

Abruzzo soon followed his children. *Clementina's* mother to whom he bequeathed his fortune, lived a short time after her ; but the death of her dear *Clementina* soon put an end to her existence, and once more re-united her to her beloved daughter.

A melancholy instance of the unlimited power which the abbots and abbesses of convents could exercise on the unhappy victims entrusted to their care.

WHEN the late unfortunate Louis the Sixteenth attempted to escape from his persecutors, in 1791, I was then in *France*, where having resided for some years, I had an opportunity of witnessing the beginning and process of that dreadful revolution, which has shaken that devoted country to its foundation. The excesses which were daily committed in the capital determined me to leave it, and retire at a great distance from that scene of bloodshed. My health was at that time very bad, and I had every reason to suppose I was attacked with a pulmonary complaint ; I therefore chose the south of *France* as the place of my future residence, hoping that the well known salubrity of the air would prove beneficial. Being arrived in *Provence*, I found, to my great sorrow, that the revolutionary spirit had reached the shore of the *Mediterranean*, and that I was not to expect the tranquillity which I had promised myself to enjoy in that climate, to which nature has been so prodigally bountiful. I was however fortunate enough to discover a retreat in a delightful village not far from *Nice*, and in that charming place I flattered myself that I should regain my health and strength. I walked out every day, and admired the unrivalled beauty and luxuriancy of the country ; the hills were covered with fruits of all sorts, the flavour of which is unknown to the inhabitants of a higher latitude. At the distance of about five miles from

the place of my residence, stood a convent of the order of . . . it was most beautifully situated upon the brow of a hill, from the summit of which an extensive and enchanting prospect delighted the eye. I took great pleasure in walking to that convent almost every day ; I wished greatly to visit it, but upon inquiry found that it was impossible, as it was a convent of nuns, and the abbess was uncommonly strict, and reputed one of the most venerable of the holy sisterhood. I was told that formerly several young ladies were sent to that convent as boarders, and that some of my fair country-women had been educated in it ; but that, owing to some report of the abbess' having treated one of them rather cruelly, no English person had been sent there for many years. I inquired how long the present abbess had been at the head of the convent, and I was informed that she had presided nearly forty years, being at that time about three score and ten. The man who gave me that information was extremely superstitious, and looked upon the abbess as a saint ; he seemed quite distressed at the thought that any person could be profane enough to suppose her guilty of *any* crime. I learned, however, that many persons were of a different opinion, and considered her as a very cruel woman. After having resided nearly a year in the village of . . . I found my health considerably better, and resolved to return to my beloved country at the end of autumn, 1792, particularly as I heard, it was likely that hostilities would take place between the two countries. In the beginning of August, news were received of many horrid murders and assassinations committed at *Paris*. Whether the men, who were then at the head of government, sent some propagators of their principles to *Nice* and the environs, I cannot assert ; but certain it is, that in a few days the spirit of plunder and rapacity seemed to be instilled in almost every one. I began to think my situation was not wholly without danger, and I determined to quit the country immediately. I desired my landlord, who was a worthy man, to accom-

SUICIDE THROUGH OPPRESSION.

pany me to *Nice* to procure my passports ; at our return we were told that a party of peasants, headed by a recruiting-serjeant, had set fire to two or three beautiful country houses belonging to some noblemen, and that they appeared resolved to destroy every mansion and convent in that part of the province. The cruelty of the abbess of the neighbouring convent immediately occurred to my mind. Wretched woman, thought I, thy crimes will probably be severely punished, even in this world. My honest landlord begged me not to go out ; he assured me my life was in danger : " These wretches," said he, " hate the English ; and they would perhaps murder you, if they knew you were a native of that country." I thanked him, and followed his advice. In the night we heard a most terrific and confused noise ; the cries of terror and lamentations were mingled with oaths and execrations ; distant firing added horror to the scene. I sprang out of bed ; and was dressing to go out and inquire the cause of those dreadful cries, when my landlord came to me, and conjured me not to appear ; he said he was going, and he would tell me all that had happened. He returned in about an hour, and, with terror in his countenance, he informed me that the villains had set fire to the convent, brutally treated the nuns, and murdered the abbess. My blood ran cold at that horrid account ; and I imagined every moment that they would come and murder me likewise ; but my landlord assured me that there would be no danger for two or three days, because they were gone to the *Chateau de L....*, which was at twenty-two miles distance ; and where they were sure of finding an immense quantity of valuable articles, as the owner was one of the richest noblemen in the province. The next morning my landlord asked me to walk with him to the half-burnt convent : " It is an awful sight," said he, " but you will have an opportunity, which seldom happens, that of visiting the cells where the nuns reside, for above one third of it remains entire, and the fire has been extinguished." When I approached the smoking ruins, I felt an indispensible horror ;

horror ; traces of blood appeared in various places ; the recollection of the cruelties which had been inflicted on the wretched nuns greatly affected me ; and, though I had been assured, that the abbess had acted basely towards an English lady, I could not help regretting that her punishment had been so dreadfully severe. I examined attentively the cells ; some of them had not been rifled, and contained many valuable relics, and specimens of ingenuity. Behind that part of the convent which remained entire, was a large paved yard which led to a most beautiful garden. As we were traversing the place, my landlord said in a low voice : “ I detest the wretches who have set fire to this convent : I execrate their leaders, and from my heart pity the victims of their ferocity ; but the abbess of this convent deserved her fate, miserable as it has been.” “ I have heard,” answered I, “ that she was a very cruel woman ; and that she had ill-treated one of my countrywomen, but I never heard the particulars ; can you inform me of them ?” “ I cannot,” replied he ; “ all that I know is, that a young and very amiable English lady perished in this place about thirty-two years ago, and I believe no one has ever known how she died. It is *my* opinion that she was murdered ; but,” continued he, “ let us explore this court, I have been informed that there is a dark dungeon where she used to confine the nuns whenever they dared disobey her ; she had great power, and the bishop venerated her so much, that it would have been useless to have made any complaints against her.” We carefully examined every part of the court, but could find no trap-door. At last my friend thought of a method of discovering the opening if there were any ; he took a large stone and struck several parts of the pavement ; near one of the corners it sounded very hollowly. “ Depend upon it,” said he, “ that the dungeon is near this place ; let us remove this square stone.” With a great deal of trouble we succeeded, and perceived a very deep cavity ; we removed two more stones, and discovered a dark and narrow staircase. “ Let us venture down this horrid place,”

place," exclaimed my landlord; "and you will, I dare say, have convincing proofs of the cruelty and tyranny of the abbess. How many unfortunate females have probably ended their days in that horrible dungeon!" He descended cautiously; and, after a few minutes, he called to me. "Hasten down, you will be astonished." I was indeed very much surprized when I beheld two large dungeons, considerably lighter than I expected; I perceived that they extended under another part of the convent, and that the light proceeded from a grated window. In one of the dungeons was a low and very bad bed, and a crucifix; but the other dungeon was much better furnished; and we judged that nuns, who had not committed heinous crimes, were confined in it. The bed was much better, a table was close to it, and there were besides a chair and a Bible; against the wall was a large ivory crucifix. As I was examining the different articles, I perceived that the table had a drawer, and opening it I found a manuscript, written partly in English and partly in French. Upon the outside leaf was written in a French hand: "*Recit des Suffrances de Mdlle Eliza H.....n*:" which signifies, "A narrative of the sufferings of Miss Eliza H.....n." "I believe you are right," said I to my landlord, "this is an English name; I dare say that is the unfortunate young lady you mentioned." "I have no doubt of it," answered he, "but let us not remain in this dismal place; let us return home; you can read it there without interruption." As soon as I was in my room I eagerly perused the manuscript, of which the following is an exact copy.

"My God! what have I done? what crime have I committed to be thus buried alive, and condemned never to see the glorious sun again! Souls of sensibility, if you find this paper when I have ceased to exist, pity me; pity the sufferings of the wretched Eliza H.....n.

I was born at S.....d, in the north of England; my father was born a Roman Catholic, and disliked greatly every other religion. When very young, he fell desperately in love with my mother; and, though she was of

SUICIDE THROUGH OPPRESSION.

the established religion, he married her, but he insisted on all the children being educated in the Roman Catholic religion ; and desired her, or rather *ordered* her, never to speak to them in praise of any other religion. Their first child was a boy, who was sent at an early age to a college on the continent, that he might be regularly educated in his father's religion. I was the second child ; my mother loved me dearly, and treated me with the utmost fondness ; my temper was said to be good, I returned my mother's affections by attending dutifully to all her wishes. She took the utmost pains with my education : and before I had attained my seventh year, I was better instructed than children generally are at ten years of age. When my dear mother perceived that I was fond of learning, and anxious to excel all my young playmates, she ventured to speak to me of religion ; she defined it according to the dictates of her kind and sympathizing heart ; she painted the excellence of it in such glowing colours, that I became as fond of religious conversations as she was. Firmly attached to her religion, and believing it to be the best, she forgot the promise which her husband had extracted from her, and gradually instructed me in the established religion ; pointing out at the same time the improprieties and errors of other sects. My father examined me one day, desirous of knowing how I employed my time, and whether I had improved ; when he examined me on the subject of religion, he was surprized and greatly irritated at finding me so averse to the Roman Catholic religion. Convinced that my mother had instilled those principles in my mind, he sent for her ; and, having severely reproached her for deceiving him, and educating me in a belief which he detested, he told her that it would be of no use, for he was determined all his children should be brought up in his religion ; and, to erase all the impressions which I received on that head, and at the same time to prevent her from continuing them, he assured her that he would send me to a convent in France, as soon as he could discover an abbess who would

SUICIDE THROUGH OPPRESSION.

watch me carefully, and inculcate those principles which he so ardently wished me to follow. After a short time he discovered this fatal and wretched convent. Having agreed with the abbess, he tore me cruelly from my beloved mother's embrace, and sent me to this hated place. I have since found out that he requested the abbess to punish me severely if I did not attend with the greatest assiduity to the rites and ceremonies of the Roman Catholic church; and he farther desired her to endeavour to persuade me that the life of a nun was the most agreeable that could be led; and that it would be my duty to take the veil as soon as I had attained my fifteenth year. I shall never forget the agony of parting with my dear, my venerated, my tender, mother. Alas! her pangs were not inferior to mine; for I learned that she had sunk under her grief, which was increased by her husband's cruel treatment. The abbess at first treated me with the utmost kindness; for a long time she behaved to me with the utmost affection, without ever mentioning the subject of religion. At last, at the expiration of about eight months, she began to examine me, and reproved me sharply for my *heretic* opinions: she then informed me that it was my father's orders that I should render myself worthy of being admitted in the holy sisterhood; for, he designed that I should take the veil and dedicate the whole of my life to the service of the church. Unkindly treated as I had been by my father, torn from the arms of my dearly beloved mother, who, I had just learned, had breathed her last about two months after my departure, I cared little for the world, and would gladly have followed the abbess's advice, if I had not felt an insurmountable aversion to some of their ceremonies. However, I did not like to tell the abbess that I was determined to remain in the religion in which I had been educated, as I was well convinced that I should be ill-treated and had no means of redress: no friend to apply to! My father I knew would be inexorable. I told the abbess that I would do every thing that my father and she thought the best for me; but that I should

SUICIDE THROUGH OPPRESSION.

wish to make a longer probation than was generally the case, in order that I might understand fully the duties incumbent upon *my sacred* calling. 'My daughter,' answered the abbess, 'you are now twelve years of age : you are tall, and have received a much better education than is commonly given to young people of your age : twelve or eighteen months are generally the time that we allow to young girls ; but, desirous of indulging you, I shall give you two years and a half. You will have time to examine the benefits attendant upon this holy institution ; you will be nearly fifteen, and I trust that your good sense will point out to you the propriety of conforming to the will of heaven, who wishes to reclaim you from error.' I confess that, during the first year of my *noviciate*, I thought the life of a nun melancholy but not disagreeable ; but I soon discovered that the abbess was a cruel unrelenting woman ; all the nuns hated her, yet they were so much afraid of her, that they dreaded to express their sentiments to each other. Among them was a lovely young female about eighteen years of age ; she had taken the veil about a year before I arrived at the convent. Her name was *Sister Madeleine* : she was of a most amiable disposition, yet it was easy to discern that grief preyed upon her soul. As I was extremely grave, she took a particular fancy to me : 'My dear Eliza,' she said one day when we were alone, 'you do not much like the idea of quitting the world for ever ?' I ingenuously confessed that I did not, and that I should have preferred a gay life to the secluded and monotonous existence of a cloister. 'Alas ! dearest Eliza,' replied she, 'you are perfectly right ; unless you are compelled to take the veil, do not comply with the wishes of the abbess ; it is a dreadful life, particularly for one who has tasted the pleasures of this life. *Sister Madeleine* shed some tears as she spoke. 'You are unhappy,' said I ; 'will you not impart to your friend the cause of your unhappiness ?' 'You are the only friend I have in this world,' she replied, 'and I shall immediately prove to you that I cannot

SUICIDE THROUGH OPPRESSION.

be happy in this dismal place, by informing you that I once loved. Alas ! I love still, an amiable young officer, who was distantly related to me ; he returned my passion with equal ardour ; my cruel step-mother had me carried to this place by night, and compelled me to take this hated veil ; my adored *Montjore* died of grief at having lost me for ever, and here I drag a lingering existence, fervently imploring Heaven to accelerate the moment of my dissolution. I have felt less unhappy since you are here ; the wish of alleviating the grief, which I see imprinted upon your countenance, has made me forget part of mine."

" I was affected at *Sister Madeleine's* short but pathetic adventure, and it increased my dislike for a convent. Alas ! the time drew near, and I saw no method of escaping, as the abbess shewed me a letter from my father, in which he threatened me with his malediction if I refused to comply with his will. I imparted the dreadful tidings to my dear *Madeleine*. ' Poor wretched *Eliza*, ' she said, ' you will be as miserable as I am ; well, we must submit to our fate, perhaps it will not be for a long time ; death will come and release us from our vows.' The day arrived, and I was compelled to bid adieu to the pleasures of this world. When I pronounced the detested vows, I formed the resolution of breaking them if I ever found an opportunity, as I was well convinced that an oath taken by compulsion could not be binding. As soon as I had taken the veil, the abbess treated me with the utmost kindness ; she knew that I could not escape, and, proud of having fulfilled my father's cruel intentions, she thought she would conciliate my affections by an apparently kind treatment ; she was deceived, I detested her, and all the nuns, except my dear *Madeleine*, who has since proved the sincerity of her friendship for me, and the excellence of her heart. At the festival of *St. Philip*, we all went in procession to the church of . . . to hear the bishop preach. In leaving the church I observed a young officer, who looked at me with the greatest attention ; he

91 followed

SUICIDE THROUGH OPPRESSION.

followed the procession, and kept as close by me as propriety would permit; his eyes were always fixed upon me. Alas! I thought I could see love and respect depicted in them, and I felt that I should love him much better than my solitude. When we were alone, I spoke of him to my beloved *Madeleine*; she told me, that she had observed him, and that she was convinced he would endeavour to impart his sentiments to me.— ‘Would to Heaven!’ continued she, ‘that his sentiments were honourable, and that you might escape from this dismal abode! but take care of yourself, dearest *Eliza*, you are lost if that old dragon, the abbess, should know of your correspondence. You speak of it, said I, as if it were very sure that he loves me, and that he is to write to me!’ ‘Depend upon it, you will hear from him;’ replied *Madeleine*. Alas! she was right; a distant relation of *Sister Madeleine’s* visited her, and, as soon as she had the opportunity, told her that *Charles de R . . .* an intimate friend of her husband’s, was violently in love with a nun belonging to that convent; that he had followed her during the whole time the procession lasted, and had at last prevailed upon his friend to request his wife would be good enough to go to the convent, and endeavour to find out who this lovely English nun was; for, by her walk and elegant figure, he was sure that she was an English lady. *Madeleine*, without my knowing it, told her that I returned his passion, for that I had done nothing but speak of him since I saw him; she added, that I had been compelled to take the veil, and that I should be delighted to find an opportunity of quitting the convent for ever. Accordingly, two days after, *Madeleine* came to my cell, and delivered me a letter that her friend had given her. It was from my dear *Charles de R . . .*; he described his passion in the most ardent and honourable manner, and vowed by all he held sacred to make me his wife. He begged that I would forgive him for thus abruptly declaring his passion, and desiring me to fly from the convent; but that, this would be perhaps the last opportunity

tunity he could find to write to me. He appointed a day, and said, that if I would walk in the garden of the convent as late in the evening as I could, he would be on the other side with a postchaise and a few friends; and, with the help of a silken ladder, I might escape, and make him the happiest of men. Love pleaded his cause, and I consented. My beloved friend promised to assist me; I wanted her to escape also; 'No, my dear *Eliza*,' she said, 'the world has now no more charms for me; *Montjore* is dead—how can I be happy? but *you* will be happy.' Alas! I was doomed to be wretched, instead of being blessed. Whether the abbess suspected something from the unusual agitation which appeared on my countenance, I know not, but she visited my cell while I slept, and found the dear letter of my adored *Charles*, which unfortunately I had not destroyed. She convened all the oldest sisters of the convent, and having imparted to them the horrid crime of corresponding with a man, and meditating to escape, she ordered me to be confined in this dungeon until death put an end to my penitence. Four of her servants came to my cell.—I was just awake, and did not know that the abbess had taken my letter; they bound my arms, and, loading me with reproaches, dragged me in this horrid place. The abbess came to reprimand me in the severest terms, and to assure me, that I should never see the sun again. I wept, I fell at her knees, but all in vain. Since that horrid day, I have had nothing but bread and water. *Sister Madeleine* comes as often as she can to weep with me. She has furnished me with pens and paper, and I determined to write my lamentable adventure, that, if it should ever be seen by my father, he may shed a tear to the memory of a daughter whom he has driven to desperation. My God! forgive me! I cannot live longer in this horrible dungeon, torn from all the world, from *thee*, beloved *Charles*! alas! *thou* didst wish to save me.—Accept my last thanks,—Adieu for ever!"

SUICIDE THROUGH DISTRESS.

The manuscript finished with the following lines written by *Madeleine* in French ; “ Poor unfortunate *Eliza* ! God have mercy on her soul. She could bear her sufferings no longer ! This morning when I entered her cell, she was kneeling before a crucifix, and with a steady hand, she was drawing a sharp knife through her throat. I flew to her, but, alas ! it was too late,—I was covered with her blood. She looked at me, and, lifting her hands to Heaven, as if to implore forgiveness, she expired in my arms ! Almighty Creator ! forgive her ! may her sin be upon the cruel wretch who drove her to that dreadful SUICIDE !

HENRI DE FRANCEUR.

A French Tale.

HENRI DE FRANCEUR was born at *Dijon*, in *Burgundy*, in 1735. His father was a respectable tradesman, and, though his honesty and industry were remarkable, he had experienced so many severe losses, that it was with difficulty he could maintain his family, which consisted of seven children. His wife, the beloved partner of his sorrows, had sunk under the accumulated pressure of grief and penury, and *Mr. de Franceur* exerted himself to support his dear children in as comfortable a state as he could, devoting every moment, in which he was at leisure, to the improvement of their minds. Though he was an excellent father, and treated all his children with great kindness, he could not help feeling more partiality for *Henri* ; his disposition was so amiable—he was so gentle, so obedient, and so desirous of improving, that it was impossible not to love him more than his brothers. When he had attained his twelfth year, his father, who lamented his inability to give him as brilliant an education