ALESSANDRO MANZONI

THE BETROTHED

|I PROMESSI SPOSI|

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THE BETROTHED |2|

Chapter|19|

The signor count formed the resolution to make use of the father provincial to cut the knot of these perplexities; whether he would have thought of this, had it not been suggested by Attilio, it is impossible to determine, inasmuch as he would never have acknowledged this to be the case. It was important that one of his family, his nephew, should not be obliged to yield in an open controversy; it was a point essential to the reputation of his power, which he had so much at heart. The satisfaction which his nephew might himself take of his adversary would be a remedy worse than the disease. Should he order him to leave his castle, when obedience would seem like flying from the field of battle? Legal force could have no power over the capuchin; the clergy were entirely exempt from secular jurisdiction. All that he could attempt against such an adversary was to endeavour to have him removed and the power to do this rested with the father provincial.

Now the count and the father provincial were old acquaintances; they saw each other rarely, but always with great demonstrations of friendship, and reiterated offers of service.

When all was matured in his mind, the count invited the father provincial to a dinner, where he found a company of choice guests; noblemen, who, by their deportment, their native boldness, and lordly disdain, impressed those around them with the idea of their superiority and power. There were also present some clients, who, attached to the house by hereditary devotion, and the service of a life, sat at their lord's table, in a spirit of implicit submission, “devouring his discourse” and his dinner with unqualified and equal approbation.

At table, the count led the conversation to Madrid; he spoke of the court, the count-duke, the ministers, the family of the governor; of the bull-fights, which he could well describe,

having seen them from a distinguished place; of the escurial, of which he could speak in its most minute details, because a page of the count-duke had conducted him into every nook of it. For some time all the company were attentive to him alone; then they divided into separate parties. He continued for a while to relate a number of anecdotes, as in confidence, to the father provincial, who was seated near him. But suddenly he gave a turn to the conversation, and spoke of Cardinal Barberini, who was a capuchin, and brother to the reigning pope, Urban VIII. As they left the table, the count invited the father provincial to go with him into another apartment.

The noble lord gave a seat to the reverend father, and taking one himself, said, “Considering the friendship that exists between us, I thought I was authorised to speak to your reverence of an affair equally interesting to us both, and which had best be concluded between us without going farther, which might—and I will tell you frankly what it is, as I am certain we shall have the same opinion on the subject. Tell me, in your convent of Pescarenico, is there not a Father Christopher of ***?”

The father provincial bowed assent.

“I pray your reverence to tell me, frankly, as a friend,—this man—this father—I have no personal acquaintance with him, 'tis true; I know many fervent, prudent, humble capuchins, who are worth their weight in gold; I have been the friend of the order from infancy; but in a numerous family there is always some individual—— And I have reason to think that Friar Christopher is a man—a little fond of quarrelling—who has not all the prudence he might have: I imagine he has caused your reverence much anxiety.”

“I perceive there is some intrigue,” thought the father provincial; “it is my fault; I knew that this holy man should have been sent from pulpit to pulpit, and not have been suffered to remain six months in a convent in the country.—Oh,” said he, aloud, “I am truly sorry that your excellency has conceived such an opinion of Father Christopher; for I know that his conduct in the convent is exemplary, and that he is esteemed by every body.”

“I understand very well; your reverence ought—— However, I would as a friend inform you of a matter which it is necessary you should know. This Father Christopher has taken under his protection a young man of that country, one of whom your reverence must have heard; him who recently escaped from the hands of justice, on the terrible day of San Martin—Lorenzo Tramaglino!”

“I had not heard of this,” said the father provincial; “but your excellency knows that it is the duty of our order to seek those who have gone astray, for the purpose of leading them back.”

“That is true; but I thought it best to give you this information, because, if ever his holiness—the intelligence of it may have been sent to Rome.”

“I am much obliged to your excellency for the information. However, I am certain, that if the affair is enquired into, it will be found that Father Christopher has had no connection with this man but for the purpose of doing him good. I know the father well.”

“Your reverence knows, then, better than I, what he was in the world, and the pranks of his youth.”

“It is the glory of our habit, signor count, that whatever a man may have been in the world, once clothed with that, he is quite another person; and since the Father Christopher has belonged to our order——”

“I believe it from the bottom of my heart, I believe it; but sometimes—as the proverb says—The habit does not make the monk.”

The proverb was not much to the purpose, but the count had cited it, in place of another which occurred to him,—“The wolf may change his skin, but he does not become a dog.”

“I have certain information,” pursued he.

“If your excellency knows positively that the father has committed a fault (we are all liable to err), I wish you would inform me of it. I am his superior—unworthily, 'tis true; but it is my duty to watch over, and, if necessary, correct——”

“Besides the circumstance of his granting protection to the man I have mentioned, this same Father Christopher has

undertaken to contend—but we can settle it together with my nephew, Don Roderick."

"Oh, I am sorry for that, I am sorry for that, truly."

"My nephew is young, rash, and not accustomed to provocation."

"It becomes my duty to obtain the best information on the subject. Your excellency, with your experience of the world, knows better than I, that we are all frail, liable to error—some one way, some another; and if our Father Christopher has failed——"

"But these are things which had better be settled between ourselves; to spread them abroad would only increase the evil. These trifles are often the cause of numerous embarrassments and difficulties, which might have been prevented by some decisive act in the commencement. That is now our business; my nephew is young; the monk, from what I hear, has still the spirit, the inclinations of a young man; but we, who are advanced in years, (too true, is it not, reverend father?) must have prudence to act for the young, and apply a remedy to their follies. Happily there is yet time; we must remove the fire from the straw. An individual who does not do well in one place may in another; your reverence might see to his being removed, might find a suitable station for the friar at a sufficient distance —all may be easily arranged—or rather, there's no harm done."

The father provincial had expected this conclusion from the commencement of the conversation. "I perceive," thought he, "where you would lead me; when a poor friar gives one of you the least umbrage, the superior must make him march, right or wrong."

When the count had finished, the provincial said aloud, "I understand what the signor count would say; but before taking a step——"

"It is a step, and it is not a step, very reverend father: it is only a natural event, such as might happen in the ordinary course of affairs; and if we do not do it quickly, I foresee a deluge of disorders, a mountain of grievances. If we do not put a stop to the affair between ourselves, it is not possible it should remain a secret. And then it is not only my nephew—you raise a

wasp's nest, very reverend father. We are a powerful house—we have adherents."

The father bowed in assent. The count proceeded. "You understand me; they are all people who have blood in their veins, and who in the world—count as something. They are proud of their honour; the affair will become theirs, and then —— Even those who are the friends of peace—— It would be a grief of heart to me to be obliged—— I, who have always had such a friendship for the capuchins! The fathers, for their ministry to be efficient, should be in harmony with all men—no misunderstandings: besides, they have relations abroad—and these affairs of punctilio extend, ramify—— I, too, have a certain dignity to maintain—— His excellency—— my noble colleagues—— It becomes a party matter——"

"It is true," said the provincial, "that Father Christopher is a preacher; I had already the intention—I have even been solicited to do it—but under these circumstances, and just at this time, it might be considered as a punishment; and to punish without being well acquainted——"

"But it is not a punishment; it is a prudent precaution, an honest means of preventing evils that might—— I have explained myself."

"The signor count and myself understand each other very well; but the facts being those which your excellency has adduced, it is impossible but that they should in part be known through the country: there are every where firebrands, or idle spirits, who find pleasure in the contests of the monks and the nobility, and love to make malignant observations. Each one has his own dignity to preserve; and I, in the character of a superior, have an express duty—the honour of the habit—it is not my own affair—it is a deposit which—and since the signor your nephew is so irritated, as your excellency has said, he might take it as a satisfaction offered to him, and—I do not say boast of it, but——"

"You jest, reverend father, surely; my nephew is a cavalier of consideration in the world, as he should be; but in his relations with me, he is but a child, and will do neither more nor less than I prescribe to him. And, moreover, he shall never know it. The thing is done between ourselves; there is no necessity for

rendering an account to him. Let not that give you any uneasiness; I am accustomed to keep silence on important subjects. As to the idle talk of others, what can be said? It is a very common thing to see a friar leave one place to go and preach at another."

"However, in order to prevent malicious observations, it would be necessary, on this occasion, that the nephew of your excellency should give some demonstration of friendship, of deference,—not for us, but for the order."

"Certainly, certainly, that is but right; it is not necessary, however; I know that the capuchins are highly esteemed by my nephew, as well as by our whole family. But, in this case, something more signal is very proper. Leave it to me, very reverend father: I will give such orders to my nephew—that is to say, it shall be prudently suggested to him, that he may not suspect what has passed between us, because we need not apply a plaster where there is no wound. As to that which we have agreed on, the sooner it is done the better; and if you had a place at some distance—to remove every occasion——"

"They want a preacher at Rimini; and perhaps without this motive I should have thought——"

"That is very opportune, very opportune. And when?"

"Since the thing is to be done, it shall be quickly."

"Certainly, certainly; better to-day than to-morrow. And," continued he, rising, "if I or my adherents can render any service to the good father capuchins——"

"We have often experienced the kindness of the house," said the father provincial, also rising, and following his vanquisher to the door of the apartment.

"We have extinguished a spark," said the count,—"a spark, very reverend father, which might have excited a great conflagration. Between good friends, things are easily arranged."

They then entered the next apartment, and mixed with the rest of the company.

The count obtained his end: Friar Christopher was made to travel on foot from Pescarenico to Rimini, as we shall see.

One evening a capuchin from Milan arrived at Pescarenico, with a packet for the superior: it was an order for Father Christopher to repair to Rimini for the purpose of preaching the Lent sermons. The letter contained instructions to the superior, to insinuate to the friar, that he should give up every attention to any business he might have on hand in the country he must leave, and that he should not maintain any correspondence there. The friar, who was the bearer of the order, was to be the companion of his journey. The superior said nothing that night, but in the morning he sent for Father Christopher, showed him the order, and told him to take his basket, staff, and girdle, and with the friar, whom he presented to him, commence his journey.

Imagine what a blow this was for our good father. Renzo, Lucy, Agnes, passed rapidly over his mind, and he thought, "Great God! what will these unfortunate people do, when I am no longer here?" but raising his eyes to heaven, he placed his hope and confidence there. He crossed his hands on his breast, and bowed his head in token of obedience; he then went to his cell, took his basket, his staff, and his breviary, and after having bid farewell to his brethren, and obtained the benediction of his superior, took, with his companion, the route prescribed.

We have said that Don Roderick, more than ever determined on the accomplishment of his infamous enterprise, had resolved to seek the assistance of a powerful man. We cannot give his name, nor even hazard a conjecture with regard to it; this is the more astonishing, inasmuch as we find notices of this personage in several histories of the time. The identity of the facts does not leave a doubt of the identity of the man; but there is evidently an extreme care to avoid the mention of his name. Francesco Rivola, in his life of the Cardinal Federigo Borromeo, speaking of him, says, "He was a lord as powerful from his wealth as illustrious from his birth," and nothing further. Giuseppe Ripamonti makes farther mention of him, as a *man*, this *man*, a *person*, this *person*. "I will relate," says he, "the case of a man, who, belonging to the most powerful family in the city, chose the country for his residence; and there, assuring himself of impunity by the force of crime, he set at nought the law and the magistrates, the king and the nobles. Placed on the extreme confines of the state, he led an independent life; he

offered an asylum to the outlaw; he was outlawed himself, and then absolved from the sentence which had led——" We will hereafter quote from this author other passages, which will confirm the history we are about to relate.

To do that which was forbidden by the laws; to be the arbiter, the supreme judge in the affairs of others, without other interest than a thirst for power; to be feared by all, even by those who were the objects of fear to all men; these had ever been the controlling principles which actuated the conduct of this man. From his youth he had been filled with impatient envy at the power and authority of others; superior to the greater number in riches and retinue, and to all perhaps in birth and audacity, he constrained them to renounce all competition with him; he took some into his friendship, but was far from admitting any equality between himself and them; his proud and disdainful spirit could only be content with those who were willing to acknowledge their inferiority, and to yield to him on all occasions. When, however, they found themselves in any difficulty, they did not fail to solicit the aid of so powerful an auxiliary; and a refusal from him would have been the destruction of his reputation, and of the high station which he had assumed. So that, for himself and others, he had performed such deeds that not all his own power and that of his family could prevent his banishment and outlawry; and he was obliged to leave the state. I believe that it is to this circumstance Ripamonti alludes:—

"He was obliged to leave the country: but his audacity was unsubdued; he went through the city on horseback, followed by a pack of hounds, and with the sound of the trumpet; passing by the court of the palace, he sent an abusive message to the governor by one of the guards."

In his absence he did not desist from his evil practices; he maintained a correspondence with his friends, "who were united to him," says Ripamonti, "in a secret league of atrocious deeds."

It appears that he even contracted new habits, of which the same historian speaks with mysterious brevity. "Foreign princes had recourse to him for important murders, and they even sent him reinforcements of soldiers to act under his orders."

At last, whether the proclamation of his outlawry was withdrawn from some powerful intercession, or that the audacity of the man outweighed all authority, he resolved to return home; not exactly to Milan, but to a castle on the frontier of the Bergamascan territory, which then belonged to the Venetian state. “This house,” says Ripamonti, “was a focus of sanguinary mandates. The household was composed of such as had been guilty of great crimes; the cooks, and the scullions even, were not free from the stain of murder.” Besides this notable household, he had men resembling them, stationed in different places of the two states, on the confines of which he lived.

All, however tyrannical themselves, had been obliged to choose between the friendship or enmity of this tyrannical man, and it fared ill with those who dared resist him. It was in vain to hope to preserve neutrality or independence; his orders to do such or such a thing, or to refrain, were arbitrary, and resistance was useless. Recourse was had to him on all occasions, and by all sorts of people, good as well as bad, for the arrangements of their difficulties; so that he occasionally became the protector of the oppressed, who could not have obtained redress in any other way, public or private. He was almost always the minister of wickedness, revenge, and caprice; but the various ways in which he had employed his power impressed upon all minds a great idea of his capability to devise and perform his acts in defiance of every obstruction, whether lawful or unlawful. The fame of ordinary tyrants was confined to their own districts, and every district had its tyrant; but the fame of this extraordinary man was spread throughout the Milanese; his life was the subject of popular tales, and his name carried with it something powerful and mysterious. Every tyrant was suspected of alliance with him, every assassin of acting under his orders; at every extraordinary crime, of the author of which they were ignorant, the name of this man was uttered, whom, thanks to the circumspection of our historians, we are obliged to call the Unknown.

The distance between his castle and that of Don Roderick was not more than six miles. The latter had long felt the necessity of keeping on good terms with such a neighbour, and had proffered his services, and entitled himself to the same sort

of friendship, as the rest; he was however, careful to conceal the nature and strictness of the union between them. Don Roderick liked to play the tyrant, but not openly; tyranny was with him a means, not an end; he wished to live at ease in the city, and enjoy the advantages, pleasures, and honours of civilised life. To insure this, he was obliged to exhibit management, to testify a great esteem for his relations, to cultivate the friendship of persons in place, in order to sway the balance of justice for his own peculiar purposes. Now, an intimacy with such a man would not have advanced his interests in such points, and especially with his uncle; but a slight acquaintance with him might be considered unavoidable under the circumstances, and therefore in some degree excusable. One morning Don Roderick, equipped for the chase, with an escort of retainers, among whom was Griso, took the road to the castle of the Unknown.

Chapter|20|

The castle of the Unknown was situated above a narrow and shady valley, on the summit of a cliff, which, belonging to a rugged chain of mountains, was nevertheless separated from them by banks, caverns, and precipices. It was only accessible on the side which overlooked the valley. This was a declivity rather steep, but equal, and continued towards the summit: it was occupied as pasture ground, and its lower borders were cultivated, having habitations scattered here and there. The bottom was a bed of stones, through which flowed, according to the season, a small brook, or a large torrent, which served for a boundary between the two territories. The opposite chain of mountains, which formed, as it were, the other wall of the valley, was slightly cultivated towards its base; the rest was composed of precipitous rocks without verdure, and thrown together irregularly and wildly. The scene altogether was one of savage grandeur.

From this castle, as the eagle from his eyrie, its lawless owner overlooked his domain, and heard no human sound above him. He could embrace at a view all the environs, the declivities, the abyss, the practicable approaches. To the eyes of one viewing it from above, the winding path which ascended towards the terrible habitation could be perceived throughout its whole course, and from the windows and loopholes, the signor could leisurely count the steps of the person ascending, and examine him with the closest scrutiny. With the garrison of bravoes which he kept at the castle he could defy an army, which he would have crushed in the valley beneath, before an individual could reach the summit. But none, except such as were friends with the master of the castle, dared set foot even in the valley. Tragical stories were related of some who had attempted the dangerous enterprise, but these stories were already of times long past, and none of the young vassals could remember to have encountered a human being in this place, except under his lord's authority.

Don Roderick arrived in the middle of the valley, at the foot of the cliff, at the commencement of the rugged and winding path; at this point was a tavern, which might have been called a guard-house; an old sign, with a rising sun painted on both sides, was suspended before the door; but the people gave the place the more appropriate name of *Malanotte*.

At the noise of the approaching cavalcade a young boy, well furnished with swords and pistols, appeared on the threshold of the door; and casting a rapid glance at the party, informed three ruffians, who were playing at cards within the house, of its approach. He who appeared to be the chief among them arose, and recognising a friend of his master, saluted him respectfully; Don Roderick returned the salutation with much politeness, and asked if the signor was at the castle. The man replied in the affirmative; and he, dismounting, threw his horse's bridle to Aimwell, one of his retinue. Then, taking his musket from his shoulder, he gave it to *Montanarolo*, as if to relieve himself from an useless encumbrance, but in reality because he knew that on this cliff none were permitted to bear arms. Drawing from his pocket some *berlinghe*, he gave them to *Tanabuso*, saying, "Wait here till my return; and in the mean time amuse yourselves with these honest people." Then presenting to the chief of the band some crowns of gold for himself and his companions, he ascended the path with Griso.

Another bravo belonging to the Unknown, who was on his way to the castle, bore him company; thus sparing him the trouble of declaring his name to whomsoever he should meet. When he arrived at the castle (Griso was left at the gate) he was conducted through a long succession of dark galleries, and various halls hung with muskets, sabres, and other weapons of warfare; each of these halls was guarded by a bravo. After having waited some time, he was admitted to the presence of the Unknown, who advanced to meet him, replying to his salutation, and at the same time, as was his custom, even with his oldest friends, eying him from head to foot. He was tall in stature; and from the baldness of his head, and the deep furrows of his countenance, appeared to be much older than sixty, which was his real age; his countenance and movements, the firmness of his features, and the fire which sparkled from

his eyes, indicated a vigour of body as well as of mind which would have been remarkable even in a young man.

Don Roderick told him he had come for advice and assistance; that, having embarked in a difficult enterprise, from which his honour did not suffer him to withdraw, he had remembered the promises of one who never promised in vain; and he then related his abominable intrigue. The Unknown, who had already heard something of it, listened with much attention to the recital, both because he naturally loved such relations, and because Friar Christopher, that avowed enemy of tyrants, was concerned in it. Don Roderick spoke of the difficulty of the undertaking, the distance of the place, a monastery, the *signora*,—but the Unknown, as if prompted by the demon in his heart, interrupted him, saying, that he took the charge of the affair on himself. He wrote down the name of the poor Lucy, and dismissed Don Roderick, saying, "In a little while you will receive news from me."

The reader may remember the villain Egidio, who lived near the walls of the monastery into which Lucy had been received; now, he was one of the most intimate colleagues in crime of the Unknown; and this accounts for the promptness with which this lord assumed the charge of the undertaking. However, no sooner was he left alone than he repented of his precipitation. He had for some time experienced, not remorse, but a vague uneasiness on account of his crimes; at every new addition to them, the remembrance of those he had previously committed pressed upon his memory, if not upon his conscience, and loaded it with an intolerable weight. An undefinable repugnance to the commission of crime, such as he had experienced and subdued at the outset of his career, returned with all its force to overwhelm his spirit. The thoughts of the future contributed to render the past more painful. "To grow old! to die! and then?" And the image of death, which he had so often met undaunted, in face of an enemy, and which seemed to inflame his courage and double his energy—this same image now, in the midnight silence of his castle, quelled his spirit, and impressed him with an awe which he in vain endeavoured to resist. Formerly, the frequent spectacle of violence and murder, inspiring him with a ferocious emulation, had served as a kind of authority against his conscience; now the confused but

terrible idea arose in his mind of individual responsibility at the bar of God. The idea of having risen above the crowd of vulgar criminals, and of having left them far behind, an idea which once flattered his pride, now impressed him with a sentiment of fearful solitude; and experiencing at certain moments of despondence the power and presence of that God whose existence he had hitherto neither admitted nor denied, having been wholly immersed in himself, his accumulated crimes rose up, to justify the sentence which was about to condemn him to eternal banishment from the divine presence. But this uneasiness was not suffered to appear, either in his words or his actions; he carefully concealed it under the appearance of more profound and intense ferocity. Regretting the time when he was accustomed to commit iniquity without remorse, without any other solicitude than for its success, he made every effort to recall these habits and feelings; to take pleasure in wickedness; and glory in his shame, in order to convince himself that he was still the same man.

This accounts for the promptitude of his promise to Don Roderick: he wished to deprive himself of the chance of hesitation; but, scarcely alone, he felt his resolution fail, and thoughts arose in his mind which almost tempted him to break his word, and expose his weakness to an inferior accomplice. But with a violent effort he put an end to the painful conflict. He sent for Nibbio|[30]|, one of the most skilful and resolute ministers of his atrocities, and of whom he had made use in his correspondence with Egidio, and ordered him to mount his horse, to go to Monza, to inform Egidio of the affair he had undertaken, and to require his assistance for its accomplishment.

The messenger returned sooner than his master expected him with the reply of Egidio; the enterprise was easy and safe; the Unknown had only to send a carriage with two or three bravoes, well disguised; Egidio took charge of the rest. The Unknown, whatever passed in his mind, gave orders to Nibbio to arrange every thing, and to set out immediately on the expedition.

If, to perform the horrible service which had been required of him, Egidio had depended only on his ordinary means, he

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would not certainly have sent back so explicit an answer. But in the asylum of the convent, where every thing appeared as an obstacle, the villain had a means known to himself alone; and that which would have been an insurmountable difficulty to others was to him an instrument of success. We have related how the unhappy signora once lent an ear to his discourse, and the reader may have surmised that this was not the last time; it was only the first step in the path of abomination and blood. The same voice which then addressed her, become imperious through crime, now imposed on her the sacrifice of the innocent girl who had been intrusted to her care.

The proposition appeared frightful to Gertrude; to lose Lucy in any manner would have seemed to her a misfortune, a punishment; and to deprive herself of her with criminal perfidy, to add to her crimes by dealing treacherously with the confiding girl, was to take away the only gleam of virtuous enjoyment which had shone upon her mysterious and wicked career. She tried every method to avoid obedience; every method, except the only infallible one, that was in her power. Crime is a severe and inflexible master, against whom we are strong only when we entirely rebel. Gertrude could not resolve on that, and obeyed.

The day agreed on came; the hour approached; Gertrude, alone with Lucy, bestowed on her more caresses than ordinary, which the poor girl returned with increasing tenderness, as the lamb licks the hand of the shepherd who entices it without the fold into the murderous power of the butcher who there awaits it.

"I want you to do me a great favour; many are ready to obey me, but there is none but yourself whom I can trust. I must speak immediately on an affair of great importance, which I will relate to you some other time, to the superior of the capuchins, who brought you hither, my dear Lucy; but no one must know that I have sent for him. I rely on you to carry a secret message——"

Lucy was astonished at such a request, and alleged her reasons for declining to perform it; without her mother! without a companion! in a solitary road! in a strange country! But Gertrude, instructed in an infernal school, showed great astonishment and displeasure at her refusal, after having been

loaded with so many benefits; she affected to treat her excuses as frivolous. “In open day! a short distance! a road that Lucy had travelled a few days before!” She said so much, that the poor girl, touched with gratitude and shame, enquired, “What was to be done?”

“Go to the convent of the capuchins; ask for the superior, tell him to come here immediately, but to let no one suspect that he comes at my request.”

“But what shall I say to the portress, who has never seen me go out, and will ask me where I am going?”

“Endeavour to pass without being seen; and if you cannot, say you are going to some church to perform your orisons.”

A new difficulty for Lucy! to tell a falsehood! but the signora was so offended at her refusal, and so ridiculed her for preferring a vain scruple to her gratitude, that the unhappy girl, alarmed rather than convinced, replied, “Well, I will go; may God be my guide and protector.”

Gertrude, from her grated window, followed her with anxious looks, and when she saw her about to cross the threshold, overcome by irresistible emotion, she cried, “Stop, Lucy.”

Lucy returned to the window; but another idea, the one accustomed to predominate, had resumed its sway over the mind of the unhappy Gertrude. She affected dissatisfaction at the directions she had given; described the road again to Lucy, and dismissed her: “Do exactly as I have told you, and return quickly.”

Lucy passed the door of the cloister unobserved, and proceeding on her way with downcast eyes, found, with the aid of the directions given, and her own recollections, the gate of the suburb; timid and trembling, she continued on the high road, until she arrived at that which led to the convent. This road was buried, like the bed of a river, between two high banks, bordered with trees, whose branches united to form an arch above it. On finding it entirely deserted, she felt her fears revive; she hurried on, but gained courage from the sight of a travelling carriage which had stopped a short distance before her; before the door of it, which was open, there stood two travellers looking about, as if uncertain of their way. As she approached, she heard one of them say, “Here is a good girl,

who will tell us the way." As she came on a line with the carriage, this same man addressed her: "My good girl, can you tell us the way to Monza?"

"You are going in the wrong direction," replied the poor girl; "Monza lies there." As she turned to point it out, his companion (it was Nibbio) seized her by the waist, and lifted her from the ground. Lucy screamed from surprise and terror; the ruffian threw her into the carriage; a third, who was seated in the bottom of it, seized her, and compelled her to sit down before him; another put a handkerchief over her mouth, and stifled her cries. Nibbio then entered the carriage, the door was closed, and the horses set off on a gallop. He who had asked her the perfidious question remained behind; he was an emissary of Egidio, who had watched Lucy when she quitted the convent, and had hastened by a shorter road to inform his colleagues, and wait for her at the place agreed on.

But who can describe the terror and anguish of the unfortunate girl? Who can tell what passed in her heart? Cruelly anxious to ascertain her horrible situation, she wildly opened her eyes, but closed them again at the sight of those frightful faces. She struggled in vain. The men held her down in the bottom of the carriage: if she attempted to cry, they drew the handkerchief tightly over her mouth. In the mean while, three gruff voices, endeavouring to assume a tone of humanity, said to her, "Be quiet, be quiet: do not be afraid; we do not wish to harm you." After a while her struggles ceased, she languidly opened her eyes, and the horrible faces before her appeared to blend themselves into one monstrous image; her colour fled, and she fell lifeless into their arms.

"Courage, courage," said Nibbio; but Lucy was now beyond the reach of his horrible voice.

"The devil! she appears to be dead," said one of them. "If she should really be dead!"

"Poh!" said the other, "these fainting fits are common to women; they don't die in this way."

"Hush," said Nibbio, "be attentive to your duty, and do not meddle with other affairs. Keep your muskets ready, because this wood we are entering is a nest for robbers. Don't keep them in your hands—the devil! put them behind you. Do you not see

that this girl is a tender chicken, who faints at nothing? If she sees that you have arms, she may die in reality. When she comes to her senses, be careful not to frighten her. Touch her not, unless I tell you to do so. I can hold her. Keep quiet, and let me talk to her."

Meanwhile the carriage entered the wood. Poor Lucy awoke as from a profound and painful slumber. She opened her eyes, and her horrible situation rushed with full force upon her mind. She struggled again in vain, she attempted to scream, but Nibbio said to her, holding up the handkerchief, "Be tranquil; it is the best thing you can do. We do not wish to harm you; but if you do not keep silence, we must make you."

"Let me go. Who are you? Where are you taking me? Why am I here? Let me go, let me go."

"I tell you, don't be frightened. You are not a child, and you ought to know that we will not harm you. We might have murdered you before this, if such had been our intention. Be quiet, then."

"No, no, let me go; I know you not."

"We know you well enough, however."

"Oh, holy Virgin! Let me go, for charity's sake. Who are you? Why have you brought me here?"

"Because we have been ordered to do so."

"Who? who? who ordered you to do it?"

"Hush!" said Nibbio, in a severe tone. "Such questions must not be answered."

Lucy attempted to throw herself from the door of the carriage, but finding the effort vain, she had recourse again to entreaties, and with her cheeks bathed in tears, and her voice broken by sobs, she continued, "Oh, for the love of heaven, and the holy Virgin, let me go! What harm have I done you? I am a poor creature, who have never injured you; I forgive you all that you have done, and will pray to God for you. If you have a daughter, a wife, or a mother, think what they would suffer in my situation. Remember that we must all die, and that one day you will hope that God will show mercy to you. Let me go, let me go; the Lord will guide me on my way."

"We cannot."