ELIZABETH BONHOTE

# BUNGAY CASTLE: A NOVEL. V. 1

**Elizabeth Bonhote**

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*http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=24179252*
*Bungay Castle: A Novel. v. 1/2:*
*ISBN http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/37533*

# Содержание

# Bungay Castle: A Novel. v. 1/2

## BUNGAY CASTLE: A NOVEL. VOL. I

**TO THE MOST NOBLE CHARLES DUKE OF NORFOLK, WHOSE URBANITY AND PHILANTHROPY MUST EVER REFLECT ADDITIONAL HONOURS ON THE NAME OF HOWARD; BY WHOSE NOBLE FAMILY BUNGAY CASTLE WAS POSSESSED FOR MANY CENTURIES; THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED, BY HIS GRACE'S MOST OBEDIENT, AND VERY HUMBLE SERVANT, ELIZ. BONHOTE**

**Bungay, 1797**

# INTRODUCTION

Castle-Building appears to have been the passion of all ages; while some have been raising their fabrics on the most solid and lasting foundations, others have been forming them in the air, where the structure has been erected with infinitely less trouble, as their own invention led them to wish, and very pleasant, no doubt, was the delusion of the moment.

It is now the prevailing taste to read wonderful tales of wonderful castles; to recall them from the [* Missing words here] ages, and represent them as the novelist finds most suitable to the circumstances of his tale. In times like these, every book that serves to amuse the mind, and withdraw the attention from scenes of real distress, without inflaming the passions, or corrupting the heart, must surely be as acceptable to the reader as it may have been found pleasant to the writer, and should exempt the latter from the severity of criticism. Under the influence of this opinion, the Author of the following sheets has been tempted to send them into the world. She might, indeed, to evade the danger of having her work condemned, pretend to have found it in some recess of her favourite ruins, or to have discovered it artfully concealed in the bottom of an old chest, in so defaced and mutilated a condition, as to have rendered it a very difficult and laborious task to collect the fragments and modernize the language: but the writer of these pages has not been so fortunate;

and, had she attempted to assert so marvellous a circumstance, she could not have expected any miss of fifteen would have been credulous enough to believe her.

The thought of publishing a novel, under the title given to these volumes, has long been her intention, – a thought which originated from her living within the distance of twenty yards from those venerable ruins, which still attract the attention of the stranger and the curious. Often in early youth had she climbed their loftiest summits, and listened with pleased and captivated attention to the unaccountable tales related by the old and superstitious, and considered as real by herself and her inexperienced companions. – In one place, it was said the ghost of an ancient warrior, clad in armour, took his nightly round to reconnoitre scenes endeared by many a tender claim. In another, a lovely female form had been seen to glide along, and was supposed to disappear on the very spot where it was imagined her lover had fallen a victim to the contentions of the times.

"Her face was like an April sky
Dimm'd by a scatt'ring cloud;
Her clay-cold lily hand, knee-high,
Held up her sable shroud."

All these circumstances added strength to a romantic turn of mind, which acquired additional force from a love of reading the old romances, and this propensity for the marvellous was for some time indulged in the midst of scenes which afforded ample

scope for the creative excursions of fancy. After having left her paternal dwelling many years, she is again replaced in it by some of those changes which so frequently occur in the progress of human life; and has purchased the little spot of ground on which stands the principal part of all that now remains of Bungay Castle, and which, though a mere heap of unconnected ruins, are still so venerable as to excite, in the feeling and thoughtful mind, a sympathetic regret at the instability of human grandeur and the weakness of human strength.

Among these ruins, once the property, and, in all probability, the temporary residence, of the noble house of Norfolk, cottages are now built, and inhabited by many poor families, and those very walls, which perhaps sheltered royalty, are now the supporters of miserable hovels. Such are the awful effects of time, and the unaccountable revolutions it produces!

But, were it in the Author's power as much as it is her inclination, she would adorn their venerable remains with all the flowers of spring, and the tempting treasures of autumn should surround them. The jessamine and honey-suckle should clasp them in their embraces, and the tendrils of the vine and the fig-tree should encircle and decorate them with their luscious sweets. She would, on the loftiest corner of their remains, build herself a little hut, in which she could sit and contemplate the variegated scenes around. She would reverse the order of things, and render them as lovely and beautiful in age, as they were grand and magnificent before time had robbed them of those envied

and valuable properties which it cannot restore.

Being again in the habit of spending many leisure hours in this favourite spot, endeared to her for bringing to remembrance the enlivening scenes of youth, and, having opportunities to pursue her sedentary amusements, she determined to accomplish her design, seeing no reason why Bungay Castle should not be as good a foundation for the structure of a novel as any other edifice within or without the kingdom. But, as so many ages are elapsed since this Castle was reared, and since time and death have swept away with ruthless hand almost every vestige of what it once was, she has to lament, and so perhaps may her readers, that she was furnished for this employment with no other materials than the scanty portion her own imagination afforded. She has borrowed some real names, and she hopes the characters she has introduced will be found neither disgusting nor unnatural. But, as Solomon so many centuries ago declared, there was nothing *new* under the sun, she cannot surely be condemned for not producing new characters, nor blamed if any contained in this work resemble those of the present day; and, though in the reigns of our first sovereigns, and many of their successors, the customs and manners of the people were somewhat different, she is convinced the world was in many instances just the same. The same virtues, vices, and passions, degraded or ennobled human nature; and, though delicacy, sensibility, and refinement might be less known, and not so frequently mentioned, they no doubt retained as proper and powerful an influence over the mind. Love

too, that invincible and all-subduing passion, implanted in the heart of man from the beginning of the world, was as generally known and acknowledged by the king and the peasant, the hero and the coward.

This painfully leads to an observation, which, while it is humiliating, has too much truth for its foundation to admit of dispute, that, though the same vices which disgrace the present times were practised in the earliest ages, more pains were then taken to conceal them from public observation, and the conduct, of which the modern fine gentleman or avowed debauchee will now proudly boast, would then have been considered as sufficient to stamp the character with indelible infamy. By our unfashionable progenitors modesty was distinguished and admired as the most becoming ornament of woman; adultery was punished, and seduction held in contempt; the artful betrayer of unsuspecting innocence was pointed at by the finger of derision, and the victim of baseness compelled to conceal her shame either in the shades of retirement or the seclusion of a nunnery. We may justly lament, if we are not permitted to condemn, that in this respect the present age is not quite so sensitive, and may shed the tear of regret at being so often forced to look down with pity, when we meet, at almost every corner of our streets, the unblushing front of degraded beauty, and our ears are shocked with the execrations of profligacy from lips that in early life had been taught to speak a language as pure as their own uncontaminated hearts.

The author of these pages has not attempted to enter on the politics of the past or present times. Had she ever cherished such a design, the sentiments of one of the first[1] and most interesting writers this age has produced, would instantly have determined her to decline her intention, but she had ever thought that so heterogeneous a mixture was not likely to please the taste of many readers, and that a novel was never intended as a vehicle for politics, any farther than it was necessary for the elucidation of the story. Firmly attached to her King, perfectly satisfied with our laws and constitution, and grateful to heaven for being permitted to live under so mild and just a government. In a country where freedom and plenty have hitherto taken their stations, and shed their most benign influence, she will ever remain contented to leave politics and the affairs of state to be settled by better, wiser, and more experienced heads.

Gentle reader, we will now enter upon a story, of whose origin you are informed. If any, who sit down to read it with minds tortured by mental or bodily diseases, should find a temporary relief from misery or languor, the Author will consider it as a luxuriant reward for her employment. If, on the contrary, they should be disappointed, or dissatisfied, she sincerely wishes they may meet a more agreeable entertainment from the next publication thrown in their way.

To the Reviewers she takes this opportunity of publicly making her acknowledgements for the liberality and candour

[1] Mr. Cumberland

they have invariably shewn to her former publications; and, though she has never had the satisfaction of being personally known to any one of them, she has for many years considered them as friends.

# CHAP. I

During the bloody period of the Barons' wars, when civil discord threw her fire-brands around, to lay waste and make desolate the fertile plains and fruitful fields of this long envied country; when the widow mourned the husband torn from her embraces, and the orphan wandered friendless and unprotected; when brother waged war against brother, and the parent raised his arm to destroy the son he had reared and cherished; when every castle was kept in a state of the most guarded defence, lest it should be wrested from its owner by the ambition and enmity of his neighbour: – then it was that *Bungay Castle* reared its proud towers and battlements aloft; while its massy walls stood in gloomy and majestic grandeur, as if they could bid defiance to every design formed against them by man, and to the more certain influence of all-conquering time; so perfectly stupendous and strong was this once-spacious edifice, it was not only an object of desire to the proud and aspiring barons, but, it has been said, even to contending kings.

The noble and loyal lord of this castle, being called upon to fill some important office in the service of the state, appointed Sir Philip de Morney to be governor during his absence, and never had he shewn the goodness of his heart and the excellence of his judgment more than in the delegation of his power and authority over so numerous a train of vassals and dependents to this his

bosom friend.

Sir Philip de Morney was a bold and hardy veteran: he was grown grey in the service of his king and country; brave in the field, just, merciful, and benevolent, in his dealings with all his fellow-creatures, – possessed of an abundant fortune, he accepted this important trust to oblige his friend, and promote the happiness of those to whom he knew he was attached; – fond of an active and useful life, he wished not to sink into indolence or obscurity, till the infirmities of age should render him incapable of taking his share in the busy scenes of that important period, in which, though the pernicious doctrine of equality did not influence the minds of the vulgar against their lawful sovereign, or the rights of the subject, the ambition of the nobility, and the feuds and distraction of the contending parties, produced scenes of misery equally distressing, but happily not so extensive in their effects.

Into Bungay Castle he removed with his whole family, and there for some years found that happiness he had vainly sought in more enlivening scenes; and there he tasted those serene and contented pleasures he had been unable to procure in the world; though formed to make a brilliant figure on its great stage, he had every endowment of the mind for the true enjoyment of domestic life, uniting with the most unshaken courage the gentlest philanthropy. He had married at the age of thirty-five a lady much younger than himself, by whom he had several children, and looked forward with the hope of being the parent

of a more numerous offspring, while, like the patriarchs of old, he lived respected and revered in the bosom of his family. Ah! little did he suspect the revolution ambition would one day make in his mind.

Lady de Morney was yet in the pride of life; her beauty unfaded, her spirits lively, and her mind in its full vigour; her person was lovely, her disposition amiable: sweetness, modesty, truth, and fortitude, were the inmates of her bosom, and gave additional graces to the ease and elegance of her manners; strictly exemplary in performing the important duties of wife and mother, no complaints were heard where she presided; no looks of discontent were seen on the countenance of her dependents; time was neither abused nor found a burden; her whole study and attention were employed to promote the happiness of her husband, and to superintend the education of her children; for the latter employment no one was more adequate than herself, – her own example serving more than precept to enforce the lessons of truth on the ductile mind of youth; her own gentleness made them happy, while her conduct convinced them of the value and dignity of virtue.

She considered youth and innocence as the most valuable of earthly treasures, and she was not more anxious to preserve the one in all its native purity, than to teach them how to enjoy the other with cheerfulness and gratitude: Having stored their minds with virtuous precepts, best calculated to chain the attention, and which she hoped would lay the most solid foundation for securing

their future happiness, she lived with her children in habits of the most soothing and perfect friendship, and very seldom was under the unpleasant necessity of assuming the stern authority of a dictatorial parent.

But, as no character on earth can be found without having some of the weakness and frailty of erring mortality annexed to it, the author does not mean to present Lady de Morney to their view as a being entirely faultless. She was vain of her high birth, being allied to nobility; and so partial to her eldest son, that she could scarcely suffer him to be out of her sight; yet her partiality originated from a circumstance so interesting and affecting to all who knew it, that, though it might by some be considered as a weakness, it was by none but herself condemned as a fault. When her son was in his infancy, she was seized with a fever of so malignant a nature, as deprived her for some weeks of her senses: during this distressing period of her delirium, and in the absence of her nurse, she one day snatched the infant from the arms of a young woman, his attendant, and, before any one was aware of her design, ran out of the house, and with almost incredible swiftness down a long gravel walk to the bottom of the garden, and threw him into a lake, by which it was bounded. By the fortunate and timely assistance of an old and faithful servant, who was luckily at work near the spot, and who had hastened to it on seeing his lady so unexpectedly make her appearance, the family were alarmed, and the child providentially, but with difficulty, saved.

This incident, of which she was unguardedly informed, made so forcible an impression on the mind of this susceptible and affectionate parent, as she could not shake off: it created an additional claim upon her heart for every tender indulgence, and gave to every juvenile action and good quality redoubled value. He had in a manner been raised from death, rescued from a watery grave, into which her own, a mother's, hand had hurled him; and yet he loved her, as her fond and plaintive partiality led her often to imagine, better than the rest of her children. She would sometimes embrace this darling son, and, with all the enthusiasm of maternal tenderness, tremble at the horrid remembrance of having so nearly deprived him of an existence that added so much to the happiness of her own. To all her children Lady de Morney was an indulgent parent; but for Edwin she felt that indescribable fondness which not only threw a veil over his failings, but robbed her of that fortitude and energy with which she acted on all other occasions. So far from attempting to deny any request he made, it was her study to prevent his wishes. She would at times apologize to the rest of her children for the extreme affection nature had implanted, and which she could not help cherishing for their brother, but which she regretted as a weakness she was unable to conquer. This conduct served to reconcile the young people to a partiality which originated from so singular and awful an incident, and, so far from shewing either envy or regret, it seemed to endear their mother's favourite to their youthful and guileless hearts. Another circumstance,

which equally helped to reconcile them, was the sweetness of Edwin's disposition, who as often availed himself of his mother's indulgence to gratify and make them happy, as he did to obtain any of her favours for himself.

In a situation from which thousands of her sex and age would have shrunk disgusted and affrighted, Lady de Morney was cheerful and contented. The rooms were Gothic and gloomy, but her husband and children enlivened every place they inhabited. She was at times surrounded by and exposed to dangers; but her beloved De Morney and his faithful people were ever near to protect and guard her. She was the wife of a noble soldier, and she had acquired a fortitude almost equal to his from the knowledge of his unfailing courage, which gained energy from danger, and redoubled ardour from difficulty.

The castle itself could boast few internal beauties, but her children, whom she saw playful as youthful fawns, and happy as health, innocence, and unbroken spirits, could make them, were treasures inexhaustible: they beheld the rough implements of war without terror or dismay, instructed by their father to consider them as the only ornaments fitted for a soldier. The young De Morneys were taught the use of arms as soon as they had learned to walk.

Seldom were the Gothic gates of the castle unbarred to admit the social friend or gay companion to the festive board; seldom did the voice of mirth and jollity echo through the lofty rooms and vaulted passages; but a sweet serenity supplied their place,

which, having lost during the absence of her husband, at an early period of her marriage, Lady de Morney now felt the full value of possessing; and, though secluded from the gaudy pleasure of a court, she felt herself a gainer by the exchange in the balance of happiness. – Lady de Morney had a sister, who was placed by the Lady Gundreda as superior in the nunnery of Bungay; with her she spent many of her leisure hours: between them the tenderest friendship strengthened the endearing ties in which they were united by nature.

The abbess was a pious, but yet she was a young and interesting woman, of a benevolent and placid disposition; and, though she had voluntarily secluded herself from the world, she was not so much disgusted with its pleasures as she felt herself wounded by the severity of its disappointments. – Early in life, death had deprived her of a lover who had engaged her most animated and ardent affection, and with whom she had indulged the fond hope of being united in the indissoluble bands of Hymen; but adverse fate had ordained it otherwise, and those virtues and good qualities which had made him inexpressibly dear to her, rendered his loss the more exquisitely painful. With him the world lost all its power to charm, and she resolutely determined to fly that world for ever, and never to permit another lover to displace the sainted Henry from her heart; she therefore unreluctantly withdrew from the varying and busy scenes of life, – not to avoid temptation, but to be able to indulge, in the gloomy shades of a nunnery, the memory of a man, to whose

worth and constancy she deemed no sacrifice too great. Time served to convince her of the wisdom of her choice; and, giving way to all the luxury of a pure but romantic imagination, she encouraged the consoling hope, that, if her regretted Henry were permitted to know what was acting in this lower world, his spirit would be gratified by the purity of her choice, and his heart convinced of the unabating strength of her affection. She often flattered herself that her Henry was deputed to watch her conduct, and would be the first to convey her to the bright regions of immortality; yet, though thus severely tried in the lessons of affliction, she troubled no one with a repetion of her sorrows; and, though she often wept in all the bitterness of anguish, her tears fell when no one observed them, and only to the ear of her sympathizing sister did she venture to mention a name so dear and so beloved.

Young Edwin de Morney, whom we have already mentioned, was at this period in his seventeenth year, and, notwithstanding the unbounded indulgence of his mother, he had made a rapid proficiency in every part of his education. Nature had been equally liberal of her favours to his mind and person: his temper was good, – his manners and conversation those of the gentleman and the scholar, and, with all the interesting gaiety and natural cheerfulness of youth, he united a benevolent and susceptible heart.

His eldest sister, Roseline, was only one year younger than himself; her form was small, but symmetry itself, every limb

so nicely turned, it would have been chosen by a statuary for the model of a Venus: her face was beautiful in the extreme; her eyes expressive and sparkling, and the smile which shewed itself was of that irresistible kind as caught the attention and won the heart; and it would have been difficult for a connoisseur in beauty to point out which feature it was that had the greatest claim to admiration, while the unfading and fascinating beauties of her polished mind, which was stored with all the graces the best education could bestow, or the most lively genius acquire, rendered her conversation as delightful as her manners were captivating. She played on the lute, and warbled her artless song in strains so sweet, as would have rivalled the daughters of Italy. Her heart, unwounded by the barbed thorn of affliction, and free from the entanglements of love, was like one of the first days of infant-spring, which, enlivened by the bright rays of an unclouded and all-cheering sun, serves not only to revive, but to embellish the whole face of inanimate nature, just bursting into life, and rendering all its sweetly modest beauties of redoubled value to those who had lingered through a dreary winter, in eager expectation of its approach. Lively as the birds which hovered round the turrets of the castle, she entered gaily into all the youthful sports of her brothers and sisters. To the little blooming Edeliza she was particularly attached; and, though she saw her as beautiful as herself, felt neither envy nor regret in the reflection. No modish complaints filled her with imaginary terrors, and, as she had known no sorrows, she thought it not only incumbent

on her to shew her gratitude to heaven and her parents, but to soften, by every benevolent attention in her power, the miseries and misfortunes of others.

In those days, the education of young women was completed at a more early period than in the present; and, if the manners were not altogether so highly finished, or the mind so profusely decorated, or rather fettered, with innumerable, and, to too many, useless accomplishments, the time was undoubtedly more rationally employed, and the fair sex less exposed to the allurements of flattery and the dangers of temptation: though more retired in their habits, and reserved in their manners, they were neither less susceptible of the tender passions, nor less fervent or sincere in their attachments.

Roseline had formed an early friendship with a young lady educated in the Bungay nunnery, of which her aunt, fortunately for the young people, was the superior. This sweet victim of ambition was designed by a proud and haughty father for the monastic life, in order to enable him to provide more liberally for the rest of the children. She had not yet however entered on the year of her novitiate; but it was soon to commence, and, at its awful close, she was to bid a final adieu to that world, to which her heart had of late become too tenderly and anxiously attached. As it approached, time seemed to wing his flight with redoubled rapidity, and she felt a trembling dread that her fortitude, like a false friend, would forsake her in the hour of trial, and a trembling presentiment that the moment, which shut her from

the society at the castle, would exclude her from every prospect of happiness; yet this repugnance to obey the will of her parents was new to her mind: – she dared not investigate the cause too nicely, lest she should find a subject for self-condemnation. She found, with painful regret, a troublesome guest was admitted to her bosom, and she was afraid, in attempting to become more intimately acquainted with its prevailing influence, she should permit the stranger to gain greater ascendancy.

The youthful Madeline, on her first entrance into the nunnery, had neither felt nor shewn any discontent: she had assumed the formal and unbecoming habit without a sigh, and yielded to the rigid rules prescribed with uncomplaining resignation; but, as time crept on with solemn and leaden pace, unrelieved by any of the innocent amusements of social life, only to repeat and bring forward the same dull round of gloomy and mortifying scenes, not only repugnant to the feelings of nature, but disgusting to the senses, she began to think and to complain to the bosom of friendship, that those fetters, put on by the rigid will of unfeeling parents, to be finally closed by the iron laws of bigotry and superstition, were unjust and galling, and the free-born soul of innocence and virtue drooped and pined beneath the sacred walls by which it was inclosed; – how cruel to make religion a pretext for such persecution and misery, and to counteract the designs of the Creator, who never formed his creatures for seclusion from that world in which he had profusely strewn so many blessings for the enjoyment of rational and social beings!

Roseline, by the urgency of her entreaties, frequently obtained leave of the abbess for Madeline de Glanville to visit at the castle. This favour was the more readily granted, from her having observed with real regret that some secret grief preyed on the mind of her young charge, which, though she could not help commiserating, she did not choose to mention. Those days, which the fair Madeline spent at the castle, were the happiest she had ever known; while there, she was gay and cheerful as the youthful companions who studied to amuse and entertain her. The song, the dance, the lute, drove from her remembrance the gloomy nunnery in which she was condemned to waste and linger out her future life.

Sir Philip and Lady de Morney treated her with the tenderness and indulgence of parents; the friendship and affection between her and Roseline was mutual and sincere; for Edwin she felt, as she innocently supposed, the fond regard of a sister. All the younger branches of the De Morney family rejoiced to see her, and gladly assisted in rendering her happy; and when the hour arrived for the unfortunate Madeline to return to the nunnery, whilst she observed with secret gratitude the gloom it threw on the countenances of her friends, it gave additional pangs to the feelings of her own heart; her spirits instantly deserted her, and tears of unfeigned regret marked the sad moment of departure. When she re-entered her solitary cell, she would sink into a despondency which the austere rules of the order was not likely to conquer.

The inhabitants of the castle and its environs were in themselves a little commonwealth, which contained a vast variety of characters. Men of different nations were met together, and, by the unaccountable effects of accident, ambition, or necessity, brought into the same habits, and lived cordially together, serving one master; and, united by one cause and interest, the utmost harmony prevailed among them; for Sir Philip de Morney was a just and active governor; gentle as the lamb and forgiving as mercy to the virtuous or injured, – but a terror and a stern master to the traitor or oppressor, whether friend or foe: he knew the importance of his situation, and how much the happiness of others depended on the careful and faithful discharge of those duties belonging to his high station, and intrusted to him by his noble friend the Earl of Norfolk; he therefore wisely and justly determined not to be biassed nor misled, either by the partiality or designs of other men, nor to suffer any prejudice to gain ascendancy over his mind in the rewards he bestowed, or the punishments which guilt would sometimes compel him to inflict.

# CHAP. II

In the middle of a cold and inclement winter's night, when the wind blew with uncontrolable force, and the snow, rain, and hail beat with fury against the window, every instant breaking some of the few panes which admitted a scanty light into the interior apartments, and threatened to demolish those of the state-rooms, while nature appeared to shudder at this unusual warring of the elements, the centinels on guard were alarmed by a loud rapping at the western gate, and the rumbling of a carriage, with the clattering of horses' hoofs was distinctly heard. For some moments the people stood irresolute; at length one of the soldiers roughly inquired who it was wanted admittance at so unseasonable an hour, when only treason or treachery could be suspected.

A voice replied, "We are no traitors; we come with no hostile intentions, but have brought dispatches of the utmost importance to the governor, and must beg to be immediately admitted, as we are in danger of perishing from fatigue and the severity of the weather." This answer caused a general bustle; the governor was summoned, and the troops, lodged within the interior parts of the castle, ordered to arms before the gate was thrown open; nor were the strangers permitted to enter till their number was ascertained, and the soldiers prepared to oppose them should they have any bad designs to accomplish by this strange and suspicious visit;

but the alarm soon subsided, and the soldiers almost tempted to laugh at their own fears, when they saw a carriage draw up to the gate, guarded by about twenty men, out of which they took a person who appeared quite passive, and was so muffled up, that, in the hurry which was made use of to convey him into the governor's apartment, it was impossible to discover either his age or person. The governor, after reading the dispatches, withdrew with the prisoner and two of the people, who appeared to have the command and direction of this mysterious expedition. —

Refreshments were ordered for the travellers, and beds made up for them in the barracks; but the governor had a long conference with the gentlemen before they separated. In the middle of the following night they departed from the castle with as much secrecy, and as little ceremony, as they had entered it, no one appearing desirous to develop the cause which brought them, or daring to ask any questions of the governor, in whose power alone it rested to satisfy their inquiries, as at this time civil commotions and private feuds between the contending nobles were continually arising to disturb the peace of society, and involve the nation in accumulating distresses; this strange visit was not only silently observed, but in a few weeks scarcely recollected, even by those who had witnessed it; and the guards, with only silent shrugs and significant looks, thought it fastest, wisest, and best, to perform with exact attention the discharge of their respective duties.

At this period of our tale, the joyous festival of Christmas

was approaching – a festival which our old-fashioned forefathers welcomed with every mark of grateful and benevolent hospitality; and its arrival was beheld with as much complacent and cordial hilarity by the rich and great, as it was with delight and impatience by the poor and needy. While the holly and mistletoe decorated the kitchens, and the innocent joke went round, as the blushing maidens received the compliments and good wishes of the season, the loaded tables served still more to exhilirate their spirits, and even the stranger and the beggar were invited to taste the good things they enjoyed.

The youthful inhabitants of the castle began to reckon with eager and high-raised expectation the days, the hours, and even the minutes, which must pass away before the lovely Madeline, who had obtained permission of the abbess to spend the Christmas holidays at the castle, could join their party. Various plans of pleasure were formed, which they hoped would be productive of such amusements as would amply gratify their own wishes, and those of their expected visitors; for Agnes de Clifford, who was a boarder in the nunnery, was to accompany Madeline, by whom and Roseline she was much beloved. She was a lively interesting girl, about Miss de Morney's age, and, next Madeline, held the highest place in her regard.

In realty, the young people at the castle were as much confined as those in the nunnery from any intercourse with the world, Sir Philip de Morney having a decided aversion to the introducing young people early into life; but by the urgent entreaties of his

lady, he was now prevailed upon to relax from the strictness he had observed respecting his elder children, four of whom felt a wish for a more enlarged society; and, as their father had no design of placing any of them in a religious retirement, it began to be time for them to know something of that world in which, in all probability, they must take an active part.

The holidays were spent in the utmost harmony; the festivity which reigned in every part of the castle seemed to have banished sorrow from its walls. The surgeon, captains, and lieutenants, were all of their parties, and the evenings generally concluded with a dance: their dependents were sometimes permitted to join the set, and the good priest, Father Anselm, who attended the castle, would gladly have been a partaker in their innocent amusements, had not the rigid rules of his sacred order forbidden such relaxations.

A few days before the young ladies were to return to the nunnery, Madeline was taken ill, and her disorder increased so rapidly, it was not only thought dangerous, but found impracticable to remove her with safety. For some weeks her life was despaired of, and, when immediate danger was over, she was left in so weak and languid a state, that air and exercise were pronounced absolutely necessary to effect a perfect recovery. This sentence was heard with secret delight by the suffering Madeline, as she was certain it would procure leave for her longer continuance at the castle, and the permission, when obtained, had more efficacy in restoring her, than all the medicines she

had taken during her illness. Edwin and Roseline, much as they had suffered from the alarming indisposition of their loved companion, rejoiced that it had been productive of an indulgence they had almost despaired of gaining.

As the progress of her recovery was slow and precarious, many symptoms of a decline being visible, every one was eager and anxious to amuse the fair invalid, and none appeared more earnest in their endeavours than Hubert de Willows, captain of the guard, a young man, whose wit, vivacity, and unceasing good humour, had so strongly recommended him to the favour and protection of the governor, as had obtained him a constant invitation to his table. With a lively imagination, he had a turn for satire, so pointed, that, while it rendered him a most entertaining companion, kept many of his enemies in awe, and he had the merit of never shewing his talents at the expence of a friend, nor any worthy character; but he considered vice and folly as fair game, against which he levelled his attacks.

Arthur de Clavering, the acting surgeon, was allowed both judgment and humanity. The practice of physic and surgery was then but obscurely known, compared with the more enlightened practioners of these days. De Clavering, however, patched up many a broken constitution. People lived as long, and had fewer diseases, than has been the lot of succeeding generations, but, whether this is owing to chance or folly, I leave wiser heads to determine.

Arthur de Clavering was rather an extraordinary character;

his person was neither tall nor short; of a thin habit; had a countenance so pleasing, and eyes so penetrating, it was impossible not to be struck with him, as something beyond the common race of mortals. He had been abroad, had read much, was acquainted with both men and manners, had a plain and rather awkward address, was singular in his expressions, and formed his opinions with a justness and rapidity that astonished those with whom he associated; told a number of good anecdotes with a delicacy and humour peculiar to himself; public places and general society he avoided so cautiously, that he was considered as a misanthrope by those who did not know him intimately.

Lieutenant de Huntingfield was a Humourous bachelor of forty: he professed himself an admirer of the ladies, and pretended to lament that the state of his finances would not permit him to take a wife to his bosom, and increase the ancient family of the De Huntingfields, which, he apprehended, if fortune proved averse to his accomplishing, would become extinct.

Among the rest of the officers was a Cambrian youth, who was a general favourite in the castle. Hugh Camelford was gay, high spirited, thoughtless, and extravagant; but with all so generous and good humoured, it was impossible not to be pleased even with his eccentricities; he rode good horses, gave good dinners, and was always in good spirits. De Clavering and Hugh Camelford were the best friends in the world. The doctor, as he was generally called, had once, during some indisposition,

advised him to be bled; but the fiery youth would neither follow his advice nor submit to his entreaties: he was then threatened with death for his obstinacy.

"In Cot's cood time I am ready to die, (said the invalid;) but, if ever I lose one drop of my Welch bloot, put in the service of my country, may my coot name be plasted with the titles of poltroon and coward!" – He saved his Welch blood, and recovered, and De Clavering, though at first somewhat displeased, treated him as a friend and brother ever afterwards.

There was a still more singular character in the castle than any yet described, – Alexander Elwyn. He was placed there as a school for improvement in tactics and all the relative duties of a soldier: he had good connexions, and a genteel allowance; but was a miser at twenty. This sordid humour made him the butt of the garrison, and De Willows, with the rest of the officers, vowed to laugh him out of a habit as disgusting as it was unnatural and unnecessary.

In a few weeks Madeline was so far recovered, as to be removed into one of the state-apartments for the benefit of air; an adjoining room was likewise fitted up for Roseline, to sleep near her friend during her confinement. They generally parted from their attendants as soon as the rest of the family retired. Being one night earnestly chatting over some occurrence that had afforded them pleasure, they were alarmed by footsteps under their apartment, and a low murmuring sound of voices indistinctly reached their ears. Madeline was a good deal frightened, but

Roseline, who had great presence of mind, and more courage, made, or rather appeared to make, very light of the matter, telling her friend the rooms they occupied were, she knew, connected with some passages and offices belonging to the castle, and she doubted not but the noise proceeded from the people on duty. This, in some degree, abated the fears of Madeline, till, after a profound silence of half an hour, they heard a deep groan, followed by the rattling of chains; at the same instant one of the windows flew open with the greatest violence, and as instantly closed again, which was followed by the bell at the corner of the room ringing violently.

Madeline gave a faint scream; Roseline jumped out of bed, and ran for some water, supposing she would have a fainting fit; but she gently put it aside, and with wild affright inquired what was the matter, and what could occasion the unaccountable noises they had heard. "The wind, and the people in some of the lower apartments; no doubt, (replied her friend;) therefore I beg you would not discompose yourself; if you do, you will compel me to disturb the family, and that I am afraid would displease my father; and, in all probability, Edwin would ridicule our childish fears, and the rest of the gentlemen would laugh at us."

This silenced Madeline, and Roseline continued: "I am totally unacquainted with many parts of this castle. I have two of three times wished to explore its secret passages, look at the dungeons, and visit all its subterranean contrivances, but have been forbidden by my father. Edwin did once promise to shew me

how well we were secured from outward danger by the immense strength of the fortifications, and equally secure of a retreat, should the castle be attacked; but he cautioned me not to give a hint of his design, either to my father or mother, not to drop a word of his intentions before my brothers or sisters. Eager as I was to have my curiosity satisfied, your illness, my dear girl, and the pleasure we counted of partaking during our visit, drove it from my mind; but I will take the earliest opportunity of claiming my brother's promise."

"Agreed, (cried Roseline;) you and I, my dear Madeline, have yet seen too little of life to be weary of it, and I trust our hearts are both too guiltless to have any fears of those supernatural appearances, of which superstition and ignorance give such improbable accounts."

"Yet I have heard strange tales of this castle being haunted, even in the retired recess to which my adverse fate had in all probability doomed me to spend my hapless days, and – "

"You are too much inclined to believe them, (interrupted her friend;) but, my dear Madeline, be assured of this, – if we had nothing more to fear from the living than we have to apprehend from the dead, we should be perfectly secure, and our lives would pass away in a more serene and placid manner than the turbulent wills of our fellow-mortals will allow. Hark! I am sure I hear the soft and distant sound of a lute. I never yet knew a ghost that had a taste for Mortal harmony."

"I certainly hear music, (sighed Madeline;) from what place

can it proceed? – Surely it must be – "

"The amusement, no doubt, of some one either on the ramparts or in the cells; for you have fluttered my spirits so much, I cannot determine from what part of the castle the sound can reach us: let us, however, rest satisfied, that no ghosts would trouble themselves to play a midnight serenade in order to terrify those who could never have injured them. Let us wait till you are quite recovered before we mention a word of the occurrences of this night; for, were my father to hear of our alarm, we should be instantly removed into other apartments, and should not then be able to accomplish our purpose of exploring the intricate recesses of this castle. Good night, Madeline; I hope the musician will not cease his harmony till he has lulled us to repose."

She then jumped into her own bed; but her spirits were not altogether in that composed and courageous state she wished her friend to imagine. She had heard strange stories of lights being seen, of ghosts gliding along the ramparts, of noises being heard; but, as she had not been told of a ghostly musician, she was inclined to hope it would, by some means or other, be explained to her satisfaction.

Till the rising sun, however, peeped over the hills which bounded the view from her windows, she could not rest; she then sunk into repose, and slept so soundly, that it was with difficulty her sister, Edeliza, could convince her that the family waited breakfast till she should be in the humour to join them. Madeline took her's in bed. Roseline hurried on her clothes, and Lady

de Morney tenderly inquired if indisposition had prevented her rising at her usual hour. complaining of not having slept till late satisfied all parties, and, after a gentle reproof from Sir Philip, and a joke from Edwin for hugging her pillow so long, the subject was dropped.

The next day was fixed for Madeline to join the family at dinner, for the first time since her long and alarming illness. De Clavering, De Willows, and Hugh Camelford, were invited to be of the party on this joyous occasion, and it was with the utmost difficulty that Edwin de Morney could conceal the rapture he felt in his bosom at the thought of seeing the fair nun once more among them. He had ventured, with the consent of Roseline, to make her several stolen visits, and in those moments of rapturous delight had discovered that Madeline de Glanville reigned sole mistress of his heart. Too young for the practice of deceit, too sanguine and inexperienced to think of the consequence of loving one devoted to the service of her God, he flattered himself the partial indulgence of his mother would enable him to conquer any difficulties thrown in his way, wither by his father, or the designs Madeline's parents had formed for her future destination. He likewise cherished the sweet hope that Madeline would not be averse to accept him as a lover. His own heart had taught him to read the language of the eyes, and in her's he saw, or thought he saw, joy sparkle at his approach, and a soft sadness overcloud them at his departure.

The party met at dinner. Madeline entered the room, leaning

on the supporting arm of Edwin, and followed by Roseline. Never, in the full bloom of youth and health, had the fair invalid looked so inexpressibly lovely. A faint blush tinged her cheek upon receiving the congratulations of the company on her recovery. The doctor humourously declared he was entitled to their thanks for the resurrection of their friend.

"A resurrection, methinks, it is in reality, (said de Willows;) 'for the mortal seems to have put on immortality,' and to have brought down from heaven the beauty and form of an angel."

"Hey day! (cried Sir Philip;) why, good people, you all seem to be taking vast pains to make my sweet nun believe a language you yourselves do not seem perfectly to understand. That we are all glad to see her restored to us I hope and trust she believes; but our congratulations must convince her, notwithstanding your high-flown compliments, that she is a mere mortal, like the rest of her sex."

"Not exactly like some of them, (said the doctor;) for, if she were, De Willows would not look at her as if he had a mind to seize the precious morsel from mother-church."

This sally produced a hearty laugh from all but Edwin and Lady de Morney, who, seeing the conversation was become distressing to her young friend, summoned them to sit down to dinner.

"In Cot's name, (cried Camelford,) let us obey orders, for I feel myself all mortal at sight of Sir-loin, who is as coot and entertaining a knight as any on this side the Welch mountains."

"Excellent, faith! (exclaimed De Clavering;) and you look at him with as much pleasure as a goat would at a field of young grass, or as Edwin at his sister Roseline."

Edwin at this moment was gazing at Madeline with an earnestness that struck the doctor, and he took this method of withdrawing his attention from an object which he considered might prove dangerous to the peace of his young friend, to whom he was most sincerely and affectionately attached.

The day was spent with all that serene harmony which attends the society of friends. Madeline's return to the social party was like that of one having been so long absent, that little hope was entertained of ever meeting again. She retired to her room at an early hour, accompanied by Roseline; and the progress of her recovery, though slow, was so visible, as in a few days to remove all anxious fears from every heart but that of the impassioned Edwin, that no further danger was to be apprehended from the effects of the fever.

For more than a week the young ladies heard nothing to disturb them. They were lodged at a great distance from the rest of the family, and Roseline, having informed her brother of Madeline's fears, he had requested his mother to let him sleep in that wing of the castle, lest Madeline should be taken ill in the night, and his sister under the necessity of leaving her to call assistance. His request was granted, at the same time he received his mother's commendations and thanks for this prudent precaution.

# CHAP. III

During the time that De Willows was cherishing an increasing affection for Madeline, the youthful Edeliza, now in the sixteenth year, was in a situation more distressing. She had long been accustomed to consider De Willows in the light of a playfellow, and to be gratified by his almost undivided attention, while to him her's was wholly confined. With Camelford she would sometimes romp, if De Willows were absent, but, as soon as he returned, she would fly to him, and complain of the young lieutenant's having wearied her by playing too roughly.

Love even with the inexperienced is generally quick-fighted. Edeliza had observed, with a kind of trembling apprehension, and a fear she knew not how to account for, the attentions De Willows paid to Madeline. She was angry, – she was shocked, – thought her not half so handsome as she once had been, and wondered what the gentlemen could see to admire in so ghostly a figure; her brother, De Clavering, Hugh Camelford, and Elwyn, might make as much fuss as they pleased about the beautiful nun, as they chose to call her, that De Willows should be so blind, so provoking, she could not bear to recollect; however, as she would soon be obliged to return to the nunnery, she hoped De Willows would then forget she had ever left it, and recover his senses.

Thus was the little blind god, who had been the delight and the torment of all ages, beginning to play cross purposes at the

castle, and aiming his arrows at hearts too innocent to guard against or repel their attacks. De Willows had ever admired Edeliza as a beautiful and interesting child; he had been in the habit of seeing her, from the time she was ten years old, every day; therefore her progress towards womanhood had passed in a manner unperceived, and he had indulged himself and his little favourite in the same fond and playful endearments as had taken place from the first of their meeting, and that without forming an idea of there being either danger or impropriety in so doing. Had any one informed De Willows that Edeliza was cherishing a growing affection for him, which, if unreturned, would endanger her future peace, he would have treated it as the idle chimera of their own whimsical brain; but, had he once seriously supposed he was destroying her happiness, and planting the thorn of anguish in her innocent bosom, his heart was so much the seat of true honour, he would have stabbed in his own breast rather than have acted unjustly by the daughter of his friend.

It happened about this period that Sir Philip de Morney was obliged to go to London in order to settle a law-suit which had been long depending, and which had harassed his mind very much. De Huntingfield was to take the command of the castle during his absence, being the oldest officer in the place. De Willows, though of higher rank, was too young to be entrusted with a charge of so much importance, and gladly yielded the honour to one so much his superior in years. Sir Philip departed

with reluctance, took leave of his family with tenderness, and promised to return the first moment after the affair was settled. – Lady de Morney was reconciled to the temporary absence of her husband by the important business which had called him away.

The young friends, having slept for several nights undisturbed, had almost lost all remembrance of their fears before the departure of Sir Philip, whose absence happened very opportunely to gratify their curiosity in visiting every part of the castle, Edwin having promised to procure the keys, and accompany them.

Two nights after Sir Philip's departure, having spent a cheerful evening, they retired to rest in unusual good spirits, but were awakened about midnight by a war of the elements, and what made the scene more terrific, though it was in the depth of winter, the thunder rolled in tremendous peals over their heads, the sturdy walls of the castle appeared to shake from their centre to the battlements, and the lightning flashed upon the walls, and gleamed along the vaulted passages, as if to make horror visible. The young ladies dressed themselves, and Edwin tapped at the door with a light, inviting them to go down into one of the lower rooms, to which he would accompany them.

Cheered and revived by the sound of his voice, they readily agreed to his proposal, and in a few minutes opened the door to admit their conductor. They made as little noise as possible, fearful of disturbing Lady de Morney, if she was not already alarmed by the tempest; and, to prevent the possibility of doing

so, they agreed to go down a winding staircase that led through one of the towers, and which was seldom used by the family. They crept slowly along, when, in one part of it, which was rather wider than the rest, they passed four steps, which led to a door in the wall, and which appeared so well secured by locks and bars, as if it never was intended to be opened.

"For heaven's sake, (whispered Roseline,) to what room does that door lead? I never saw it before."

"I entreat you (said the trembling Madeline) not to stop in this horrid place to ask questions, (for the humid and unwholesome dews of night and noxious vapours hung on the walls.) Though I am not afraid now Edwin is with us, yet I may take cold by staying here."

Edwin pressed the hand which was resting on his arm to his throbbing bosom, and hurried them into the room the family had left, and they were all truly rejoiced to find an excellent fire still blazing on the wide-extended hearth, round which they seated themselves, and neither Madeline nor Edwin uttered a single complaint at having been so unseasonably disturbed.

The tempest having spent it fury, subsided by degrees into a calm, and the party, entering into conversation, almost forgot it had ever been. Roseline however repeated her question respecting the door they had seen in their way down the staircase. Edwin assured her he knew no more than herself to what place it belonged: he had heard that the restless ghost of some one had been bound in the apartments to which it led, and that orders had

been given for it never to be opened. He had once made some inquiries of his father, but was desired by him never to ask any questions till he came to years of maturity, nor to explore any of the secret passages or entrances to the castle.

"Then, surely, (said Madeline,) it would be extremely wrong to disobey the commands of Sir Philip, merely to satisfy an idle and perhaps blamable curiosity."

"At the moment (interrupted Edwin) that I admire the complying sweetness of the gentle Madeline, I must beg pardon for retaining my own resolution of seeing those parts of the castle from which I have been so long secluded. I am now arrived at an age that surely deserves to be trusted, or I must be unfit to live in a situation like this. My father's reasons for the secresy he has observed so long, I am unacquainted with; but I will most assuredly avail myself of his absence to gratify my curiosity. I know where the keys are deposited, and in a night or two will begin my nocturnal search. If you and Roseline are in the humour to accompany me, it is well; if not, I shall certainly go by myself."

"As that might be dangerous, (said Roseline, who rejoiced to find him so resolute,) you must promise to take me along with you."

To this he assented, and Madeline agreed, with some little confusion, to be of the party, concluding, Sir Philip must be wrong in not granting his son's request. This matter settled, they retired for the rest of the night, to forget, in the arms of sleep, not only the castle and the nunnery, but the whole world.

The next night they were surprised by an unusual noise, that seemed to be immediately under them. It appeared something like the rattling of a carriage over stones. Groans too they thought they heard; and, after dressing themselves, Roseline called her brother, to convince him their alarms were not the effects of imagination. He heard the same sounds, and, in looking round their apartment, and into an adjoining closet, he discovered a trap-door, that was very curiously concealed under a board, which slided over it. He attempted to lift it up, but found it was secured by a lock which was hid in a small projection of the wall.

Finding it impossible to obtain a passage, they determined to defer their search till the succeeding night, when Edwin promised to secure the keys. He stayed with them till daylight dissipated their fears; they then retired to repose; but sleep deserted their pillows. A thousand vague conjectures occupied their minds, and Madeline, for the first time in her life, wished herself absent from the castle: that there was something to discover appeared beyond a doubt; but, whether the discovery would serve to relieve or increase their anxiety, was as hazardous as it was uncertain; however, as Roseline and Edwin were resolute to make the attempt, she determined not to oppose them.

Edwin revolved in his mind how he might be able to find some clue to guide him, and resolved to apply to an old soldier, whose whole life had been spent in the castle, to give him some account respecting it. He was fond of retracing past scenes, and, when once he began talking, knew not when to stop. From him Edwin

learned all he wanted to be informed; by him he was told the use of the keys, and received every necessary direction. The old man, considering himself honoured by holding converse with the governor's son, told him every circumstance he knew or could recollect. The next day was spent in the same manner as usual. De Clavering was uncommonly facetious, De Willows particularly cheerful, Hugh Camelford entertaining, and De Huntingfield busy in the active duties of his important office.

The afternoon being remarkably clear, mild, and serene, the whole party agreed to ascend to the top of the castle, and walk on the ramparts, for the benefit of air and exercise. Edeliza would not quit the arm of De Willows, therefore Madeline was left uninterrupted to the care of Edwin.

The air was reviving, the prospect picturesque and interesting; for notwithstanding the season, nature had still beauties to catch the inquiring eye, and awaken the gratitude of innocent and cheerful hearts. A few evergreens, scattered here and there among the leafless trees afforded shelter to innumerable birds. The red breast warbled his artless song, surrounded by a number of chirping sparrows, who seemed gaily to flutter around, making a most uncommon bustle, which was occasioned by a shower that had lately fallen.

"Confound these impertinent noisy little devils! (said De Clavering,) I wish I had my gun, and I would most assuredly put an end to some of this clatter."

"For shame, toctor, (cried Camelford;) what! would you

testroy such pretty harmless creatures as these? Rather save your ammunition for the enemies of your king – that would be coot sport indeed! – then, my man of mettle, we should be petter employed; but let the sparrow-family lif, and enjoy their prating."

"I believe you are nearly allied to that same family, (replied the doctor,) and therefore I do not wonder at your being anxious to preserve your relations."

"Petter not provoke me, toctor. I am in a valiant humour just now, and, as Cot shall pless me, I will not pocket an affront from any one."

"Pack it up in your knapsack, (replied the doctor drily,) and say, as our Saviour did, when tempted, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" – for really Hugh, I often think the devil has jumped into your skull, and, by kicking about your brains, has made you so hot headed."

"Then the best thing I can do (replied Camelford) would be to put myself under your tirection to lay this same tevil, and by the time you had trained me of all my Welch ploot, he would leave my lifeless carcase to be poiled for your improvement; but avaunt, thou cataplasm of cataplasms! – I defy thy incantations, plisters, and pleedings."

"I believe the young dog will live the longer, (cried the doctor, addressing De Willows,) but who among us will deny or defy the sweet influence of these lilies and roses that are now blooming around us."

"I do not pretend to any such philosophic apathy," replied De

Willows.

"If you did, your looks would betray you, (retorted Edwin.) To deny the united influence of love and beauty is not the province of a soldier."

"Do all soldiers admire beauty, and fall in love?" inquired the artless Edeliza, looking earnestly at De Willows.

"I believe so, my sweet little girl, (he answered;) love and death are alike inevitable."

"But not equally dangerous, (said the laughing Roseline;) for I never heard of any one dying of the wounds given by the little blind god, though thousands fall victims to the more certain arrows sent from the furnace of war."

"By the crate Cot, (said Camelford,) I had rather tie by the wounds of a pair of pright eyes than by those of a cannon, loaded by the hands of an ugly tog, who like a putcher delights in ploot."

"More fool you, (replied De Clavering;) the death in the one case would be glorious and instantaneous, – in the other, foolish and lingering, – "

"Unless I applied to a toctor to put me out of my misery, and then

I should get rid of it in a trice."

"A truce with your compliments, good folks, (said Roseline;) suppose we endeavour to reconcile ourselves to the world, and all its strange vagaries, by a dance in the great hall. This proposal met with general approbation; to the great hall they descended, and, surrounded by the rusty armour of their hardy forefathers,

they enjoyed in the mazy windings of the lively dance, a pleasure as innocent as it was amusing, Lady de Morney herself being a gratified spectator of the scene.

This hall was decorated, if we may use the term, with a vast number of suits of armour, belonging to the family of Norfolk. One, more light and higher finished than the rest, appeared to have belonged to a youth of Edwin's size. He was prevailed on to fit it; and, armed cap-a-pie, strutted about in bold defiance, and threw down his gauntlet, daring any one to single combat who should deny the palm of beauty being due to the lady he should name.

"Suppose I threw down my glove," said de Willows."

"You would soon take it up again, (replied Edwin, somewhat scornfully,) as I fancy our taste in beauty to be the same."

De Willows coloured, – Madeline appeared uneasy, – and Edeliza declared armour was the most frightful dress she ever saw, while the younger part of the family jumped round their brother, and with eagerness made many inquiries concerning the use of every part of his dress, and requested their mother to let them wear some of the nodding plumes which hung in lofty state around them.

In the course of the evening, Edwin gave Madeline a hint to retire early to her chamber, having obtained possession of the keys, and gained such directions as could not fail to satisfy their curiosity and guide them in their researches. Madeline silently acquiesced, and imparted, with trembling impatience,

the tidings to her friend. She was thoughtful and absent the rest of the evening, and availed herself of the earliest opportunity of withdrawing to her chamber. Roseline very soon followed her, and, as soon as the family had retired to rest, Edwin stole gently to their apartment. They had anxiously expected his arrival, and therefore gave him immediate admittance.

Roseline rejoiced at seeing her brother, and eagerly inquired if he was sure that he had the keys that would enable them to proceed. He then produced a most enormous bunch, with a dark lantern, which was to guide them through the intricate labyrinths of the castle, and advised Madeline and his sister to guard against the damps of the passages they had to go through, and to arm themselves with their whole stock of resolution, lest their terror should betray him.

Roseline assured him her fears were conquered by her strong desire to explore the secrets of their habitation, and Madeline promised not to let her apprehensions impede their progress. Edwin lighted his candle, and with some difficulty unfastened the trap-door he had discovered in their closet; but, on opening it, a kind of noxious vapour ascended, that almost tempted them to give up their design. A flight of broken brick steps, of amazing depth, carried them into a narrow winding passage, in which it was impossible for more than one person to move forward at once.

Madeline caught hold of Edwin's coat, and Roseline followed her with a lighted candle in her hand. For some time they groped

along, frequently stumbling over the stones which had fallen from the mouldering walls, and trembling lest this passage should lead them into danger. Edwin frequently stopped to encourage them to go on, assuring them they had nothing to apprehend. By degrees the path widened, and, on suddenly turning, they entered a kind of square, round which were several doors, but so low, they did not seem made to admit men but dwarfs. Going up to one of them, Edwin pushed it open with his foot, and he was convinced they were the dungeons in which prisoners of war were confined. Some contained only bedsteads, iron rings, and fetters; in one of them they saw a human skull; in another was a coffin, which appeared to have stood there for ages, and with its silent inhabitant was falling to decay.

They proceeded till they came to a door which was so thickly studded over with nails, bolts, bars, and locks, this it impeded their farther progress. Edwin would fain have attempted to open it, but was prevented by his shivering and terrified companions.

"Brother, (cried Roseline,) we have seen quite enough to satisfy us for one night."

"Another time, Edwin, (added Madeline,) I shall feel less repugnance to proceed. But how do you know that door does not lead to some apartment where the restless spirit of another discontented ghost may be confined, by some potent spell, till released by the intrusion of beings who now wander amid the gloomy scenes of life as he once did?"

"No such thing, (replied the intrepid and resolute Edwin;) that

door is an entrance to a subterraneous passage, which leads from this castle to Mettingham, merely to give entrance to troops in any case of emergency, or to cover the retreat of others that may want to escape."

"But, as it has not been used, either for the one purpose or the other, since my father resided here, (said Roseline,) it may now be a shelter for thieves and traitors; therefore, for heaven's sake, let us now return to our apartment."

Edwin, whose disposition was as amiable as his manners and person were captivating, no longer contended with their wishes, but led the way for them as he had done before, and, as he was a fine tall youth, was obliged to stoop as he went along.

Just as they came near the foot of the steps which led to their apartment, they saw, or thought they saw, a faint light gleam across a passage which led to another part of these gloomy habitations, and they imagined they perceived the figure of some one disappear at their approach. This alarmed the whole group, and they hurried up the stairs as hastily as their fears would let them. Having cautiously fastened the trap-door, they sat down to recover themselves, and recollected with a degree of horror and disgust the gloomy scenes they had visited; but the light, and the figure they had all caught a transient view of, dwelt most forcibly on their minds. Madeline declared she should never have sufficient resolution to re-visit these abodes of terror, contrived by the stern hands of despotism and ambition.

"When we think, as we surely may, (said she,) with some

degree of certainty, how many poor souls have languished out a life of misery in these gloomy cells, can we wonder if they are haunted by all they have entombed? Shut out not only from the world, but from every comfort, nature too recoils and shudders at the cruelties that may have been practised on the poor victims thus buried in the bowels of the earth."

"All this may be very true, my sweet Madeline, (interrupted Edwin,) but I am determined to re-visit them. Perhaps some poor sufferers may still remain in the castle; if so, it would be delightful to soften the rigours of their fate."

"True, my dear brother, (cried Roseline, her eyes illumined with the soft beams of genuine benevolence and philanthropy,) I will certainly attend you."

"To quiet the fears of our lovely friend, (said Edwin,) I will request old Bertrand, who has lived in this castle from the time we came into it, to accompany and direct us in our search after misery. I am told too, (he added,) there is a passage which leads from this castle into the chapel of your nunnery. If I can find it out, I shall certainly pay you a visit, and steal you from your cell; for, my dear Madeline, whatever may be the truth and the virtues of our holy religion, it is doubtless one of its abuses to shut from the world those lovely works of the creation best calculated to enliven and adorn it. Can it be deemed a greater crime to doom a worthless, or, suppose I say, and innocent, man, to languish in a dungeon, that it is to compel an unfortunate female to waste her days in the austere walls of a nunnery, – kneel to the unfeeling

image of a saint, – watch the midnight lamp, – seclude herself from all social enjoyments, – and linger through life in solitary sadness without a friend, or a lover, to cheer her on her way?"

"Hush, for heaven's sake! (said the frightened Madeline;) if Father

Anselm heard you talk thus lightly and profanely of our holy religion,

I should be for ever debarred seeing you and Roseline again, for life shut out from the world, and compelled to take the veil."

"Never, by heaven! (cried Edwin, thrown entirely off his guard by the tender confusion and agitation of Madeline:) you shall take no vows but such as love and nature dictate. I would perish a thousand times, – lose a thousand lives to preserve you from a fate that would not only make you wretched, but me for ever miserable. – Roseline has long known that you are dear to my heart. Say, – ease me of the torturing suspense I this moment feel, – do you not find an advocate in your bosom that will plead my cause?"

Madeline trembled violently; her eyes were bent to the ground: She would have fallen, had not Roseline flown to support her. She attempted to speak, but the words died away inarticulately.

"I see how it is, (cried Edwin impassionately;) the happy De Willows has gained by his attentions what I have lost by disgusting you with mine: you hate, you despise me. I will solicit my father to let me join the army: I will for ever remove this detested object from your sight, and pray that the portion of

happiness I have lost may be redoubled to you."

Madeline, alarmed by the energy of this speech, was instantly roused from the languor into which she had sunk.

"I hate no one, (said she softly;) but Edwin, you forget it would be a crime in me to love. If, indeed, that had not been the case, – if I were at liberty – "

"You would bless the happy De Willows with your hand."

"Never! – De Willows I regard as a friend: as any thing more I never did, – never could think of him. I am you know banished from all intercourse with the world; – my sentence has been long pronounced; from that sentence there can be no appeal. Would to heaven I had submitted to it, and never quitted the retreat to which parental authority consigned me! At this painful moment my own feelings inflict my punishment."

"Then you do not hate me? (cried Edwin, taking her hand.) – Only say I am not quite indifferent to you, and I will endeavour to rest satisfied, and ask no more; trusting that time may do much in my favour; but, if you attempt to deprive me of all hope, – if you deny me this innocent gratification, I will go to the wars."

"Ah! why will you press me to discover what it would be better to conceal? – why will you tempt me to swerve from my duty to my God and my parents, and make me a perjured, and unworthy sacrifice? – You have, I fear, taught my heart a lesson it ought never to have learned: but it must be the hard task of my future life to atone for the crime I have committed in having suffered a mortal to rival that God, who alone should have occupied all

my thoughts and wishes."

Edwin threw himself at the feet of Madeline. His raptures were now as unbounded as the conflict had been severe; and not till she sunk fainting into the arms of her friend, could he be persuaded to quit their apartment.

Happy was it for the party that Roseline had not only a greater share of prudence and understanding that most of her sex, but likewise more fortitude than is usually their portion. She soon recovered, her friend soothed her into some degree of composure, and endeavoured to inspire her with hopes that some plan might be adopted which would remove those difficulties that threatened to divide two hearts love had united, and which appeared formed by nature to make each other happy. Roseline well knew her father would not only be displeased, but shocked, if he discovered this unfortunate attachment, and she blamed herself for having been the innocent cause of involving two people so dear to her in such a hopeless scene of complicated distress.

Notwithstanding the agonizing conflicts which had attended the eclaircissement, the lovers felt a heavy burthen removed from their hearts. Convinced of being mutually beloved, all other sorrows, all other trials appeared light and trivial: they sunk into a more sweet and peaceful slumber than they had long enjoyed, – dreamed of each other, and arose the next morning with renovated spirits and revived hopes.

Madeline wished the hour was arrived they were to renew their

midnight ramble, and thought, if she should meet a thousand ghosts, she should not fear them, while Edwin, who loved her so tenderly and sincerely, was near to guard her. She was eager too, but scarcely durst acknowledge to herself she *wished* the passage might be found which led to the chapel in her nunnery.

# CHAP. IV

If there be any so fastidious and unfeeling as to condemn and deprecate the romantic hopes and flattering visions cherished in he buoyant bosom of nineteen, I am sorry for them, and here avow, I wish never entirely to forget the fascinating pleasure of such air-built hopes. Should they be sometimes attended with danger to the weak and frail, they are likewise accompanied with their advantages to the good and virtuous, and often enable us to encounter trials with a resolution and fortitude, which, at a more advanced period of our lives, when time has weakened our bodily frame, and experience deprived us of those gay illusions, we find it difficult and painful to acquire. – The philosophy of nineteen, though not abstruse, is flattering and conclusive; so much the more valuable; for, after all the researches of philosophy, what are we taught to know, but that man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards? – that we are merely the pilgrims and passengers of a day, – that our resting place must be found in a better, an unknown world, – that we must encounter innumerable trials on our journey, and at last die and be forgotten, even by those for whom we have toiled, and to whom we are most tenderly attached? – Surely then we may be allowed to snatch, or steal, a few of those innocent enjoyments just thrown in our way, to encourage our fortitude, and clear our path from some of the briars and thorns with which it is so profusely planted.

Happy is it for those in the common walks of life, that all their stock of philosophy is comprised in a few words, acquired without study, and retained without taxing their time or burthening their memory, – "it was my fate, – I could not run from it, – it was to be." These trite sentences reconcile them to many distressing events, and sometimes are their excuse for the frailties of their conduct.

When the parties met at breakfast the next morning, any careful observer might have discovered, by the confusion visible on the countenance of Madeline, – the constraint in her manner of addressing Edwin, – his more than usual vivacity, and the pale cheeks and swelled eyes of Roseline, that something had occurred to produce the change; but, suspicion not being a frequent gust at the castle, no such discovery was made: every one employed themselves as usual, and in a few hours universal cheerfulness seemed to prevail.

The only observations made by Lady de Morney were, that her dear Edwin looked remarkably well, was in charming spirits, and had dressed himself better and more becomingly than usual. Madeline coloured, and thought the same. Roseline smiled, and Edwin whispered something in the ear of Madeline that prevented the roses fading on her cheek.

The dress of Madeline, though to her particularly becoming, would to thousands have been totally the reverse. It was the dress of the order of Benedictines, to which she belonged, consisting of a black robe, with a scapulary of the same. Under the robe,

nuns, when professed, wore a tunic of white undyed wool, and, when they went to the choir, they had a cowl like that worn by the monks; but the boarders, who were in what we may call a state of probation, were allowed to wear a tunic of muslin or cambrick, and covered their heads with a white veil. This dress, little suited to please the whimsical taste of the present time, was, strange as it may appear, simple and becoming, and proved the truth of the poet's observation, that

> – Loveliness
> Needs not the foreign aid of ornament,
> But is, when unadorn'd, adorn'd the most.

Madeline, in the habit of her order, was so captivating a figure, that no one ever thought any alteration or change in it could have added a charm to those bestowed on her by the partial hand of nature. She was tall, and elegantly formed; the expression of her countenance, blended with softness and dignity, conveying an idea of superior virtue being united to superior loveliness.

Just before dinner, the Doctor observed that Madeline looked pale: having felt her pulse, he inquired what had given them cause to beat so much out of time.

"I must examine into this matter, (said he archly.) They are galloping along at a strange rate; either the head or the heart must occasion this revolution in the system of my patient's usual habit. If it be the disease of the heart, I must resign my place to a more able practitioner. – Do not blush, my fair nun, but tell me

whom you would have called in."

"I am perfectly satisfied with your advice, my good doctor, and at this time believe I want a cook more than a physician, therefore excuse me if I say you you entirely misunderstand my case."

"Don't be too positive (said De Clavering) of my ignorance. You may safely trust me with all your complaints, – even with those of the heart; for I feel myself extremely interested that you should not return to the nunnery with any additional one added to those you so unfortunately brought away."

"Ah! (said Madeline,) mentally, advice is now too late. I shall carry back with me a more corroding, a more painful complaint than any I ever knew before; yet, strange as it is, I would not be cured for the world, as my being so would wound Edwin de Morney.

Only Camelford was present when this little badinage passed between the Doctor and his patient. He advised the former to lay aside his wig, and take up the cowl, as the most certain method of discovering the truth; "for, though the laties, (he added,) will not tell all they think to you or I, they will not attempt to teceive their Cot."

"If I thought putting on a cowl would transform me to a god, (said De Clavering,) I would soon hazard the transformation, and then I would place a shield before the heart of every fair daughter of Britain, that should have the property of a talisman, to warn them againsst the designs and insidious attention of young men,

six feet high, with black sparkling eyes, auburn hair, teeth of ivory, handsome legs, and white hands."

Madeline knew the portrait, and, rising to conceal her blushes, ran hastily out of the room.

Hugh Camelford burst into a violent fit of laughter, and told the Doctor, "so far from being thought a Cot, the young laty certainly took him for the tifel, having discovered his spells and clofen foot, or perhaps for Tafy ap Jones, who, after tying for lof, was thrown into the Red Sea, and had haunted all lof-sick maidens ever since, poor discontented tifel!"

"And that will be your fate, Hugh, (retorted the Doctor,) unless you send home the Welch lass whom you betrayed, and then left to starve with your son, a fat chubby boy, very like his father."

"As I hope to escape the toctor and tamnation, (said the indignant Hugh,) I never petrayed a lass in my whole life; therefore, you cataplasm, you plister, you caustic of fire, pring no such scandals on the coot name of Camelford, lest I take a little of your carnivorous plood, and make you drink it!"

The Doctor stole off laughing, and Camelford soon recovered his good humour.

A dance was proposed for the evening, and readily agreed to by the young people, who determined to make the time pass as cheerfully as possible during the absence of Sir Philip and the visit of Madeline.

In those days dancing was the favourite amusement of

the youth of both sexes: rich and poor, young and old, one with another, mixed in the animating dance: – complaints of weariness and fatigue were seldom heard. This exercise was not only favourable to health, but the roses it produced on the glowing cheek of youth rendered all application to the borrowed ones of art totally unnecessary. Rouge was then unknown, and no *Warren* existed to abolish old women, by giving the furrowed features of age an unfading bloom. The plain jacket, with a small quantity of ribbon bound round a cambric cap, were then thought becoming, and few ornaments were worn but on very important and particular occasions; yet beauty was equally admired: the same homage was paid to it, and it held in bondage as many captives, without the adventitious aid of deception and extravagance.

Another preservative of youth and health was their keeping better, that is, earlier hours. Night was night, and dedicated to its original purpose. Day was properly divided, and found of sufficient length for all the useful employments of life. Few young ladies but had seen the sun rise in all its glory, and found their hearts expanded by the grand and awful sight; and, while they welcomed its reviving rays from the portals of the east, it tended to raise their minds to that God who made the sun, and who alone could number the stars by which it was surrounded.

A fine moon-light evening seldom passed unnoticed by these aspiring worthies, eager after knowledge; for, having happily fewer amusements, they had more time to attend to the

instructive beauties of nature, the study of which affords an inexhaustible source of pleasure and surprise. Fearless of their complexions, they not only rambled but worked in their gardens. Each had a little spot of ground marked out, and it soon produced the desired effect; every one was emulous to outshine the other in its cultivation, and Sir Philip or Lady de Morney were often called upon as arbitrators to decide the superior beauty of a rose, the size of a carnation, or the snowy tints of a lily.

De Clavering had told them, that, under their feet, they often trampled on plants, in the careful study of which might be found a cure for every disease incident to the climate they inhabited, and that in other climates the earth produced her treasures for the same benevolent purpose; but the careless inattention of mankind to this useful knowledge had rendered the profession of physic absolutely necessary, and given men of learning and genius an opportunity of displaying their talents in preserving the lives of their fellow creatures.

In consequence of these hints, all kinds of herbs were planted, and their virtues put to the test by being applied to relieve the diseases of their poor neighbours; and never did a high-bred town belle, at making a conquest, or a hero, after obtaining a signal victory, exult more, or feel greater delight than the having effected a cure produced in the minds of these young practitioners. De Clavering was gratified in giving them all the intelligence they requested, very often inquired when they went their rounds to visit their patients, and offered them his physical

wig to give them consequence.

In those days people lived much longer in the same number of years; to rise between five and six o'clock, and breakfast at seven, was their usual custom, the time of taking their meals differing as much as their antique habits. Dinner was constantly on the table between eleven and twelve, and supper regularly served at seven; tea was then bu little used, Whether the introduction of that bewitching beverage had been followed by the long catalogue of evils laid to its charge, I am not able to determine; but, as I have known many weak constitutions who have never felt any ill effects from taking it, I am inclined to think it has not such dangerous properties as are alledged against it by valetudinarians and their medical advisers.

But what would the antediluvian souls, who compose my dramatis personae say to the innovations made upon time in these day of delicate and fashionable refinement? They would suppose the world turned topsy-turvy, and be puzzled to know why the afternoon should be discarded, and what part of the twenty-four hours to call night.

The periodical times of taking refreshment are quite different to what they formerly were, and contradictory to the practice of our ancestors, who hoarded their time, and considered it as a treasure of some value. We may now literally be said to turn day into night, and night into day, while the want of time is the source of general complaint. Our people of fashion, and many of no fashion at all, breakfast at three in the afternoon, dine at

seven, sip their tea at eleven o'clock at night, and sup at four in the morning; whereas Queen Elizabeth breakfasted at five or six in the morning, and dined at eleven in the forenoon. – She and all her court went to bed with the sun in summer, and at eight or nine o'clock in winter.

The parliament, in the reign of Charles the First, went to prayers at five or six in the morning, and the king dined at twelve; nay, in the licentious reign of that merry monarch, his son, dinner at two was thought a very late hour; for all public diversions were at an end by six in the evening, and the ladies, after seeing a play, went in their carriages to Hyde-Park.

Whether it would not be greatly to the advantage of people in general to revive some old customs, and return to the prudent habits of our progenitors, will not admit of much dispute. Private families, in these expensive times, would undoubtedly be benefited. Morning would again become a theme for the poet, and poor day-light be brought into fashion. Our parliament too would find more time to transact the important business of the nation, on which they so eloquently harangue. Possibly a good dinner would add weight to their arguments, and the not being hungry would prevent their eagerness to adjourn.

But one of its greatest evils, after that above mentioned, is felt by servants, particularly the unhappy cook. She seldom sees the face of day, – never enjoys the enlivening rays of the sun, and can scarcely find time even to change her clothes till the night is too far advanced to render the change necessary. It was

formerly the custom for people to walk after tea, and by doing so acquire a redoubled relish for the variegated beauties of nature; but now the table makes its appearance at so unseasonable an hour, and fashionable etiquette, with the love of good cheer, detains them so long, that in fact it appears the chief business of life to study every art and contrivance how to destroy and squander, not how to improve our time; and, instead of people's eating that they may live, they now live only to eat and drink, that the senses, I presume, may be disabled from torturing them with reproaches. – But to return to our tale.

In the evening, as Edeliza was going down the dance, her eyes, with those of Madeline, were attracted by the same object, – a plume of white feathers, placed on a suit of armour, nodded, and the armour moved. This had such an effect, Madeline screamed, and Edeliza, throwing herself into the arms of De Willows, begged he would protect her from the ghost. The dancing stopped, the whole party was alarmed, and Lady de Morney very much surprised; but, on being informed what had occasioned the bustle, Hugh Camelford flew to discover its cause, and, jumping upon a long table, which was placed by the side of the room for the accommodation of large parties on any particular occasion, he without much ceremony caught hold of the haunted armour, when, to the astonishment of the whole company there instantly appeared, – gentle reader, be not alarmed! – not the ghost of a murdered hero, nor forsaken maid, – but the youngest daughter of Sir Philip de Morney, who skipping from her concealment

upon the table, and from thence to the floor, shook her head, decorated with a profusion of flaxen hair, which curled in natural ringlets, and laughed heartily at the fright she had occasioned.

"Of all the chosts I ever saw, (said the delighted Hugh, catching her up in his arms,) this is by much the prettiest and most entertaining. I should like to be haunted by such an one all the tays of my life."

Lady de Morney called the little culprit, and, having severely reproved her, ordered her to bed, to which she had been sent before the party had began dancing, for some fault she had committed, but had persuaded one of the servants to place her as before described, that she might be a spectator, though she was not permitted to be a partaker in the amusement. Lady de Morney reprimanded the servant; and, had it not been for the general intercession of the company, poor Birtha would have been a prisoner in her own apartment some days.

This incident, simple in itself, happened very unfortunately for the two ladies, who had agreed to accompany Edwin in his subterranean tour. They lingered till the last moment, and then withdrew with visible reluctance; but determined, as soon as they reached their own room, not to say a word to Edwin of their fears, as they knew it would expose them to ridicule, if not to censure, and there was not in the catalogue of human ills or evils any circumstance Madeline would so much have dreaded as being thought meanly of by Edwin de Morney.

Within little more than an hour after the family had

withdrawn, all the servants retired to rest, they were joined by the sanguine and spirited Edwin, accompanied by the ancient veteran, who, though loaded with the heavy burthen of fourscore years, was still active and hearty, his senses unimpaired, and his sturdy limbs still able to carry with firmness their accustomed load. His grey locks hung with silvered dignity upon his aged shoulders, and his eye retained some of their former expression. He made a profound obeisance to the ladies on his entrance, and was received with that condescending affability which his years and long-tried faithfulness demanded.

Edwin's manner of introducing him, flattered the old man's remaining stock of vanity, and revived, in full force, the remembrance of his former exploits, which, though they had not procured him preferment, secured him attention and respect.

"This is my friend Bertrand, (said Edwin, addressing Madeline particularly on his entrance;) though you had some fears with only such a stripling as myself for a leader, you can have none with so experienced and brave a guide."

The old man listened with delighted attention to this eulogium from the lips of his dear young master, whom he had so often dandled on his knee, whom he had been so fortunate as to snatch from a watery grave, and for whom he retained a stronger affection than for any other being on earth. Sir Philip had long maintained him in ease and comfort, and excused him from every employment, but such as tended to the preservation of his health. Both ladies held out their hands, which he respectfully kissed,

and preyed that heaven might bless and reward them for their kindness to their old but grateful servant.

"Now the ceremony of introducing you into the bed-chamber of these fair ladies is over, 'tis time for us to think of proceeding, my old friend, (said Edwin.) If you will assist me in unfastening the trap-door, we will procure lights, and, putting ourselves under your direction, follow wherever you are disposed to lead us.

# CHAP. V

It was the intention of Bertrand to open the door of the subterranean passage, which communicated with Mettingham-castle; but, before they proceeded par, something rushed past them several times: it was rapid, and their candle threw so feeble a light on the walls which surrounded them, that they could not discover what it was.

They hurried on till they came to the square leading to the dungeons, when their attention was arrested, and their fears increased by the barking of a dog. They hesitated, looked with astonishment at each other, and stopped, as if irresolute whether to return or proceed. In the mean while, the little animal made its appearance, jumped and capered about, as it it rejoiced at seeing them in its dreary habitation, attached itself particularly to Roseline, and seemed to recognize an old and beloved friend.

Roseline took it up in her arms, kissed and caressed it; but how to account for meeting with so beautiful, fond, and gentle a creature was not only matter of surprise but wonder.

"Are you sure, sister, (said Edwin, slily glancing a look at the pale face and trembling lips of the terrified Madeline,) – are you sure it is a real dog? – May it not be one of the ghosts, who, in such various shapes, are said to haunt these gloomy regions, and disturb the peaceful slumbers of young maidens, born perhaps two hundred years after they had left the world?"

This gentle reproof restored the roses to the fair cheek from which fear had driven them, while Roseline declared it was really and truly the prettiest dog she had ever seen. Bertrand had looked thoughtful, agitated, and confused, from the moment it appeared.

"This dog must have a master, (said Edwin,) and that master must be somewhere near these cells."

"Perhaps (said Bertrand) some daring villain may have found entrance here, either with the hopes of plunder, or to accomplish designs against the castle; let us therefore, for the present, give up attempting to explore the passage; it might be dangerous to unfasten a door which is now our security."

"Had we not better call for help?" said the again-terrified Madeline.

"Not for the world! (interrupted Edwin;) – how should we be able to account to my mother for being in this place, without burthening her mind with ten thousand suspicions? while, telling her our reasons would most assuredly expose our venerable companion to the certain displeasure of my father. – Do you (said he, addressing Bertrand) know if there is any one a prisoner at this time?"

The old man hesitated. – "I know but little – I apprehend it may be so, – but I – I hope you will excuse my talking on a subject that – that – "

"It must assuredly be so, (said Roseline softly to her brother,) and from that cause proceeded the noises which so repeatedly alarmed us."

Again every one stood for a moment irresolute. Edwin, however, fearful of bringing his father's anger on Bertrand, and scorning to tempt the old man to betray and trust reposed in him, or any secret belonging to another, instantly formed his resolution to act with the utmost caution. He proposed to his sister and Madeline to return to their apartment as soon as Bertrand had pointed out the passage which led to the nunnery. – On being shewn the door which might one day enable him to meet his Madeline, and open to give him a gleam of happiness, Roseline snatched up the little dog, pressed him to her bosom, and vowed to release him from captivity.

As soon as they had reached their own apartment, Bertrand, after promising eternal secrecy, took a respectful leave. Edwin accompanied him to his room, then returned to his sister's and proposed instantly renewing their search.

"This is doing nothing, (said he;) all is still left to conjecture and uncertainty."

"If you mean to go again, (said Madeline,) why did you suffer Bertrand to leave us?"

"From respect to my father and regard to the old man, (he replied;) for should we, my dear Madeline, make any discovery of consequence, with us the secret will rest secure, and, should we be found out, on ourselves alone will fall the displeasure of Sir Philip; but, by this procedure, we empower no one either to betray his secrets or our own. We will, however, carry back with us this little stranger, (continued he, pointing to the dog, who was

sleeping on a cushion which Roseline had placed for him before the fire,) and, when we set him down, we will follow wherever he may choose to lead us: If he be attached to any miserable being confined in one of the cells or dungeons, we may depend upon his returning to his usual habitation."

Once more the trap-door was lifted up; once more the party descended into regions like those of the grave, while the mouldering walls, glittering with the dews of night, and rendered humid with the unwholsome damps of the situation, hung loose and disjointed over their heads, as if to threaten instant destruction.

Turning into a passage which led to a contrary direction to that they had before entered, and which was somewhat wider and less dismal than the other, Roseline sat down the dog, who ran nimbly away, as if well acquainted with the path. They followed with the utmost caution, observing a profound silence. The dog went before them the whole length of the passage, then turned suddenly down a few steps, at the bottom of which a door stood half-open: he rushed in, and appeared to them to stop at some distance. Instantly they heard him growl and bark, and this determined them to proceed.

They passed through two small apartments decently furnished, and, just as they reached an inner door, at which the dog had demanded admittance, they saw it slowly open, and a faint voice appeared to chide the guiltless wanderer for his long, long absence, and then to caress him with fondness.

Edwin, knowing, if he hesitated to proceed, the fears of his companions would increase by the delay, gently tapped at the door. For a minute all was silent; he then gave some louder raps. The same person very soon opened the door, of whom they had caught a transient glimpse when he had granted admittance to the dog. He was evidently alarmed, and in tremulous and terrified accents inquired who was there, – what was the matter, – and what errand brought them? at the same time brandishing a sword, which he had hastily snatched from a chair which stood near him.

"Whoever you are (continued he) that have found a way to this den of misery, you may safely enter, unless you come to add farther oppressions, and inflict additional woes on the head of an injured and guiltless sufferer. If you come with such diabolical intentions, be assured of this, – I will no longer be a passive or silent spectator of such unheard of barbarity, but give up a life in his defence which cruelty has rendered a worthless sacrifice. Forego then your designs, and know he will not long be either a burthen or reproach to his unnatural parent and sordid oppressors."

"We come with no design to injure or oppress, (said Edwin.) We inhabit this castle, and were led by the curiosity incidental to youth into these horrid regions. – Chance conducted us into these apartments, without knowing they were inhabited. – We wish not to alarm or interrupt any one, but of this be assured, if you will inform us how we can serve you, or render your situation more comfortable, we will gladly contribute all in our power to do so.

Your countenance does not appear stamped with guilt, and your determination to protect the injured speaks a noble mind."

The sword was instantly laid down, – the door flew open, – and they were requested to enter by one, who told them his life and courage were only valuable so long as they would enable him to watch and protect the best and most beloved of masters.

Reader, guess, if it be possible, the surprise and astonishment of our trembling and compassionate adventurers, when they beheld and elegant young man, whose countenance was as prepossessing as his situation was interesting, wrapped in a striped-satin morning-gown, which reached to his feet, with his hair hanging in graceful ringlets, and nearly concealing a face pale as death, lying on a kind of couch, and to all appearance in the last stage of a consumption.

On the entrance of Edwin, he took but little notice, but, on seeing Roseline and her friend advance, he looked up, and attempted to rise, but was not equal to the effort, and instantly sunk down in a state of apparent insensibility. Roseline, more agitated and terrified by the whole of this unaccountable and affecting scene than she would have been at the sight of the ghost she had almost expected to meet, flew to support him. She was assisted by Edwin and Madeline, and their united endeavours soon restored the poor sufferer to life and an imperfect sense of his situation.

Having now no longer any fears, he fixed his large blue eyes on the strangers, – wondered from whence they came, – how all

this could happen, – and to what blessed chance it was owing the he saw himself attended and consoled by two celestial beings, for as such he actually considered them; while the pure drops of genuine and the gentlest pity fell softly on his emaciated hand, he raised the precious gems of compassion to his lips, sighed deeply, then, looking earnestly in the face of Roseline, with a smile of doubt and anguish once more sunk down in a state of insensibility, unable to bear the weight of his own agitated and contending feelings.

The attendant, who had strictly observed the whole of this extraordinary scene, now approached to assist in recovering his master. Edwin hastened to his sister's apartment to procure proper restoratives; they were applied with their usual success, and the change they produced gave new life and spirits to all around, particularly Roseline, who concluded they arrived merely to witness his dying moments, and hear him breathe his last sigh.

She was still supporting his languid head on her knee; his hand rested on her arm, his eyes were fixed upon her face, his lips moved, and the words "kind, consoling angel: were all they could understand.

"What can this mean? (said Edwin;) who is your master? – who brought him here? and of what crime has he been guilty that he is sentenced to such a place as this?" —

"I am bound (replied the servant) by the most solemn oath to silence and secresy. By complying with these conditions I

obtained leave to attend him. Were I at liberty to speak, I could a tale unfold would tempt you to curse the world, and even detest those claims which bind man to man. You would be ready to forego the ties of nature, and shun society. – Time will, it must develop the whole of this mystery."

"But my father!" said Edwin.

"Your father, sir, like my dear unhappy master, is blameless and innocent: he has been deceived like many others."

"But why (cried Roseline) are you thus shut out from the world, and banished society? – why, if innocent, is not this poor sufferer placed in a situation more likely to restore him to health? – why thus cruelly deprived not only of liberty, light, and air, but of every other necessary comfort?"

"A higher power has willed it should be so," said the stranger, whose unreserved manner, superior language, honest and open countenance, found an instant passport to their hearts, confirmed their belief, and banished every suspicious doubt of his sincerity.

"Are you involved in the crimes of which this gentleman is suspected?" inquired Madeline.

"No, madam; my only crime is my attachment to him. I am here by my own voluntary choice, and were they to convey him a thousand fathoms deeper in the earth, I would not, unless I were compelled, ever leave him till his noble and guiltless soul was summoned to appear before a more just and merciful tribunal than he has found on earth."

"A thousand blessings on you! (cried Roseline, a tear

trembling in each expressive eye,) for shewing this care and god-like compassion to one so helpless and oppressed. – Brother, surely we may, without deserving reproach, unite our endeavours with those of this friendly stranger, to soften the pangs of misery and death, be they inflicted by whom they may."

"You ought to do so, (cried the lovely Madeline, whose gentle spirit was awakened into action by the scene before her.) – As fellow-creatures, and the children of the same Almighty Parent, it is our duty to assist each other; but we should do more, not remain coldly indifferent to sufferings which, if we cannot entirely remove, we may in some measure alleviate."

"And we will do so! (cried the generous and animated Edwin.) – You too, my honest fellow, (turning to the servant,) shall share in our kind offices. You deserve the thanks of every good Christian, and to be immortalized for your faithful attachment to one so helpless and unable to reward you. – But how is this?" observing the invalid had sunk into a gentle and quiet sleep; like the peaceful slumber of an infant.

"This has been the case for some weeks. His spirits depressed by the corroding anguish which preys upon his mind, his body has become a victim to the conflict, and the soul of my master will soon, by quitting this earthly tenement, escape the farther persecution of his enemies. Much, much as I love him, I should rejoice at his release."

The words trembled on his tongue, and the tear of manly compassion rolled down his cheek.

"Has he no one to attend him? (said Roseline, looking at him with eyes that beamed with all the heavenly animation which at that moment throbbed around her heart;) has he no advice?"

"Only such as I can give him, madam. Poor and ignorant as I am, he has never been allowed any other physician, or better tutor than myself; but I trust, if the Almighty would again restore him to health, he would now meet with those who would assist in performing a task for which I was never calculated."

"Has he no bed to sleep on?" cried Roseline, gently removing his languid head upon a cushion that laid on a couch, without awakening him.

"There is one in the inner apartment, but this being the most comfortable and airy room, he will not leave it."

"I will fetch some pillows."

She did so; they were instantly placed under his head. Still he slept as if her were never to awake again.

"In the morning, (said Roseline,) at the foot of the stairs, which your will find by turning to the left, at the end of this passage, I will leave some few trifles and comfortable cordials, which I hope will be of service.

"And tomorrow night, at about this time, you may expect us again, (said Edwin.) I hope your master will then have shaken off this death-like slumber, and be able to converse with us."

"Perhaps he may, (replied Albert, the name of this faithful servant;) but he never talks much. I had taught him to read, but they took away our books, and since that time I am afraid he has

lost the remembrance of the little knowledge he had of reading. He has lately learned to play a few simple tunes on the lute, – that sometimes amuses him."

"We will bring you some books, (said Roseline,) and surely, Edwin, you and I can assist Albert in the delightful task of restoring by friendship what has been lost by cruelty."

Albert informed them they were regularly served with their meals, but never saw the person who brought them, all intercourse with any one being forbidden, to prevent the possibility of discovery or escape; but, he said, they had better food and more indulgences than had been allowed them in their former prison, which consisted only of one room.

The party now retired with the utmost caution, lest they should disturb the apparently-peaceful slumbers of the prisoner, and deprive him of his only refuge from misery.

Before they parted, Roseline and her brother, actuated by the same generous feelings in behalf of this unfortunate young man, and his equally unfortunate companion, satisfied, should there be found any thing in their conduct to condemn, (which they could not bring themselves to think,) in their present situation there was much to pity, resolved to unite in their endeavours of relieving their miseries, and softening the rigours of a confinement, of which they knew not the cause; but they were told, the object who had most excited their compassion was innocent, and therefore they determined to think him so till his own conduct, or an explanation from any other quarter, proved him otherwise. It is

true, they had nothing on which to found their belief but the word of a stranger, and him they found in the humble capacity of a servant; but, though a stranger, he had, by his simple, modest, and unaffected language, given ample proofs in their opinion of his sincerity.

They now left the cells, and retired instantly to bed, – dreamed of the prisoner, and sometimes imagined they could distinguish his groans; in fact, they thought and talked of him, and him only.

Early in the morning, Roseline carried every little nicety she could procure, and left them at the foot of the stairs, – then hurried back to her room, not daring to stop and make inquiries, lest the person who supplied the object of her pity with his daily food should discover and betray her benevolent designs.

Madeline was now making a rapid progress in her recovery, and was every hour in fear of receiving a summons from the abbess to return to the nunnery. Edwin participated in all her fears, and lamented, in the language of tender affection, the cruel necessity which compelled her to leave the castle, protesting neither walls nor vows should long divide them, and swearing to release her from a situation, which, though sanctioned by religion, only bigotry, superstition, and priestcraft, could justify; which he knew would not only destroy all his prospects of happiness, but, as he could not disbelieve the fascinating hopes he had not absolutely been forbidden to cherish, the happiness also of a beloved object, dearer to him than life, without whom fortune, honour, prosperity, and youth, would be robbed of all

their value.

The next day, accompanied by Bertrand, Edwin stole by another entrance into the lower recesses of the castle, not mentioning a word of the prisoner, and carefully avoiding that quarter in which he was confined. They first explored the subterraneous passage, leading to the nunnery, and found fewer impediments in their way than they expected. They easily gained an entrance into the chapel, having fixed upon an hour when they knew all the fathers and nuns would be engaged in their cells. They found the opening under the organ, and in that part of the chapel appropriated to the use of the nuns, the door being concealed from observation by a very curious tomb, belonging to the ancient family of De G – .

They entered next the passage leading to Mettingham-castle, and determined to see the whole of it. Here they met with many difficulties: in some places huge stones had fallen from the walls, – in others the arch-way was so low they were almost obliged to crawl, – while toads, snakes, and various kinds of reptiles impeded their progress; when, at length, they reached the end of this wonderful labyrinth, the production of labour and art, they found themselves close to the ballium of Mettingham-castle, and under a strong machiolated and embattled gate.

They now discovered another short passage, which was terminated by a door that opened to the outer ballium, and through which the cavalry could sally in any case of emergency. They ventured cautiously to look around them. Edwin's mind,

however, was chiefly occupied by one dear object, and he secretly rejoiced at having found the means of escaping with Madeline, should the obstinacy of her parents, or the ambition of his own, leave him no other resource.

He likewise, in the course of the day, but unaccompanied by any one, opened the door on the stair-case leading to the South tower. He felt a kind of repugnance at taking this step, but determined, as matters were now circumstanced, to go through the whole of this unpleasant business at once, that nothing might be left to conjecture. He also recollected that it would not only put an end to that restless curiosity which had long dwelt upon his mind, but enable him to judge whether it would be possible to remove the dying prisoner into a more airy and convenient room, without the hazard of a discovery.

This wind of the castle he knew was totally unoccupied, as in his boyish days he had frequently, and at all times gone that way to the ramparts to lodge his playthings in a secret apartment in one of the highest towers, and never in his peregrination had met with a human being.

On attempting first to open the door, he was a good deal startled at the noise it occasioned, and was almost buried beneath the heap of cobwebs and dirt which fell and enveloped him in a cloud of dust. – Some birds too, that had here found a sage asylum, flew in terror around him. Not willing to disturb them more than was necessary, he unfastened a narrow casement, to give those opportunity of escaping who wished to obtain their

liberty. He then stole softly and cautiously across the room to an opposite door, which opened without any difficulty, and he entered a second apartment, much larger and more commodious than the first. It was hung with ancient tapestry, on which time and moth had made many depredations; but, in some parts of it, the full-length figures remained perfect, and the colours retained some of their beautiful shades. He soon discovered that it represented the most striking and interesting scenes in the well-known history of Hero and Leander, from his first seeing her, in the temple of Venus, at Seftos, in Thrace, till the last closing scene of their unfortunate loves.

The figures of the lovers were fine, and in excellent preservation, and the tapestry was of so superior a kind, that it gave as full force and expression to the faces and drapery as the finest painting could have conveyed. The temple, the palace, the turret, and the Hellespont, upon whose waves the rising and setting sun were alternately reflected, with the downy swan, in snowy dignity, which was seen laving on its bosom were admirably depicted.

The nurse, or attendant of the faithful Hero stood at full length on the edge of the water, which gently undulated near the walls of the palace, pointing to the waves, and as if in the act of telling her fond, impatient mistress her lover was coming, while she, with modest sweetness, seemed fearful of stealing a look at the element which contained a treasure dearer to her soul that the whole of her ambitious father's dominions.

In another part, he saw the lifeless body of Leander, and the despairing Hero in the act of throwing herself into the Hellespont, which had unfortunately proved the grave of her lover.

Edwin stood a long time, silently admiring this pathetic tale: it had an instantaneous effect upon his feelings; it served to remind him of the difficulties he should have to encounter in his attachment to Madeline, and he could have kissed the senseless portrait of the old Egyptian woman for her kind and faithful attentions to the persecuted lovers.

In the middle of the room stood a square table, on which were carelessly spread a number of papers. Four massy silver candlesticks were likewise placed upon it, each of which contained a wax-candle, that had never been lighted, and an old writing, to which was annexed a vast many seals, laid folded up under them.

This he concluded was the mystic bond which held in captivity the restless spirit it was supposed to confine. Edwin opened and attempted to read it. In some parts the writing was defaced, and the whole of the language so unintelligible, he very soon replaced it in its former situation, imagining that, if the ghost was not to regain its liberty till the bond could be read, it would rest in peace for ever, and suffer others to do the same.

In the chimney stood an antique grate, that had once been bright, and still shewed some of its brilliant features through the rust by which it was enveloped. A few chairs were standing here

and there, but they were falling to decay. He then opened another door, which led him into a vaulted chamber, in which were placed the tattered remains of a bed, that had been handsome, and could be repaired. A book of devotion was lying upon it. The windows were high and narrow, admitting but little light, notwithstanding which they were secured by iron bars of immense thickness, so strongly, that, had they been lower, it would have been impossible for the arm of the strongest man to remove or shake them.

This led him to conclude it was originally designed for the security of prisoners of rank, its distance from the ground precluding any communication with the people on guard; and he shuddered as he recollected how many, like the poor prisoner in the cells, might have lingered away their wretched existence in this very apartment, in the hopeless expectation of meeting with a release.

He next carefully searched in every part of the room, to discover if there was not a more secret entrance, but found none. – He put the key into his pocket, as he had before done that of the trap-door, and in the morning, unobserved by Bertrand, had the precaution not to lock the door of the subterraneous passage, leaving it well secured by the bolts and bars which were on the inside.

He now hastened to replace all the rest of the keys in the repository from whence he had taken them, and was satisfied those he retained in his own possession would not be missed by

his father or any one else.

After this he returned to join the family, and said not a word of what he had seen, nor the plans which floated in his own mind, in consequence of the morning peregrinations he had taken.

# CHAP. VI

In the course of the day, Roseline asked a thousand questions, with apparent indifference, of De Clavering, respecting the nature of consumptive cases, their symptoms, progress, &c. and how people ought to manage themselves in regard to diet, who were confined in damp regions of a dungeon, or immured in the narrow precincts of a prison; to all which she received such plain, direct, and experienced answers, as she cherished hopes would enable her, with the approbation of heaven, to be the humble means of restoring to health, or a more promising degree of convalescence, the interesting object whose secret sufferings hap stimulated her to make these unusual inquiries; and what gave new life and added energy to her benevolent hopes was the arrival of a letter from Sir Philip to Lady de Morney, in which he was reluctantly obliged to inform her that his stay in London was unfortunately prolonged, and he was sorry to find his absence from the castle was likely to be protracted a considerable length of time from the slow progress of the law, and the difficulties thrown in the way by his opponents. This account would have given her paid a few days before; it was now a source of pleasure, which produced the most sanguine expectations of preserving, under Providence, the life of a fellow-creature, or, at least, of rendering its closing scene less hopeless and more comfortable.

A sensibility, like that which was lodged in the bosom of the

artless and innocent Roseline, I would wish all my sex to possess. So far from tempting her to run from misery, it led her in search of it, and, when found, it awakened every gentle passion of the mind into immediate and resolute action; while the fictitious feeling, the affected sensibility of a modern miss is confined to kicking, fainting, or squalling at sight of a wretched object, and the little they may really have will evaporate in the trouble of acting their part so as to impose on the minds of others an unjust sense of their own delicate and extreme compassion.

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.