

## THE UNFORTUNATE VICTIM.

**L**UDOVISIO Carantani, a native of Verofa, a city of the Milanese, had only two daughters, by a wife who had brought him a considerable fortune; but that parental affection which ought to have been divided between them, was confined to the eldest, whose name was Victoria, though she was not near so amiable as Olympia her sister. This capricious preference was evident even in their infancy.—Victoria enjoyed all the caresses of her father, nor could her sister obtain the smallest token of his tenderness or affection. Her mother's love, indeed, made some amends for this indifference—but death having deprived her of this consolation, she was exposed to continual ill treatment.

Victoria's beauty, and the fortune she might expect from the wealth and partiality of her father, soon drew about her a number of suitors; and Carantani, that he might marry his favorite to greater advantage, was determined to sacrifice to her interest the happiness of Olympia, whom he put into a Convent, and reported that she had resolved upon a religious life.

Carantani already congratulated himself upon the success of his scheme. As he had always hated the amiable Olympia with severity, he was persuaded she would be soothed by the tranquility of a Convent, and think herself happy to have escaped the rudeness and neglect she suffered at home. Nor was he altogether mistaken; for at the solicitation of several of her relations, who were gained over by her father, she consented to take the habit of a novice or probationer, in the Monastery of San Martino. But at that time Olympia's heart was widely different from the wish of a life of Monastic devotion.—She was beautiful, young, and lively—and on the point of becoming a victim to her father's ambition.

On the very day, however, of the ceremony, she saw amongst the company, assembled as usual, on those occasions, an amiable Cavalier, who had made

a deep impression on her heart. Immediately the thoughts of a Convent became intolerable ; and she reflected with horror, upon the sacrifice she was just about to make, of all the advantages which she might promise herself in this world.

The nuns and her relations, who soon perceived the change, endeavored, in vain, to bring her back to her first resolution. All the answer they received from her was, that her circumstances being equal with her sister, she had no inclination to sacrifice herself to her ambition, and the partiality of her father ; that her design was to marry a young Cavalier of a very good family, by whom she knew she was beloved.

It is easy to imagine the astonishment of Carantani, at a resolution, which quite frustrated the scheme he had formed for raising the fortune of his dear Victoria. He earnestly intreated the nuns to redouble their endeavors to make Olympia alter her determination. But those endeavors only increased her disgust for a Monastic life ; nor did she conceal her sentiments even from her father, who came frequently to see her, in order to discover the effects of the remonstrances of his friends ; but perceiving that this expedient did not succeed, he had recourse to menaces ; assuring her that if she did not resolve on a religious life, he would take her home again, where she might expect to be the most wretched of women.

Olympia, who knew her father's unkindness, by a long and cruel experience, did not doubt but he would keep his word ; yet she endeavored to mollify him, by the most tender and pathetic expostulations ; but neither arguments, intreaties, nor tears, made the least impression on his heart.

As Victoria's match, was, by this change in Olympia's resolution, in danger of being broken off, her lover growing indifferent, in proportion as her fortune became precarious, Carantani became so much enraged, that the next time he visited Olympia, he told her, in a transport of fury, " that if she did not take the veil when her noviciate expired,

he would put her to death with his own hand."—"If I die," said Olympia, calmly, "it will not be by your hand. I have often represented to you my aversion to a Monastic life, yet you command me to sacrifice myself to the fortune of my sister, and to that excessive fondness which you have always shewn for her; and if it be impossible for me to prevail on you to retract this command, you shall be obeyed; but you and my sister will have perpetual cause to regret the cruel sacrifice which you oblige me to make you;" adding that he might, whenever he thought proper, order the necessary preparations for the ceremony.—She then withdrew.

Carantani, who probably did not know to what lengths despair might carry a young mind, when love has once seized on the heart, pleased himself with the thoughts of having made her change her resolution. He went, therefore, with an air of triumph, to carry the news to his dear Victoria and her lover, who were then together. They exulted exceedingly at the news, and deemed themselves arrived at the summit of felicity.

As the time appointed for Olympia's taking the veil was now near, Carantani made all the usual preparations, and, as if he thought the unhappy victim knew not to whom she was to be sacrificed, he took measures for solemnizing the marriage of his Victoria at the same time.

On the day preceding that which was fixed for this double ceremony, Olympia thought it her duty to make a last effort to soften her father, and, if possible, divert him from so barbarous a sacrifice.—For this purpose she again reasoned and intreated; but Carantani was equally deaf to the voice of reason, nature, and religion; he continued inflexible, and confirmed his threatenings by the most horrid oaths. "Ah! my dear father," said the amiable Olympia, with a look of unutterable tenderness and grief, "consider well, what you are about; consider, that to me, your answer is life or death! and be assured, that if you sacrifice me to my sister's fortune, you will repent when it is too late: the phan-

toms that mislead you, will vanish at once—you will perceive with horror, the effects of your delusion, and feel the pangs of remorse, when they are aggravated by despair. But I will withdraw, and do not give your final answer till to-morrow. Yet, remember, if I perish, you will be wretched; and that in refusing mercy to your daughter, you give sentence to yourself." With these words she left the parlour.

Carantani disregarded all she said—and the preparations for Victoria's marriage engrossed his attention. He thought of nothing but how to make it splendid and magnificent. The relations who were invited to this double ceremony, were already assembled in the Church of the Convent, and Olympia was dressed in her richest apparel, and most splendid ornaments, which at these times are put on only to be renounced with the greater solemnity. —The dreadful moment arrived, in which this lovely victim was to be conducted to the altar—then knowing she had nothing farther to hope, though she concealed her despair, she asked leave of the nuns who were about her, to go up into her cell, under pretence of having forgot something, which was necessary to the weighty business she had to transact. This was readily granted, and Olympia went up—not into her cell, but into a garret that was over it; and after having deplored her misfortunes, and prayed to God for pardon, she fastened to one of the beams, a cord which she had taken from one of the nuns, who used it as a girdle, put it about her neck, threw herself from a little bench on which she stood, and in a few minutes expired.

In the mean time the company, who had been almost an hour assembled in the Church, waited with impatience the beginning of the ceremony. The abbess was acquainted with it, who was equally surprised at the delay, and asking the nuns the reason of it, was informed of Olympia's request—they waited some time longer, but still Olympia did not appear; they then went to seek her in her cell, but she was not to be found; other parts of the Convent were

searched, but without success. At length, after much time spent in a fruitless inquiry, one of the nuns thought of going up to the garret. — What a mournful sight! — What an horrid spectacle was there! The unfortunate Olympia hanging in the fatal cord with which she had put a period to her existence.

Seized with horror at the ghastly sight, she ran down stairs, and rushing into the choir, where the nuns were assembled, she filled them with terror, by her outcries. The alarm soon spread itself to the Church, where all the relations, with the utmost affliction, received the news of the sudden death of the unhappy Olympia, the most shocking circumstances of which the abbess prudently concealed. At first they would not believe it: they demanded a sight of her, and going out of the Church in a body, the ladies, and Carantani himself, entered the Convent. — What a spectacle was this for a father! One of the most amiable young women, the victim of a violent despair, all the horrors of which was still visible in her countenance.

Carantani, now too late accused himself as the murderer of his daughter, and stung with this tormenting thought, he fled from the Convent, and even from the City. He mounted his horse, with a design to conceal his shame, in the obscurity of a country seat. He had not rode far, when his horse taking fright, threw him, and his foot hanging in the stirrup, he was dragged at full speed, till every limb was broken, and he suffered a death more dreadful than his unhappy daughter. Victoria, who was an eye witness of this fatal event, could not sustain the complicated calamity which was heaped upon her. The death of her sister and her father, together with the loss of her lover, who had refused to enter into an alliance with a family which suicide had dishonored, made so deep an impression on her mind, that she died two days afterwards—closing by her death, the most disastrous series of events, which were ever recorded in any country. ————— *Finis.*