

and twice she closed her eyes, shuddering with horror. Her love for the unfortunate being who had just yielded to the exaltation of his passion, and the oath by which she had engaged herself to him, drew her on one side towards death, but the attachment to life which is ever strongest at the approach of danger, the fear of suffering and the remembrance of her mother conspired to retain her in this world. The cruel combat which tore this poor heart had perhaps terminated by another catastrophe, when the miserable girl saw lights burning beneath her, and heard a dull murmuring sound from the town : she guessed that it was the people running to pick up the body of her lover, and this circumstance turning aside the current of her thoughts, sufficed to renew her energy in a trifling degree ; and she had strength to drag her steps as far as her mother's hut, putting off to the next day the fulfilment of her promise. The poor thing had never been more agitated, more pale, or distressed, but Peppa was accustomed to see her melancholy ; she contented herself by addressing, as usual, reproaches to her daughter and ordering her to go to bed. The next day, Tonia went to the scene of the catastrophe ; she wept much, and several times tried to accomplish her fatal vow, devotion and love were powerful incentives but the weakness of this poor humanity did not allow it : nature claimed her rights over her with an imperious voice, and she won the combat. She returned however several times, but always with less resolution than ever, till at length she thought she had found good reasons for renouncing her design altogether ; but we do not trifle thus with sacred things, with impunity !

A gnawing worm destroyed the health of poor Tonia ; each day found her worse ; in a word she was visibly decaying. A fresh circumstance occurred to aggravate the situation of the unfortunate girl. The peasants of the environs pretended that each night, after the sun went down, there was seen at Renzo's stone, so called since the dreadful circumstance, a tall pale man, holding in his hand a wood-man's axe, who vanished in a light mist after a menacing, angry cry.