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# The Knight of the Broom Flower; Or, The Horrors of the Priory [Transcript]

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THE  
Knight of the Broom Flower;  
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THE order of the Broom Flower was instituted by Louis, a pious King of France. The Knights wore a collar, composed of broom, intermixed with fleur de lis. Their motto was, *Humility exulted*. Their Sovereign made choice of these words to intimate what he himself firmly believed, that God had exalted him to the Gallic throne, instead of his elder brother, Phillip of France, for his humility. The Knights wore cassocks of white damask, looped up with gold chains, suspended to buttons of oriental pearl. Their helmets were covered with leopard skins, and adorned with plumes of white feathers, and artificial sprigs of broom. Their number was thirty-four, besides the Sovereign, who was always to be the leader of these Knights. King Louis made choice of those young Nobles who were distinguished for their virtues and heroism, to instal in this honorable order. Among those that were so signalized by their Monarch, was Henrique, the youthful Marquis de Belvoir. He had just taken possession of his vast estates, which had been much enriched by the long minority he had passed since the death of his father, who lost his life on the frontiers, in a dreadful skirmish with the Spaniards; the day that his son had attained his tenth year. His widow, the amiable and lovely Marchioness de Belvoir, survived this afflicting event but a few weeks. In her expiring moments, she committed her beloved and only child to the care of her brother and his lady, the Count and Countess of St. Juliers, of whose fidelity to her interest, and their innate worth, she had often experienced the most pleasing and convincing proofs. And as they had only one child of their own, and that a daughter, she entertained hopes that the charge of conducting the steps of her son to maturity, would prove to them a source of gratification and delight. The ardent assurances they gave her of it being such, softened the anguish of approaching dissolution, and she resigned her breath with a placidity that is devoutly to be wished; but, alas! seldom experienced. The young Belvoir, though sensibly afflicted with the demise of his parents, was not of an age to feel the extent of the loss he had recently sustained. Happily for him, he had often been accustomed to visit for weeks, and even months, at the house of his uncle St. Juliers. The exchange of his residence was not, from that circumstance, either novel, or attended with those painful sensations, which a change would otherwise have occasioned. The Count faithfully discharged the trust reposed in him; and at sixteen, Henrique was one of the most accomplished Nobles that adorned the French court. Before he attained his twenty-first year, he had signalized himself in three different engagements; two with the Spaniards, and one with the Austrians. In the last of these he was so fortunate as to save the life of his Sovereign, who from that moment beheld his young deliverer with an affection that was almost parental, and strove with eagerness to raise him to the most distinguished honors. As soon as Henrique was installed as one of the Knight's of the Broom Flower, the kingdom being at perfect peace, both from the attacks of foreign enemies, and intestine broils, he determined to repair to the pleasant shades in which the castle of St. Juliers abounds. As soon as he had taken leave of his Sovereign and brother Knights, he took his departure from Paris, attended by the faithful Lorenzo, his squire. The Castle of St. Juliers was situated at Marseilles, consequently their journey was long, and travelling on horseback fatiguing. But Henrique, who was fond of surveying his native country, and delighted in the scenes which nature presented to his view, felt much pleasure from the prospect of such a journey; the season of the year, and the extreme mildness of the atmosphere, contributing to his

pleasure. He also meant to survey every edifice remarkable for its beauty or antiquity, and by that means make their journey less weary, and gratify his laudable curiosity at the same time. It is true, Henrique had often journeyed from Paris to Marseilles, but then it had always been in a post-coach and six, that travelled with the rapidity of lightning. The third evening of their journey it was uncommonly beautiful, all creation appeared in unison. The new shorn flocks, gambolled along the verdant meadows. The feathered tribe carolled their liveliest notes; and the air was odoriferous by the rich perfumes it inhaled from the luxuriant shrubs and flowers that adorned each side of the road they had to pass. Contrary to the advice of his faithful Lorenzo, and the mistress of the inn where he had stopt to take a cup or two of coffee, he determined to continue his journey during the whole of the night, and take his repose next day while the heat of the sun was most powerful. In vain they presented to his view, all the horrors he might encounter by banditti, or midnight assassins. Henrique, though not often proof against kind or reasonable entreaties, was in this point not to be dissuaded from his purpose. They proceeded on till the clock struck eleven, and as yet had no reason to repent their journey. A sudden darkness now obscured the atmosphere, and there were several indications of an approaching storm. The road now became intricate. They had to pass through an extensive wood, which branched out into paths of various directions, each leading to a different village or town. Had they been blest with the presence of the Queen of night, no difficulty would have attended the exploring their proper road. But now it was next to an impossibility. The rain, attended by a sharp, cutting hail, now poured from the Heavens, and the gusts of wind were tremendous.

Lorenzo, though he felt the utmost regret at the obstinacy of his master in travelling by night, was too respectful to murmur, or utter a word of reproach; yet he could not avoid uttering a sigh of regret. Henrique felt it vibrate on his heart: he well knew the cause, and secretly blamed himself for encountering evils that might have been avoided. But his good sense taught him that it was of no use to give way to unavailing complaints; and the only remedy was perseverance and fortitude, to extricate themselves from their present perilous situation. Their path now became more and more obscure; and the thick spreading branches so hindered their proceeding, that they were forced to dismount, and lead their horses. They had journeyed in this uncomfortable manner, till, overcome with fatigue, they were nearly ready to sink on the earth. A deep sounding bell now tolled the solemn hour of midnight; and, to the great relief of our travellers, appeared to strike at no great distance. The hopes of meeting with an hospitable shelter, in which they might repose their weary limbs, made them hasten on with recruited spirits. They had now cleared the wood, and found themselves entering on a dismal lane, bounded on each side by a deep ditch, and trees of an amazing height. There was no alternative; they stept forward with the utmost caution, fearful that the ensuing moment might precipitate them into some frightful abyss. When they had traversed, at least half a mile of this dreary place, they found their progress impeded by a pair of large iron gates, which were strongly fastened and resisted their united efforts to open. In vain they tried to find a bell; the search was fruitless. The storm, instead of abating by the length of time it had continued, now raged with more violence, and thunder and lightning added to the horrors of the night.

The young Marquis and his servant were almost ready to perish; to stand on ceremony was vain, and in their situation not to be expected. They resolved to fasten their horses to the gate,

and leave them to the care of Providence. Henrique and Lorenzo were then to climb these barriers; and explore their way to the mansion they were placed to secure. This point gained, they found themselves in a long shady avenue. The path-way was gravelled, but overgrown with filthy and obnoxious weeds. "I greatly fear (said Lorenzo) that whatever edifice belongs to this isolated place, is uninhabited; if so, we shall receive but poor consolation in our distress." "I hope better things, (said his master.) Behold, already friendly to my wishes, a light gleams from yonder turret."

Cheered by this propitious sight, they quickened their steps, and soon arrived at the back part of a stupendous building, which, by its surrounding cloisters, and other ornaments, led them to believe it belonged to some religious order. They walked round to the front of the building, and gave three loud and repeated knocks at the door, which was soon opened by a tall, robust man, whose countenance was harsh and forbidding. On perceiving the strangers, he started back with a motion that indicated the strongest surprise: but recovering in a few moments from his stupor, he rudely pushed the knight and his attendant from the steps, and closed the door with a violence that made the edifice shake. Shocked at this discourteous behaviour, Henrique knew not how to proceed. But, at length, urged by despair, he determined to try and soften this Machiavel of cruelty. He again knocked, with redoubled force, regardless of the intreaties of the trembling Lorenzo, who expected nothing less than a dreadful death to be the consequence of their temerity.

Henrique continued knocking for several minutes, without any success; and he was just going to descend the steps, hopeless of obtaining admittance, when a casement was opened on the first floor, and a female voice, in gentle accents, inquired the reason of the alarm at so late an hour. Henrique replied, by informing her of the cause in as few words as possible. The lady retired from the window, and our travellers remained a few moments under the painful influence of suspense; from which they were presently relieved by the opening of the hall door; and the same man, who had behaved in so inhuman a manner, now bid them enter, and taking a light, conducted them to a chamber, at a great distant from the hall, though on the same floor. He then left them, and presently returned with some faggots for the fire, and provisions, with an excellent bottle of wine. Though they asked him several polite questions, he would return no answer, but remain obstinately silent.

After he had prepared every thing essential for their accommodations, he left the room, and, in answer to their repeated thanks, and good nights, the only reply he made was, desiring them to keep the chamber door fastened, and to be as quiet as possible, or else worse consequences might probably ensue.

As soon as this unpleasing being had retired, Lorenzo expressed to his master his fears that they were fallen into the hands of banditti, and mentioned several circumstances, which in his opinion served to corroborate the fact; such as, several cutlasses, and other weapons, hanging in the hall, and the behaviour of the man, who evidently expected some persons, or he would not so readily have opened the door on their knocking for admittance. The Marquis could not but admit that these suggestions were too likely to be probable; yet the good fire, and the plenitude of viands so exhilarated his spirits, that he could find no room for sorrowful impressions. As soon as they had dried their garments, and changed their wet linen for some

that Lorenzo had in a small cloak-bag, which he had been careful not to leave behind in his late uncomfortable expedition, they retired to repose on two small pallets which fortunately stood in their new habitation. Again the deep-sounding bell, which they had heard when they were exploring the thick recesses of the wood, struck. It was now four in the morning, but not the least traces of light appeared through the shutters, and the storm was but little abated.

Sleep soon closed the eyes of the

way-worn travellers. But, alas! before they could enjoy the influence of Somnus, they were aroused by a noise of confused and complicated sounds. They started up, called to each other with a low voice, and then listened with eager attention: but did not distinguish any thing that could develop the cause of this terrific disturbance. Lorenzo frequently crossed himself, and more frequently wished himself in either wood, lane, or forest; in preference to his present abode. Sleep once more closed their eyes, and gave a temporary respite to their uneasy sensations. They slept till a late hour of the day, and might not have awoke even then, had not the man entered to brink their morning repast. Henrique intimated his wish to depart as early as possible, and expressed great concern about his horses. The man replied, that he had taken good care of them: but that the Knight, and his squire, must by no means think of departing from the Priory till the thick shades of evening favored their escape.

“Is this a Priory?” said the wandering Marquis. The man clapt his fore finger on his lip, and instantly withdrew, leaving Henrique, and his faithful Lorenzo, to amuse themselves as well as they could during the tedious hours that must intervene before the promised period of liberty would arrive. They had now leisure to examine the antique apartment in which they were immured. Its hangings were of blue damask, enriched with silver mouldings. The ceiling was ornamented with various devices from the heathen history: Juno was delineated with her peacocks, and Venus with her doves, Minerva with her owl, and Ceres laden with corn and fruits: nor was the chaste Goddess of the

Woods forgot. The flooring had some traits of the Mosaic in its composition. The curtains which hung to the windows in a tattered state, were such as proclaimed the magnificence that once reigned in this *now* dreary chamber. The furniture which stood in this apartment, bore no traces of ancient or modern grandeur; it was wretched, and only befitting the cottage of the most abject; nor would it have ever been retained by an industrious peasant.

The two humble pallets, and their scanty bedding, some broken chairs, and a deal table, and corner cupboard, filled with some few kitchen requisites, were all the apartment contained; and these last mentioned articles suggested to Henrique, and his squire, the idea that it had been the prison of some unfortunate persons; and they removed the pallets, that they might search with exactness, if the captives had concealed any writings that might lead to a discovery of who they were, or why confined in this mysterious place; but their investigation was not attended with any success. At length the wished-for twilight arrived; but liberty was still denied to our fugitives. The man never visited their chamber till a very late hour, and then he was accompanied by a person who was huddled up in a strange kind of dress, which was evidently meant to disguise the person; it was composed of brown stuff, and a large hood of the same material. Henrique, with some warmth, demanded the cause of their detention. The man replied, that there was no prospect of their quitting the Priory that night, as the hall was crowded with persons who must not know that the Priory had afforded them shelter. As soon as the man who attended on them had withdrawn, the stranger threw off the dress that had so completely enveloped the

wearer, as even to disguise the den to which they belonged, and discovered to the astonished Henrique,

And his squire, a lively and elegant female, apparently about eighteen years of age. She was tall, and her whole symmetry uncommonly beautiful and prepossessing. Her eyes were of the deepest blue, her nose aquiline, and her features perfectly regular. She was drest in a black silk robe. Her luxuriant tresses of light brown hair were fastened up with a pearl comb, and bound round with some velvet bands, the sable shade of which was beautiful, contrasted by her snowy complexion. As soon as the Marquis was recovered from his surprise, he advanced, and taking the fair one's hand, besought her to tell him if he was not obliged to her for the shelter he had so opportunely received on the preceding night. She heaved a deep sigh, and replied, in faltering accents, that she had, indeed, been so fortunate in this instance, as to prevail on the surly Almagro to give them admittance into the Priory, and to supply them with provisions; but, from the knowledge she had of the extreme avarice and perfidy of the wretch, she was under the most excruciating fear, lest he should betray them to the banditti which inhabited that wretched place where she was a most unwilling inmate. Henrique uttered a short sentence, expressive of surprise and pity; and then respectfully intreated her to indulge him with a recital of the event, which had proved so unfortunate to a person of her beauty, and apparent merit.

The fair one gracefully bowed her head, as if in acquiescence to his request, and thus commenced the history of her woes. "My name, Monsieur, is Elvira, my father was the celebrated warrior Don Fernando Gonzales, who was the second son of the Marquis Ferrara, and related, either by birth or marriage, to the chief part of the Spanish Nobles. My mother, Elenora de Valmont, was the heiress of a grandee of that name. She was a woman of incomparable beauty, and unnumbered suitors strove to become the possessor of the lovely fair one. But her father had long made choice of Fernando; and the nuptials had only been retarded through the indisposition of the Marquis Ferrara, who had expressed a particular desire to be present at the solemnizing of the nuptials. When he was restored to convalescence, an early day was fixt for the ceremony.

"On the morn preceding that which was to unite her to Don Fernando, till death should dissolve the tie, she repaired to the convent of St. Nicolas, that she might join in prayers in the chapel, and make her confession to Father Austin, preparatory to her entering on a change of life. She went, accompanied by her governante, Donna Laurentina, and a young page. As the distance was not more than a quarter of a mile from Valmont-House, the ladies put on their veils, and resolved to walk, that they might enjoy the salubrity of the air.

"They had not proceeded far, when they found themselves attentively surveyed by a young and handsome cavalier. They quickened their pace, to avoid his gaze. But in vain was all the efforts they used; he still kept by their side, let them walk in what step they would; and Elenora felt relieved when they entered the convent, as she hoped it would free her from her troublesome companion. But even in this she was mistaken; the holy walls did not awe the stranger from his purpose. He placed himself directly opposite to Elenora, and her amiable governante, who was a woman truly possessing every virtue that adorns the human character. When prayers were ended, and Elenora was retiring into the interior of the convent to confession, the stranger suddenly arose,

and exclaimed; “To-morrow, fatal day! would it could be for ever blotted from the calender! to-morrow tears Elenora from me for ever.’ He then reclined his head against one of the pillars with the utmost despondency. The astonished fair one trembled so violently, that she could scarce support her trembling limbs to where the pious nuns were waiting to receive her.

“As soon as the confession was ended, she returned to the chapel, and joined Laurentina, whom to her extreme surprise, she found conversing with the cavalier, who, on the approach of Elenora, bowed, and immediately withdrew.

“Elenora was extremely anxious to learn of her Duenna the conversation that had taken place with the stranger. She was evidently displeased with his conduct, and informed her beloved charge, that he said his name was Don Lermos de Aquilla, the descendent of a family, more renowned for their illustrious birth, and noble ancestry, than wealth or estates: that he had long beheld Elenora with a passion which prudence had prompted him to conceal; nor was it ever his intention to have revealed the least syllable of his love, much less in the presence of the adored fair one, had not despair got the ascendancy over his reason, and forced him to utter those exclamations which betrayed him.

“Believe me, my dear love, (said Laurentina, when she had related what Don Lermos had told her,) believe me, I doubt the sincerity of his assertions. You are now going to enter into a sacred character, and you will not have only your virtue and good name to preserve, but also the honor of your husband; therefore, guard against the wiles of the artful seducer. Alas! he may have already began to plot your destruction; and this is his first essay to attract your notice, and raise thoughts in your mind that may be injurious to your peace and repose. Elenora, could not but allow that this remark might be just, yet she firmly hoped that Laurentina might be mistaken in the cavalier's views, and laid too much stress on the incident that had so unfortunately occurred.

“Elenora was pensive and buried in thought during the rest of the day, which Laurentina perceiving, gently rebuked her for letting the stranger have so much interest in her heart. The entrance of Don Fernando put a period to their conversation, and his tender assiduities made Elenora forget the accomplished cavalier: for, though her heart was truly her betrothed husband's, yet she felt the most sincere regret at the supposition that she had been the cause (though intentionally innocent) of making him miserable, by inspiring him with a hopeless passion.

“The next day the nuptials of my parents were celebrated with the utmost magnificence at the Church of Notre Dame; my grandfather having an insurmountable objection to the then prevailing fashion of the ceremony being performed at the house of the bride's father. My mother went through the ceremony with a modest firmness. But what words can do justice to her distress and confusion, when, turning from the altar, she beheld Lermos de Aquilla with his arms crost, resembling the statue of despair? Elenora hastened from the church to her carriage, as she knew not what lengths he might be so imprudent as to proceed, if he remained in her presence, and cause the everlasting unhappiness of Don Fernando and herself: for she was well aware he would not credit the assertions of either herself or Laurentina, but would behold him as

a favored lover. Happily for Elenora, as the church was crowded with spectators of their nuptials, Lermos was not observed by Fernando, nor their attending friends. This last daring and premeditated act quite divested the fair one of every remains of any favorable sentiment she might have felt in his behalf; and she coincided with Laurentina in the disadvantageous opinion of his views on her honor and fidelity.

“Don Fernando having a considerable post at court, remained at Madrid a year and a half with his lady, whom he tenderly loved. In this city I first saw the light; and my mother being in a weak state of health, my father got leave of absence for a long period of time, and resolved to visit Marseilles, and several of the principal towns in France, in hopes to restore convalescence to his beautiful Elenora. When they had taken a survey of these places, Don Fernando proposed to repair to the Priory del Carmo, which had lately become his property by a decree of the Pope of Rome and the French Monarch; Fernando being the legal heir to the founder, the Marquis del Carmo, who was an Italian nobleman of immense property, possessing vast estates in France, Spain, and Italy, his nephew to whom he bequeathed those in Catalonia, settled in Spain, and from him descended Fernando Gonzales. This Priory was inhabited by Monks of the Benedictine order, and was conducted near a century with the greatest piety, and good order, when a Monk, of the name of Ambertus, became their Prior. He was a man who, by an outward and affected piety, and an extreme sanctity of manners, concealed the most baneful vices.

Almeria was the daughter of a merchant who resided at some small distance from the Priory; and, from the high estimation in which Ambertus was held, her father used to court his society, that he might benefit by his eloquent discourse, and receive both pleasure and instruction. The blooming Almeria unhappily attracted his notice; nor had her extreme youth and innocence any power to divert him from his horrid purpose. He employed four of his confederates in iniquity to way-lay the ill-fated maiden, on her return from a visit she had been to pay to a married sister, and convey her through a private door into the Priory.

“In vain were the prayers and intreaties of the wretched Almeria; in vain her efforts to escape from his detested embraces. She became an unwilling sacrifice to the vile Ambertus. He then dragged her to a lone and dreary vault under the Priory, enclosed with an iron door, and so contrived, (for it had been the scene of repeated cruelties,) that it was impossible for the shrieks or groans of the hapless captives to be heard in the cells of the brethren. Here he confined the suffering girl for some months, conveying her food (and what cloaths one of his confidants procured for him at a distant town,) with his own hand. In this torrid abode Almeria was delivered of a son; the Monk having procured a midwife, who was brought blindfold to the Priory, and conveyed back in the same manner; and the whole so conducted, that it was impossible for good woman to guess where she had been, or by whom employed. Added to this, she was bound by the most solemn vows never to reveal the mysterious transaction into which she had been forced to become an unwilling accomplice. Dreadful to relate! Almeria expired during the night for want of proper attention, being still left in the dreadful dungeon, stretched on straw, and covered with a rug, while the damps and noxious vapours were insupportable. When Ambertus entered in the morning, he discovered his lifeless victim, and for some minutes remained struck with anguish and remorse. The cries of the little innocent, who wanted food, aroused him from his grief-wrought



lethargy: he hastened to snatch it from the side of its dead parent, and pressed it to his bosom. The child redoubled its plaintive cries. A dreadful thought rushed on the brain of Ambertus, what could he do with this——? Nothing, without exposing himself to danger. His Priorship forfeited; his sanctity, nay, his life. A detection in one instance, would infallibly lead to a discovery of the rest of his crimes. The thought was insupportable. The child must die. Fiend-like, he grasped its little throat: it struggled, moaned, and raised its little hands. Again he grasped it, and its spotless spirit fled its frail tenement of clay. Ambertus believing all the friars to be engaged in the refactory, had not taken his usual precaution of fastening the iron door. Three of the brothers, led by the good father Phillip, who had long thought his visits to the vaults very mysterious, had watched him, and made a complete discovery of the tragic scenes in which their superior had been engaged, to the great disgrace of their holy religion, and the order they professed. They rushed in with fervent hopes that they should be able to preserve the infant; but it was too late, Ambertus was a murderer. He offered immense treasures, that he had secretly hoarded, to conceal this transaction; but the pious fathers were inexorable, they secured Ambertus, and delivered him to the hands of justice. The guilt was clearly proved, and he was condemned to the rack. The remains of Almeria, and her child, were deposited with religious rites in the cemetery of the convent of Notre Dame, and their grave is marked by a weeping willow.

“Father Phillip, was appointed the superior of their monastery in the room of the detested Ambertus.”

Here the beautiful Elvira was interrupted by the entrance of Almagro, who informed her, that it was no longer consistent with her own safety, nor ours, for her to remain out of her chamber.

Henrique declared that, great as his anxiety was to reach his uncle's seat, he would, with Almagro's permission, remain at the Priory till he could obtain another interview with the fair one. He strengthened his request, with presenting him a few Louis d'ors: and the man acquiesced with a kind of exalting smile that by no means prepossessed the Marquis in his favor, as he thought it discovered a sinister design.

Nothing material occurred during the following day. The next night they were visited by the fair Elvira, who, after receiving and giving the usual compliments, continued her narration to her attentive auditors. “The monks were removed to a house that was given them by the Cardinal de R——, as they judged the Priory del Carmo to be polluted by the crimes of Ambertus, and no longer worthy to be the residence of a holy brotherhood.

“The edifice, and the lands that were not appropriated for the maintenance of the Monks, were confiscated to the Crown of France, and bestowed on the Duke de Valancour, who intended to have made it a summer residence. He altered several of the places that had been used for religious purposes into stately rooms, and furnished them in a style of the utmost splendor and taste, the magnificence of which is apparent from: the now faded remains. This Priory seems (continued Elvira) to have some fatal influence over its rulers. The Duke had embezzled several thousands of the public money, and an order was immediately issued for his arrest. He was at del Carmo when the discovery was made; and one of his noble friends immediately sent him the fatal intelligence, that he might evade the punishment that awaited him. But the Duke made

a different use of this act of friendship. He repaired to his chamber, and taking a loaded pistol from the chimney-piece, he ended his terrestrial existence, and rushed unbidden into the presence of his creator. The Priory again reverted to the crown, and remained shut up exactly in the same state as the domestics had left it after the unfortunate de Valancour's funeral. My father, Don Fernando Gonzales, being the legal heir to this estate, (for his elder brother being of the Protestant faith, was not included in the indulgencies of the church of Rome,) and having signalized himself in the wars against the infidel Moors, was presented with this domain as the joint gift of his holiness and the French King: nor did the Spanish Monarch appear displeas'd at one of his subjects being thus signalized by a neighbouring power.

“The situation of the Priory was very pleasant, and as soon as the apartments were cleaned out, and the furniture arranged in proper order, my mother began to grow much attached to the place; and her intreaties retarded my father's return to Spain. After prolonging their stay some months longer than they at first intended, a day was fixed for the commencement of their journey towards their native country. They resolv'd to return early in the following spring, and purchase some modern furniture for their future accommodation.

“Elenora, the eve before their intended departure, walk'd in the spacious groves, that she might indulge herself with a farewell look. She had seated herself on a green bench that stood at the end of one of the long avenues, when she was startled by some leaves rustling just behind her. She started from her seat, and was looking round, in expectation that Don Fernando, or some of the domestics, were come in search of her, as she had staid out later than her usual hour: but a man, clad in slight armour, hastily pass'd her, at the same time menacing her, on pain of forfeiting her own life, and that of her husband's, not to reveal this circumstance to any mortal. Elenora utter'd a faint acquiescence, and return'd to the Priory, as well as her tottering steps would permit. The circumstance in itself was sufficiently alarming; but what augmented the fair one's distress, was her forming the idea, that the shape, air, and voice, of the stranger, accorded with those of Don Lermos de Aquilla. She had never seen him since the day of her nuptials with Don Fernando; but had frequently heard anecdotes related of him, that prov'd him to be one of the most abandoned characters existing in the universe.

“When she arriv'd at the Priory, she was met at the door by Don Fernando, who express'd his surpris'e at the alteration that had taken place in her countenance since she left her apartment to take her evening's walk. Elenora plac'd the alarming change to indisposition. They retir'd to bed at an early hour. The clock struck one just as my mother was awak'nd from her sleep by a confused noise in her chamber. She listen'd, but all was silent. She then endeavour'd to arouse Don Fernando from his slumber: but her endeavours were fruitless; and at length she concluded that her beloved husband had been seiz'd with a fit. Terrifi'd at this supposition, she hasten'd to the adjoining apartment, where her female attendants and myself slept, to procure a light, as we always had a lamp burning. She then hasten'd back, in hopes that she might be able to render Don Fernando some assistance. The light dropt from her hand; she utter'd a piercing shriek, and sunk senseless on the floor. On her recovery, she found herself, supported by her women, who

were eagerly demanding what fatal transaction had occurred. Elenora pointed to the bed, but could not articulate a sentence. Donna Laurentina, who had accompanied my mother to the Priory, alarmed at the bustle, at this moment entered the chamber. She hastily drew the curtains, but shrunk back with horror at the sight of Don Fernando, who had received a dreadful wound in his head, and another on his breast; and appeared as if he had not long expired.

The hapless Elenora was conveyed in a state that was truly pitiable, to another chamber; and Laurentina, with the three women, went with the intention to call up the domestics, that they might search for the assassin who had committed the inhuman murder. But every chamber they resorted to, they found that the hapless victims were sacrificed to some dreadful purpose. Crossing the great stairs, they were surprised at hearing the sounds of joyous mirth, resounding from the great hall. Laurentina's despair gave her courage, and she descended on tip-toe, in hopes to discover who were their horrid guests. The door that led into the great hall was but half closed; and Laurentina had the misery of beholding a party of men, whose looks, habiliments, and arms, proclaimed them to be a lawless banditti. Their chief, who sat at the head of the table, was distinguished from the rest by a slight suit of armour peculiar to the custom of those times. As she stood gazing with fear and wonder on the scene before her, by a slight turn of his head, she perceived it was Lermos de Aquilla. Astonishment got the better of her prudence, and she screamed aloud. Betrayed to this horrid gang, she knew that there was no mercy to expect, and, with a spirit too noble to suffer insults, which she was well aware would be given, she drew forth her pen-knife and ended her existence, just as two of the banditti were going to obey the order of the vile Lermos, and drag her into his presence. This sad event did not give the least shock to a party so inured to scenes of blood, and of such depraved hearts.

“How comes it (said their chief, in a stern voice that this woman was listening to our discourse; did I not command you, in particular command you, to let her be one of the first that fell?” The men stammered out some excuse. Lermos then arose, and commanding the men to follow, made a strict investigation of the Priory, that none of the unhappy victims might escape. Not to tire your patience, I will pass over scenes that would only shock you by the recital, and hasten to the final catastrophe. Out of the numerous retinue that was at del Carmo, only three survived that dreadful night: my mother, myself, and Beatrice, a poor ignorant girl, who had been hired to attend the nurse.

“Don Lermos then caused a deep hople to be dug in one of the vaults, and there all the slain, except my father, were deposited, without any ceremony or funeral obsequies. Don Fernando was buried in the decayed chapel that had belonged to the Benedictine Monks; and there, Monsieur, I have often retired with my revered mother to weep over his ashes.

“The cruel usurper now took possession of the Priory and caused a report to be made, that Don Fernando, and his family, had embarked for the Indias, and had sold him the Priory and domains of del Carmo; assigning as a reason, that he had lost most of his wealth by gambling, and was obliged to retire for some years from the world, till the produce of his estates should supply the deficiency, and restore him to his rank. There was only the trades-people who had served the Priory, that knew any thing of the family residing there, (as my mother's ill health, and the disarranged state in which the mansion then was, had determined them not to visit, or be visited, by the neighbouring nobility, till their return

the next year,) and as they had been very busy packing up the preceding day. This assertion was readily believed. Forged letters to that effect were also sent to their relations, who too readily credited the contents; and as they were ignorant, of the event that had taken place at St. Nicolas, they considered Don Lermos as a stranger to the family, and he passed unsuspected of any atrocity; and Don Fernando was blamed by all his family, for his extravagance and want of confidence in his friends, who would have given thousands to prevent him, and their beloved Elenora, from leaving their home. This point gained, Don Lermos shut up a great part of the Priory, under pretence of its being too large for a man who, having undergone a disappointment in love, had come hither for retirement with only two domestics. The iron gates at the end of each avenue leading to the edifice, were strongly fastened. Almagro, one of the banditti, was appointed as porter, and likewise went to the adjacent villages for such articles as were wanted. For he having been wounded in the arm in one of their late excursions, was not fit to accompany them in their depredations.

“In this wretched place did my mother linger out a miserable existence. Sixteen year she immured in this Priory, ere Heaven in mercy took her to itself. Religion (and she was one of its purest votaries) kept her from the commission of suicide, or she never would have lived to be the wife of Lermos; for such she was, if a marriage solemnized by some hireling priest, (whom he brought to the convent,) while the hapless Elenora made the place resound with her shrieks, can give her right to the tie she abhorred.

“Since the decease of my mother, I have resided in an apartment directly over this we are now in, and which is a part of the Priory not often visited by the banditti; and that only when they had any prisoners of consequence confined in this room, it being a rule with them to keep such young men as were so unfortunate as to fall into their toils, in the most rigid immurement, till they consented to join the banditti: nay, sometimes they have had recourse to tortures to extort their compliance. For some months I was left in quiet to indulge my melancholy reflections. But now I am continually teized by Lermos, who exerts a father’s authority over me, to take the head of the table, where he and a few of his chosen associates usually sit apart from the rest of the gang, and do the honors it requires. And what has made me almost frantic, and urged me to impart my griefs to you, in hopes that you may fix on some method to release me, and restore to my noble family their long-lost Elvira, is the wish he has formed, of uniting me to Albert de Androni, his chief favorite. He gave me a week to deliberate on my choice of accepting his friend, or of being confined in the vault where the murdered persons are buried, and to have only bread and water for my subsistence.” Here the lovely mourner ended her narrative, and remained for some moments absorbed in grief. Just at this period, Almagro entered the apartment, and sternly desired Elvira to quit the Knight, and repair to her chamber. “Lermos and his friends are absent, (said the, stern porter,) and as I momentarily expect their return, your safety and mine will be endangered by any delay.”

Henrique offered (being aware of Almagro's avarice) him an enormous sum to let him, his squire and the young Lady, with her faithful Beatrice depart; but this he peremptorily refused, on account of his dread of Lermos's vengeance. This the Knight of the Broom Flower thought but a just fear. He therefore bound himself by oath to allow Almagro four hundred Louis a

year, if he would accompany them to the Castle of St. Julier's. This was too great an offer, for the other to refuse. Every thing was soon in readiness for their departure: they set out on the fleetest horses, and happily arrived at the next post town without encountering any interruption. Hiring a vehicle with six horses, they arrived safe at the Count of St. Julier's, who received them with inexpressible joy, and congratulated them on their safe deliverance, for he was soon acquainted with their adventures.

The amiable Count and his Lady accompanied Elvira to Spain, where her relations received her with a pleasing astonishment, and heart-felt gratitude; and the enraptured Henrique soon received her from their hands as a beloved bride.

Lermos expiated his crimes on the wheel; and his associates were condemned to various deaths, according to the degrees of their guilt.

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