
BASIL and CLARA,

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Italian N O V E L.

A Rich Citizen of *Rome*, brought up in the Errors of a superstitious Piety, was Father of six Sons, to whom he was frequently repeating, that there was no Act of Devotion more agreeable to the divine Being, than that of going some holy Pilgrimage. The youngest of his Sons, named *Basil*, of about eighteen or twenty Years of Age, affected with the frequent Exhortations of his Father, entreated Permission to make the Voyage of *St. Jaques de Compostella*.

His

His Father commended the Design which Heaven had inspired him with; and requested him to hasten the Execution of it. *Basil*, transported with Joy that his Father was so well pleased with his Intentions, took leave of his Friends, and tore himself from the Arms of his Mother, who could not part from him without a Flood of Tears. She forced him to accept of a Purse, which she had concealed from her Husband; for his Intention was that *Basil*, during the Whole of this long Pilgrimage, should rely entirely upon Providence. We shall presently see the Benefit he reaped from this pious Voyage.

Though very little qualified to support the Fatigue of Walking, he was however determined to go on Foot. But when he arrived at *St. Sebastian*, he was seized by a violent Fever, which obliged him to
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keep his Bed for the space of a Month. I know not whether this Malady abated his Zeal, but it put an End to all Thoughts of proceeding on his Pilgrimage.

As soon as he had entirely recovered his Strength, he dedicated his Time wholly to Pleasure; and took particular Care not to suffer his Passions to lie idle. He was sensible that the Churches were the best Places to have recourse to, to seek for an Object worthy of his Tenderness. He was not long before he found one which captivated his Soul.

Donna Clara, Daughter of a celebrated Lawyer, was the young Lady he was enamoured with; but his Timorofuness made him delay for a whole Month, to make those Declarations to which his Impatience prompted him.

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He was every Day at the Temple, close by her Side ; he permitted his Eyes to speak to her ; but the Ladies generally pretend to be ignorant of that Language. At length however, he determined to express his Sentiments in Words. Donna *Clara* was at Chapel : He approached her as usual, and placed himself by her. Numerous involuntary Sighs escaped him, which served as a Prelude to the affectionate Declaration he was about to make.

This young Beauty, happening to turn her Head, to see who it was that was making such Lamentation, the amorous *Basil* said to her, Perhaps, Madam, you will not pardon the Liberty I am about to be guilty of, but it is your Charms only that are to be blamed for it, which will not any longer permit me to conceal the Passion which you have given Birth to ?

Indeed,

Indeed, Sir, replied she, this is a Declaration which I cannot suffer myself to attend to ; and I am astonished, as I have not the Honour to be acquainted with you, that you should presume----Hold, Madam, resumed *Basil*, interrupting her ; say no more about it : Load me, I beseech you, with the Reproaches that my Presumption deserves ; but, believe me, the Declaration which I have dared to profess, is regulated by the strictest Honour. But, Sir, replied she, how often have you made this Declaration ? For I doubt not, but a Gentleman of your Gentility and Address, has already made several Conquests ?

I know not, Madam, replied he, whether the Lady to whom I should offer my Affections, would accept them : But I can assure you, that they have hitherto been preserved in the utmost Indifference. And,
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may I then, resumed she, rely upon your Word? You may indeed, Madam, said he; for it is you alone that have converted my Heart from the greatest Insensibility, to the most passionate Lover; and, I flatter myself, that you will not disdain to accept of my Addresses.

He could say no more; an Acquaintance of *Clara's* came in, and wanted to speak to her; which put an End to this first Conversation, from which *Basil* promised himself the greatest Success; for, besides his Declaration not having been rejected, he thought he perceived in her Eyes that he was not indifferent to her; he therefore hoped that he should the next Day enjoy again the Pleasure of her Company; nor was he disappointed. In the same Chapel, he had another Conversation with his new Mistress.

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This second Interview was still more favourable than the first. Some broken Sighs, which escaped the fair *Clara*, discovered the Secrets of her Heart, and an open Confession of her Flame immediately succeeded those mute Declarations.

The amorous *Basil*, emboldened with his first Successes, had the Courage to ask of the fair *Spaniard* a nocturnal Visit. But, however inclinable she might be to comply with his Request; she thought it absolutely impossible to escape the Vigilance of her Parents. She however promised her Lover that he should have the Pleasure of her Company at an appointed Hour, and named the Place of Rendezvous.

It need not be asked, whether *Basil* was exact in going to the Place appointed; or whether, he

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was pleased with the tender Favour he received of his young Mistress. Two Months elapsed, during which Time he continued his Visits and Endeavours. Convinced of his *Clara's* Consent, he determined to solicit his Parents; he made Application to them by Letter, to which he received an Answer; but how great was his Chagrin on reading it?

Basil's Father, so far from hearkening to his Pretensions, threatened him with the severest Punishments, if he did not immediately return to *Italy*. His Passion would perhaps have detained him in *Spain*, if he could have obtained the Succours of Cash, which he was now in great want of; but his Friends, desirous of seeing him again in *Italy*, refused to send him any. He was therefore obliged to be precipitate in his Departure.

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With what Anguish did he take leave of the amiable *Clara*? What Tears did he not shed on that sorrowful Occasion? After having sworn to her an inviolable Fidelity, he assured her that his Passion should hasten his Return. Assure yourself, said he, that you will presently see me here again; for I am convinced that my Parents will not refuse the Petition I have to prefer to them. It is impossible that their Tenderneſs should hold out against the repeated Attacks of my most earnest Prayers. I will swear to them that my Happiness depends wholly upon you. Can they then be so cruel, as to be deaf to my Petitions, when my Felicity is at Stake? Alas! I fear it much, replied *Clara* sighing; I am afraid that neither your Prayers, Sighs, or Tears can obtain a Victory over their Resolutions. And, oh! ye just Gods! continued she, what will become of me, if I must re-

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nounce the pleasing Hopes with which I have flattered myself? For (why should I be ashamed of the Confession) such is the Excess of my tender Flame, that should you engage that Faith to another, which you have sworn to me, I could not possibly survive it. Rather let the God's shower on me the greatest of Misfortunes, cried he; let me be the most unfortunate of Men, if any Thing can make me deviate from the Vows I have made you. It is on the Foundation of those Hopes, resumed she, that I consent to your Departure; but, be assured, if you should be faithless, and forget your Promises, I would follow you, and exact a Performance of them.

The Protestations he made of an eternal Fidelity, dissipated her Fears. It was not without a Flood of Tears that she beheld her Lover depart, who flattered himself that he should quickly be permitted to hasten to
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where his Passion called him ; but he was ignorant that his Parents, had, in his Absence, provided a Wife for him.

They left no Means untried to shake his Constancy. But vain were all their Efforts : The faithful *Basil* swore, that Death alone should make him renounce the Love which he had sworn to *Clara*.

The frequent Letters which he received from her, were full of the Assurances of the most exalted Tenderness ; how then could he sacrifice an Object so worthy of his Love, to the interested Views of his Parents ?

But he did not suspect the Stratagems they were about to employ to render her odious to him. The Letters which she wrote to him were intercepted. *Basil* however, did not cease to write to her ; but

two Months passed without receiving any Answer to his Letters : At length he received one, which loaded him with the greatest of Misfortunes. The Writer of it, who was employed by his Parents, counterfeited *Clara's* Writing so extremely exact, that *Basil* did not doubt but it was written with her Hand : It was as follows.

Persist no longer, Sir, to act against the Will of your Parents. Submit to their superior Judgment ; they better know what will tend most to your Advantage. Blinded by our Passion, we have too long disregarded what our Duty exacted from us to those who had given us Being. For my own Part, I have atoned for my Fault by submitting to their Commands. I have engaged my Faith to an Husband whom they have nominated, who has shewn himself worthy of my whole Affections. If my Esteem is dear to you, Sir, do not hesitate to follow my Example : No longer

langer give your Parents cause to complain of your obstinate Resistance. In proportion as you regard the Advice I give, I shall judge whether you have still an Esteem for one who is truly zealous for your Interest. Write me no Answer, because I have given my Word to my Husband that he should have the Perusal of every Letter I should receive, and perhaps you might mention your Passion in that which you would write to me; which might probably create an Indifference in the Heart of a Person whom I esteem more than Life.

Such was the fatal Letter that was remitted to the unfortunate Basil: The Despair into which it plunged him was extream, and continued several Months, during which Time his Parents strove in vain to console him. He obstinately refused to accept of the Wife which they had procured for him. The heavy Melancholy to which he was reduced, made him incline to Retirement.

ment. He wanted to divorce himself entirely from the World. In vain did his Friends and Relations oppose this pious Design ; he resolved to take holy Orders, and he did so.

The Fervour with which he commenced his Noviciate did not in the least abate, till he had engaged himself to Religion, by the usual solemn Vows. But a long Repentance immediately succeeded this precipitate Engagement. His Parents had sent to the fair *Spaniard* a counterfeit Letter, informing her, that her Lover had married a rich Heiress.

This false News, which she believed to be true, threw her into such an Excess of Sorrow, that she was seized with a dangerous Illness, which confined her above a Year to her Bed. She had but just began to recover, when she received a Letter, which acquainted her that
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she had been the Dupe of her Credulity.

A young *Spanish* Gentleman, a Friend to *Basil*, was come to *Rome*, and the next Day after his Arrival, he went to *Basil's* Parents to pay him a Visit. He was there informed that *Basil* had renounced the World about a Year, and named the Convent to which he was retired. Don *Gusman* (for that was the Name of this Friend) hastened there to see him.

He conversed with *Basil*, who, notwithstanding his Retreat, continued still to nourish the dear Remembrance of his antient Mistress. He asked Don *Gusman* if he could inform him of any News concerning her; particularly desired to know if her Husband was deserving of her Tendernefs; and begged some Account of him.

Gusman told him that he must certainly be mistaken ; that the beautiful *Clara* continued faithful.-- How ! interrupted *Basil*, would you make me believe such a Falſity ? A Letter which I have received from her, has convinced me of her Inconſtancy, and, in that very Letter, ſhe exhorted me to imitate her in her Perfidy.

My dear Friend, I compaſſionate your Caſe, replied the young *Spaniard* ; but you are leſs to be pitied than the unfortunate *Clara* ; perhaps you know not, that ſhe, like you, has alſo been the Dupe of her Parents Artifice. They conveyed to her a Letter, which ſhe imagined to be written by you, acquainting her that you had been forced to accept of a Wife that your Parents had provided for you. This alarming News threw her into a violent
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Fit of Illness, from which I believe she is hardly yet recovered.

Heavens! cried the unfortunate *Basil*, what is this you acquaint me with? Has the beautiful *Clara* then preserved the Fidelity which she has sworn to me; and must I no longer think her inconstant? But she perhaps thinks me so? I will therefore justify myself.

His Friend had no sooner left him, but he wrote a Letter to his Mistress to undeceive her, and to acquaint her with all the Tricks and Arts their Parents had put in Practice to render them both unhappy. He also informed her of the Condition of Life he was engaged in.

The Perusal of this Letter calmed (in some Measure) the Disquietudes of the fair *Spaniard*, and did not

a little contribute to hasten her Cure.

Her Strength was no sooner recovered, than without considering the Perils of a long and dangerous Voyage, she determined to tear herself from the Arms of her Parents, to go to *Rome*. She thought it necessary to disguise her Sex, and therefore assumed the Habit of a Cavalier. She concerted her Measures with so much Art, for the Execution of her Project, that her Parents had not the least Suspicion of the Flight she was preparing for. Being escaped from the paternal House, she went to *Cadiz*; embarked there and arrived at *Rome*, after having courageously resisted the Fatigues of a tiresome Voyage.

The Day of her Arrival, she enquired for the Convent wherein her dear *Basil* was confined: she was conducted thither, and beheld him
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in a Friar's Habit. Think not that I shall attempt to express the Transports of our two Lovers ; they were ready to smother each other with their Caresses : Sighs and Tears deprived them of the Power of Speech ; each of them was intoxicated with the Pleasure of seeing the other. But this sweet Delight was mingled with bitter Sorrow, when they began to reflect on the invincible Obstacles which opposed their Happiness.

It is all over with us, said *Clara* sighing, our barbarous Parents, by their cruel Artifices have succeeded in their Endeavours to deprive us of all Hopes of Felicity. It is then unnecessary that we should swear to each other an inviolable Constancy ? I must renounce for ever that dear Title of Wife, which has been the Object of all my Wishes. And why, resumed *Basil*, must we renounce the Hopes of the Union on which
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the Happiness of my Life depends? I know not, added he, what will be the Effect of the Protestations I have made; but my Passion will render me ingenious to contrive the most proper Methods to extricate myself from these Chains of Confinement with which I am laden.

Basil had perhaps better have considered of a speedy Escape, than have amused himself with considering what Measures he should have taken to obtain the Absolution of his Vows. I know not what Scruples delayed him, but the Innocence of the unfortunate *Clara* was exposed to a thousand Dangers.

The Desire of having it in her Power to enjoy continually the Presence of her dearest *Basil*, caused her to conceive a Design, of which she would have been very cautious in the Execution, if she could but have foreseen the Dangers that attended

tended it. She communicated her Project to *Basil*, who could not fail of approving it. It was, that she was to solicit a Place in the Convent to which her Lover belonged: It was in the Quality of a young Lay-Brother that she desired to be admitted. She spake to the Superiors of the House; they enquired of her Birth, and her Country; they demanded her Motive for entering into a religious State. She told them she was a Native of *Spain*; that, in her Infancy, Death had deprived her of all her Friends; that, being left entirely to her own Conduct, her unbridled Youth had led her frequently astray, which drew on her the most fatal Consequences. In fine, she represented herself as an illustrious Unfortunate, who had too great Reason to complain of the Perfidy of the World ever to think of any Thing but an eternal Divorce from it.

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These Words of *Clara* were attended with a Tone so affecting and persuasive, that she easily obtained the Favour she solicited.

Behold her then received in the Quality of a Novice; the Name of *Theodore* was given her, and she was clad in a Capuchin. She began with hypocritical Fervour the Exercises of her Noviciate, during which Time she was employed in the meanest Drudgery. But the Violence of her Love rendered these Trials of her Pride supportable.

She was ordered to be obedient to the Commands of the Cook, who set her about the most abject Labour; and so far was she from complaining, that she earnestly acquitted herself in all the hard Tasks which her Master set her about: But the Night repaired what the Delicacy
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of her Complexion had suffered in the Fatigues of the Day.

A Cell was allotted her, adjoining to that of her dear *Basil*; in whose Arms she forgot the Troubles of her new Condition. She was continually expressing in the most exulting Terms, how happy she was in her new way of Life, which was so made up of Felicity, that she had not hardly another Wish to form.

Thus rolled away the Time of her Noviciate, without having her Disguise suspected by any one of the Friars; so ingenious was she in counterfeit. But the Moment was not far off, when, by fatal Experience, she was to be convinced, that amongst a Company of Friars was a very improper Place for Innocence to seek an Asylum.

Brother

Brother *Theodore* (it must be remembered that I shall call this young Lady by no other Name hereafter) after the Time was elapsed which is allotted for the Probation of a Noviciate, was with one Voice unanimously admitted to the Profession. The Superiors granted her an Employ in the Infirmary of the Hospital. Her Care and Assiduity in this Employment was the principal Cause of her Misfortunes. The general Father being taken ill, ordered that Brother *Theodore* should attend him. Being continually with her, he made some Discoveries which he was determined to take the Advantage of. I know not by what Means he began to suspect her Disguise, but however he did suspect it, and was determined to satisfy his Doubts.

The Illness with which this reverend Father was seized, had not
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been very violent ; his Strength was therefore presently recovered ; but he still continued to exact the Attendance of the young *Theodore*. He even ordered a Bed to be prepared for her in his Anti-Chamber. It may easily be guessed what were the Views of this cunning Friar, who was extremely impatient to be further satisfied concerning his Attendant. It proved a fatal Discovery to the unfortunate *Theodore* ! She had reposed herself with Tranquillity in the Arms of Sleep, when the Father General, who had something in Hand of too great Importance to suffer him to think of the Sweet's of Repose, approached her Bed-side with a dark Lanthorn in his Hand.

Heavens ! what seducing Temptations were produced to his View ? His sensual Desires, like Tinder, became immediately enflamed. Hurl'd on by his brutal Passion, he did not scruple to exercise Violence to satisfy it.

it. In vain did the unfortunate *Theodore* put forth her Cries! her Sighs, Tears, and utmost Efforts could not preserve herself from the Brutality of this holy Villain.

The Pleasures which he received were so far from lessening his brutal Rage, that they served but to increase its Ardor.

Theodore was threatened with being shamefully turned out of the Convent, if she did not confess the Motives of her Disguise; she therefore declared the whole Story.

The Father General could not without Jealousy be informed of his having a Rival tenderly beloved; he therefore conceived a Scheme of sending him to another Convent; but a Doubt arose, whether *Theodore* would consent to continue there if *Basil* was sent to another Monastery. The Evil was irreparable; therefore

Theodore

Theodore determined it should remain a Secret to her *Basil*; but this was on Condition that the Father General would engage to keep what he had learned from her an entire Secret. These were the Articles agreed upon, which were by both Parties exactly performed.

Basil thought himself very happy; and how indeed could he suspect that his young Mistress was under the cruel Necessity of bestowing some of her Favours upon an odious Rival. But she is not yet arrived to the Summit of her Misfortunes.

The Father Inquisitor, and the Prior of the Convent, entertained the same Suspicions which the Father General had done, concerning which they were determined to be satisfied.

What an Addition to the Misfortunes of the miserable *Clara*! Be-
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held her then the Object of the Lust of three villainous Friars, with whose infamous Desires she was by turns obliged to comply.

This criminal Commerce, which lasted above a Year, was at last interrupted by an Accident which was in the Course of Nature. Our young Brother *Theodore* was about to become a Mother; but it was not an easy Matter to guess who was the Father of the Child with which she was pregnant. *Basil* however had the Honour of being appointed the Father; notwithstanding the Father General, the Inquisitor, and the Prior, had each of them a Right to contest that Title. But they generously assigned to the credulous *Basil* the whole Glory attending it.

Let us now return to our feigned Brother *Theodore*, who for some Months had been reported to be ill of a Dropsy; but she was pretty
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well satisfied of obtaining a speedy Cure.

It was now become necessary for her to keep her Bed for some Time; and you may depend on it all possible Care was taken of a Person so loved by her Superiors, whose Tenderness she had so dearly purchased by her Favours. But we are now pretty near arrived at the most extraordinary Part of her Adventures.

The beautiful *Clara* was so far advanced in her Pregnancy that she had but six Weeks to reckon. This was a Subject of Inquietude for her and the unfortunate *Basil*. He entreated Permission to be always present with the young Brother *Theodore*. This Favour was granted him; but he was a Stranger to the private Reasons of the Superiors for complying with his Request; and he was so happy as to be always ignorant of them.

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But an Adventure was about to arrive, which was to secure his Happiness, and that of his young Mistress.

A Dominican Friar, named *Deltra*, of *St. Sebastian*, Uncle to the fair *Clara*, came to *Rome* to solicit a Favour from his General. A Chamber was given him adjoining to the Infirmary, wherein was the pretended *Theodore*. Being informed he was a *Spaniard*, he thought it was his Duty to pay her a Visit, hearing she was extremely ill.

Nobody but *Basil* was in the Infirmary, attached to the Bed-side of his young Mistress, who, will speedily assume her former Name; for this *Spanish* Friar, who was come to visit her, had hardly cast his Eyes upon her, but transported with Joy, he ran and threw his Arms round her Neck.

Ah!

Ah! my dear Niece, cried he, how great is my Surprize! may I rely upon the Declaration of my Eyes? What, my unfortunate *Clara*! is it you that I behold again? Into what an Abyfs of Despair have you plunged your Parents by your Flight? Tell me then the Reason of your Disguise? I cannot recover from my Astonishment! Are these the Illusions of a Dream that deceive me, or, is it real? To find you too in a Convent of our Order! Unravel to me all these Mysteries?

The Trouble with which this Friar was agitated, would not suffer any Connection in his Discourse. He waited for an Answer from his Niece! but the Confusion she was in, deprived her of the Power of uttering a single Word. Her Face was presently covered with Tears, and she could answer but with Sighs. Her Uncle, affected with

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her Behaviour, could not refrain from Tears ; but how great was his Emotions encreased when the unfortunate *Basil*, weeping, threw himself at his Feet !

You behold, said he, my reverend Father, two unfortunate Victims of Love ! It was the Artifices of our cruel Parents that has given Birth to all the Misfortunes your Niece and I have laboured under. He then recited his own Adventures, and those of the fair *Spaniard*. He thought it would have been imprudent to conceal any Thing from *Clara's* Uncle, because he did not doubt but he would endeavour to alleviate their Misfortunes.

Well, replied *Deltra*, I will do my utmost to make ye happy. This very Day I will apply to the Father General, and the Father Inquisitor, in your Behalf. Dry up your Tears, Cousin, continued he, and be assured that

that a Fortnight shall not pass, before you are the Husband of your Lover.

The miserable Condition I behold you in, hinders me from venting on you the Reproaches you deserve; therefore we will let that Subject drop, and think of nothing but to erase the Blots which you have made upon your Honour.

Oh! my dear Uncle, cried she, taking hold of one of his Hands, which she had bedewed with her Tears; I believe it is Heaven itself that has conducted you hither, to put an End to my Misfortunes. It is to you alone that I shall owe the Happiness of my Life. Every Moment of it therefore shall be employed in testifying the Sense of my Acknowledgment. *Basil* too, on his Part, returned such Thanks as were the Overflowings of a grateful Heart.

The *Spanish* Friar said, he would interceed with the Father General, and the Father Inquisitor; he might have added the Father Prior, if he had been acquainted with the private Reasons why these three Friars ought to have consented to the Felicity of his amiable Niece. But she took Care to keep that Part of her Adventures a profound Secret: She also continued to let *Basil* remain ignorant of it, because it might perhaps have abated his Ardor, if he had known that any other Person besides himself had received Favours from the beautiful *Spaniard*.

The Motion which her Uncle made, had the desired Effect: His Niece was that Day removed privately to the House of a Tradesman, where she was brought to Bed, and *Basil* was declared the Father of the Child.

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He wanted next to obtain the Absolution of his Vows. The counterfeit Letters that I have already mentioned were produced, which alone were sufficient to display the treacherous Dealings of their Parents. At length *Basil* obtained Absolution; was permitted to strip off his Capuchin; and that very Week he was married to the fair *Clara*. They then retired to St. *Sebastian*, where *Clara's* Friends resided, obtained their Pardon, and their Blessing, and spent the Remainder of their Days in a State of uninterrupted Happiness.