

This story came to the ears of the poor girl, and contributed not a little to augment her grief. The longer she delayed following to the other world him who waited her coming, the more guilty she felt towards him. At length her agony knew no bounds and she determined to confide all to her mother : which she did a short time after.

Peppa, become the depositary of this horrible secret, tore her hair in despair and prayed to all the saints in paradise to aid her with counsel in so critical a conjuncture.

Born in a class where ignorance and misery too often produce fanaticism and cruelty, Peppa doubted not from that moment of the reality of the apparition of the wood-cutter ; and she was convinced that the soul of the unfortunate came to complain to her daughter of her want of faith. The nights were passed by her in agonies of fear, and even in sleep she still fancied she saw the terrible phantom. All the day she spoke of nothing else, and the most trifling accident was to her a sinister presage which drew forth long lamentations.

Her poor brain already so weak could not resist such an attack.

In the middle of one stormy night, Peppa arose and called on her daughter in a loud voice, as if it were possible that the daughter could sleep.

— Tonia, do you hear the thunder ?

— Yes mother.

— Do you hear Renzo's voice ?

— My mother, in mercy speak not thus ! you will kill me.

— Tonia, my child, it is the will of heaven, and it is he who calls you. The Madonna has withdrawn her love from you, because you have not kept the oath pronounced before her sacred image.

— Have compassion on me, my good mother, tell me what to do, I am ready for all.

— My daughter, my poor daughter, you must fulfil your vow, the Madonna exacts it, and Renzo comes for you,