

state, when one unfamiliar sound, one fearful sight, real or imaginary, might snap the delicate and brittle chords of life, and terminate at once her frail and brief existence.

Having reached, in this state, the bottom of the stairs, the priest led her on through the damp and silent cemetery, muttering prayers as he proceeded, and holding up the silver lamp which he bore in his hand, to light them on their way. Its feeble ray struggled with the surrounding gloom, till as they passed onward, it was lost in the blaze of the wax tapers, which on this day always burned in profusion around the tomb of the Emperor. Josepha saw by the glare of light which shone upon the emblazoned escutcheon of her imperial house, that she stood beside the splendid mausoleum of her family; a mausoleum erected by the piety of her mother, in the early days of her beauty and glory. Surrounded by all that earth could give of happiness and power, Marie Theresa, forgot not even then, to look forward to that period when the joys and pomps of earth must pass away, and the grave claim that decayed body from which its immortal inmate had departed. Beside her father's splendid monument stood the humbler tomb of her youthful sister Joanna—she who, like herself, had been betrothed to Ferdinand of Naples—but who was early doomed to make her bridal bed in the eternal coldness and silence of the grave. Josepha started as she passed it, to behold the garland of white roses which had been placed there by the hand of affection, still hanging unwithered, as it seemed, upon the icy marble. "It has waited to crown me too for my bridal," she murmured, and as this thought of a distempered mind burst from her lips, she reached forth her hand to grasp it. But preserved as it had been, by some quality of the atmosphere, it crumbled to dust at the touch, and the unfortunate Josepha, regarding the incident as an omen of the fate she had predicted for herself, uttered an hysterical shriek and sank fainting to the earth.

Father Stephen in alarm hastened to her aid—he raised her in his arms, and called upon her name—but to his terrified gaze, life seemed extinct, and with all the speed which his trepidation would permit, he bore her from the vault to the upper air. The terror of prince Kaunnitz at her situation exceeded even that of the priest, and when neither their efforts, nor those of her attached attendant, could succeed in reviving her, they bore her to the carriage, and without delay conveyed her back to the palace—and there, amidst the skill of physicians, the cares of attendants, and the tender assiduities of anxious and alarmed relatives, she was at length restored to animation, but not to consciousness. When again those soft and eloquent eyes opened to the light, the wild gleams of insanity shot from them, and its ravings burst from the fevered lips which

constantly uttered the incoherent ravings of terror or despair.

Bitterly now did the Empress regret the severity with which she had insisted upon her daughter's observance of a duty, that had wrought such fatal effects upon her sensitive frame. Her own superstitious piety had made it appear in her eyes, an act of paramount importance, involving the temporal welfare and eternal happiness of her child—and this view of it, had rendered her insensible to the danger of opposing a timid and over-wrought mind to the influence of scenes and emotions, too fearful for its weakness to encounter. In short, the seeds of a fatal disease, which lurked in the frame of the young Josepha, were prematurely ripened, and endued with a malignancy that might otherwise have been unknown to them, by the dreadful excitement she had endured—and on the day succeeding her visit to the church of the Capuchins, her medical attendants declared her to be suffering under the small pox, that terrible malady, which no science had then taught mankind how to counteract or ameliorate, and which had already found one victim in the imperial family, in the person of the young Archduchess Joanna.

How bitter were the tears shed by the conscience-stricken Empress! over that disfigured and unconscious face—that face, but a few short days before, so full of life and beauty—an object of delight to every eye—of love to every heart. How poor to her now seemed all her schemes of ambition for this lamented child,—this victim of her worldly policy and superstitious weakness. How importunate were the prayers she offered up for her recovery, and how fervent the vows she now made, to seek in future only happiness and virtue for her children, nor covet for them those alliances, which must be purchased at the price of every pure and home-born affection of the heart. How well she kept the vows and promises made beside that bed of death let history tell—history, dark with the fate of the unfortunate Marie Antoinette, and polluted with the record of her career, who within one short year from this period, her mother sacrificed at the same shrine, whither the poor Josepha had been led, a sad and unwilling victim.

Although the physicians forbade any, except the necessary attendants, to enter the apartment of their patient, yet the Empress would not be excluded from the presence of her child. She hovered incessantly around her, she ministered with her own hands to her wants, and though that closing eye never again looked with one ray of intelligence into hers, she could not deny herself the melancholy comfort of listening to the low and broken murmurs of her voice, soothing the querulous complainings of insanity and pain, and when the brief and fearful contest was about to terminate, her bosom pillowed the head of