

AMELIA,

OR,
THE PERFIDIOUS HUSBAND.

TURIN, the metropolis of Piedmont, the ancient court of the dukes of Savoy, and the ordinary residence of his Sardinian majesty, about the midst of the last century, gave birth to the virtuous and beautiful, tho' unfortunate, Amelia. She was sole heiress to an opulent citizen, who was descended from one of the most considerable families in the whole principality, and was the darling of her aged parents, who had refused several very advantageous offers, which had been proposed to them, as not being able to bear the thoughts of parting with their dear daughter, whose budding beauties attracted the eyes of all who saw her. But the importunities of Fabrico, a promising young nobleman, of the first quality, were not to be resisted: and was accordingly espoused to the incomparable lady, for the first three or four years, they lived in perfect harmony, Fabrico expressing a most passionate fondness for the lovely Amelia: nor was she backward in grateful returns: and indeed excepting a too warm inclination to gaming, Fabrico's morals, and manner of proceeding, seemed irreproachable. He had, for several years before his marriage, constantly passed the carnival at Venice, where that festival is observed with much greater splendour and magnificence, than in any other part of Europe: nor was he known ever to have missed going thither about that time, where he generally stayed seven or eight weeks; yet Amelia never took the least umbrage at his so doing, any more than repining for the want of his company. As he was master of a large fortune, gamed high, and was not always unfortunate, he made a very considerable figure, and his conversation was courted by many of the chief nobility of Venice, and others of the first rank.

Unhappily, a certain senator, of a worthy character, though not very rich, became extremely fond of our young Piemontese, and had contracted such an intimacy with him, that he was never so easy or well pleased, as when he could get him to dine, or pass the evening at his palace. This hospitable nobleman had

a daughter, a young lady of most exquisite beauty and endowments, called Leonarda : with whom Fabricio (who had very carefully concealed his being married) became every day more enamoured ; and, as she appeared in his eyes the most finished beauty he had ever beheld, he soon found he was not master enough of himself to prevent his heart from falling a victim to her charms : Insomuch, that, regardless of the sacred ties under which he was engaged, he wholly abandoned himself to his growing passion for the lovely Leonarda.

As for the young lady, her judgment was too penetrating not to perceive the flame she had kindled in his breast ; nor was it long before he had some reason to flatter himself, that he was not indifferent to her. He met with no severe checks, or repulses, for the tender expressions he made to her ; and it was with great pleasure that she admitted his addresses, and gave ear to what his amorous disposition dictated, because she was very well assured of his being, by extraction, no way inferior to herself, and possessed of a plentiful inheritance ; little dreaming of the previous right marriage had given the virtuous Amelia, both to his person and affections ; nor did he omit daily to give the most solemn assurances, both to herself and her relations and acquaintance of his passion for Leonarda, and his firm resolution to devote himself to her lawful embraces ; declaring, that nothing delayed the consummation of his happiness, but the unavoidable waiting until some certain affairs, of the last importance, were settled and brought to a conclusion.

In the meanwhile his own lady, uneasy and impatient at his unusual stay at Venice, incessantly plied him with pressing letters, to return, expressing great apprehensions that some misfortune had befallen him ; having as yet, no suspicion of his infidelity. She wrote in terms so passionately tender, that, had he been less prepossessed than he was, her letters could not possibly have failed of making a due impression on him. His answers were kind, still feigning urgent business, that debarred him the happiness of her company ; and in this manner he put her off for a twelve-month ; and it is probable that he would never have thought of

leaving Venice, where was the sole object of all his present vows, had not the impatient Amelia, inconsolable at so unkind an absence, made it her daily business to enquire of every one that came from thence, concerning his conduct, and had the information from several persons on whose veracity she could depend, of what gave her mortal pangs.

Fabrico's love for his adored Leonarda, was too vehement to suffer him to keep it a secret; and as his acquaintance in that city was in a manner universal, it was no difficult matter for her to learn the particulars of an amour, which was managed with so little precaution: especially, as it was usual with him to declare publicly, in all company, that he designed to marry the lady to whom he made his addresses, and settle with her at Venice, as soon as ever the situation of his affairs would permit. This news was such a shock to the injured Amelia, that it almost deprived her of her senses, and, in the height of her resentment and despair she writ a long letter to her faithless husband, reproaching him with his baseness, and solemnly protesting, 'That if he was not at Turin within ten days, she would infallibly be with him at Venice, in a very short time after, in order to disabuse the family he had imposed on, and put a stop to the course of so base and infamous a procedure as that to which he had abandoned himself, and which was an injury that she would never suffer.'

Soon after he had received this unwelcome letter, he chanced to drop it out of his pocket, in his mistress's apartment. The sight of it raised her curiosity, and, watching an opportunity, she took it up, unperceived.

When her lover had taken his leave of her she opened it, with an agitation and concern which seemed to foretell the contents. Her amazement and indignation were beyond expression, when, upon her perusing those fatal lines, she was thoroughly convinced of her misfortune: For, at that very instant, and not till then, had she began to feel that her love for him was sincere.

She used her utmost efforts to prevail with her heart to detest a man who had so basely deceived her; but, base and perfidious as he was, he had already taken such an absolute possession of her heart, that she found

it extremely difficult to banish his idea from thence. But at length, after many violent struggles reason got the ascendancy, and opening her eyes, with horror and resentment she beheld the precipice from whence her treacherous lover was preparing to hurry her: The next time he came to visit her, she reproached him with his villainous attempt upon her, in such mortifying terms, that like one planet-struck, he remained utterly confounded and motionless: and, at the same time, throwing him his lady's letter she forbid him her presence, and, as she left him, solemnly vowed, never to see his face again, if she could possibly avoid it. This little expected shock so stupified his faculties, that he scarce knew where he was. At last, somewhat recovering from his lethargy, he went home; but so overwhelmed with passion and despair, that, when he entered his apartment, his rage was so excessively vehement, that he certainly would have laid violent hands on himself, had it not been for some of his acquaintance, who observing his disorder, follow'd him in, and prevented his doing himself any mischief, and prevailed with him to become somewhat more moderate; In the mean time, the unfortunate Leonarda, in order to deprive him of all future hopes of getting into her company, retired into a convent; which gave the finishing stroke to his despair. But in a day or two after, having received fresh letters from Turin, wherein he was assured the too-much injured Amelia was actually preparing to set out for Venice, positively determined there to say and do all that an injured jealous woman was capable of, when she found herself slighted and abandoned by an ungrateful husband; he thought the most prudent method he could take, was to endeavour to divert that storm which so apparently threatned him. As there was no longer staying for him at Venice, he packed up his baggage, and returned to Turin; where being arrived, his good lady received him in so obliging a manner, and even with such transports of joy, as plainly demonstrated that at the moment she beheld him, she entirely forgot all the just causes of complaint she had against him, never upbraiding him with his late unworthy conduct, or, indeed, scarce ever mentioning it to him; and whenever she did, it was in

a very mild and jocose manner, by way of jest. Both her relations, and his, were daily making entertainments, to welcome him home ; and the whole court, who had intelligence of what had been transacted at Venice, admired the kind reception which the virtuous Amelia gave to a person who so little merited any favour at her hands, bestowing on her all the praises her exemplary conduct deserved. Eight months passed in perfect harmony, by which time she began to appear in a state of parturition, and her husband was seemingly fonder of her than ever.

One evening, as he was sitting with her in their bed-chamber, he suddenly started up, saying, he was going to retire into his closet to his devotions, and, at the same time advised her to do the same ; she readily acquiesced, thanking him for putting her in mind of what she ought to have remembered of her own accord, and more especially, as she said, in the condition she was then in. This passed ; and the very next morning, waking sooner than ordinary, she was under no small surprize at missing her husband : But she was much more astonished, when a few moments after, she saw him coming from his closet, bearing in his arms all those materials used at the funerals of persons of distinction. Somewhat disordered and confused, she asked him the meaning of what she thought so extraordinary, and to what use he intended to put those things ? *‘ That you will be sensible of,’* replied he, his eyes sparkling with fury ; *‘ know, wretch, that they all belong to you : I have prepared them for you, and for no one else. This is the time I have fixed upon to take a direful vengeance on you for all the sufferings I have undergone, and whereof thou hast been the only cause ; and these are the wax tapers which are to surround thy bed, as soon as I have sacrificed you to that loss which you have occasioned by your detestable jealousy. Scarce had he uttered these words, but the unhappy lady sprang from her bed, confounded, pale, and trembling, cast herself at his feet, and melting into floods of tears, a sight sufficient, to have raised compassion in a tiger ; ‘ Alas !’ said she, ‘ pardon, my dearest lord, I beseech you, whatever I may, unadvisedly, have said or done to offend you. It was excess of love that made me*

culars of this dismal catastrophe, she being the only person in the family who had the least knowledge of it, till the whole were alarmed by the shrieks of the mother of the poor murdered lady; for otherwise, the unworthy perpetrator of this mischief could not have had leisure to put things in such order as they were found; and as for the wounded damsel, though she saw all, it would have been to little purpose for her to have attempted to call out for assistance, even had she been able.

As for the murderer, the surprize and confusion was too great for any-body to mind what became of him, and when, at last, they began to think of him, it was too late. He had so ordered his matters to prevent his being apprehended, that he soon got out of reach, and arrived safe at Venice. He had flattered himself with the hopes there to put an end to all his unhappiness, in the arms of Leonarda, upon whose account, and for whose sake, he had committed such a diabolical and infamous piece of villainy. At his arrival there, she was at her father's country seat, preparing to come to town: But the news of this detestable action soon spreading abroad, it reached her ears just as she was setting out for Venice. The thoughts of her having been the innocent occasion of that deplorable fact, struck her with such horror, that she immediately took a fixed resolution of quitting the world: and, notwithstanding all the arguments used by her relations, and others, in order to dissuade her, she soon after retired into a convent for the rest of her days.

Her impious, inhuman lover, unable to support himself under this last shock, the most insupportable he had ever yet met with, made all possible interest only to obtain a sight of her; but being absolutely refused, he left Venice, overwhelmed with despair; and now, utterly out of conceit with life, he wished for nothing but death: and, though he wanted courage to end his present misery with his own hands, yet it was not long before he met a deserved fate, being assassinated by a troop of Miquelets, as he was passing through Catalonia, in way to Madrid.