

Zillah. Before the squall came on, the brigantine had approached within hail of the skiff. A man habited as a pilgrim stood on the deck; he had been watching for some time with exclusive interest, the graceful movements of the girl, whose delicate beauty was so strangely assorted with the coarse and weather-beaten features of her companion. It might be, that judging from the appearance of the elements, he anticipated in idea the impending danger, and was prepared to avert it, for ere the boat upset he had seized a rope and fastning it securely round his waist, he gave the end to a sailor, and fearlessly cast himself amidst the foaming waters. He reached the drowning girl as she arose to the surface, and grasping her firmly, he abandoned himself to the resistless power of the elements. At first he was carried far towards the strand, but the receding waves bore him closer to the vessel, when with the united exertions of those on board, he was raised, nearly exhausted, with his senseless burthen to the deck. Whilst these humane exertions were being made for the preservation of the child, the ship with its crew, was in the most imminent peril. Wave after wave broke over her; still the man to whom the pilgrim entrusted his slender means of safety clung to his post. She tossed and laboured for several minutes, her very mast head dipping at times in the water, and no human effort could have saved her, if, with the torrents of rain that commenced to fall, the wind had not suddenly subsided; yet awhile the agitated billows heaved in sullen anger, but the vessel swept through them, and anchored safely in the cove.

The generous stranger who had risked his life for the preservation of the child, became a frequent and a welcome guest of the countess. He was a traveller in Italy from some northern country—a pious man, who had renounced all worldly interest in life, and journeyed hither in fulfilment of some secret vow, and with the ulterior design of entering himself a disciple of some religious order, in a land held sacred by the devout professors of his faith. Although separated from the common ties of life—an isolated being in the world, his disposition was benevolent, and his heart overflowed with kindly emotions towards his fellow creatures. Zillah became the peculiar object of his care; it seemed as if his interposition to save her from an early and dreadful death had inspired him with a paternal affection, for he watched over her with the most tender solicitude.

He was often the companion of her wanderings, and she made him the confidante of all the troubles of her young life; the chief of these was her ignorance of who and what her parents were; if her father was in existence, “her mother, she knew, had gone long long ago to heaven—but her father, they never told her he was dead, and she wondered

much if he would ever come and take her with him, and love her as other fathers loved their daughters.”

Such expressions invariably awakened the deepest emotion in the breast of the solitary. He would weep like a woman, listening to these artless yearnings for kindred love, and oft times kissing the child’s fair brow, he promised to be to her a father.

The count, for the first few years of their exile, never obtruded on his wife’s retreat, excepting when factious intrigue led him to seek intercourse with the chiefs of the Calabrian hordes. His visits on such occasions were usually brief, and unmarked by any desire to extend them; but as time sped on, and Zillah grew to womanhood, the countess observed, with trembling apprehension, that his presence at the villa was more frequent, and his visits prolonged. She could not mistake his object; her knowledge of his character was too intimate, and obtained at too dear a sacrifice, to admit of misapprehension. In this distressing dilemma she called to her council the only friend whose character, years and tender regard for her *élève*, rendered it prudent to confide in. The pilgrim, now a friar of the Franciscan order, warmly participated in the countess’ affliction and dread of impending evil. He suggested to her, and she adopted his advice, to place Zillah for some time, under the pretext of completing her education, in a convent. he undertaking to make the requisite arrangements and convey her thither.

CHAPTER III.

The tide of life rolled on as usual, ever leading to the same termination, though for ever varying its journey,—now appearing bright and luminous, with sunbeams dancing on its surface—now shaded in a tender light, and the next hour overspread with gloom and darkness; amidst these ever fleeting shadows, a change passed over the face of continental Europe. Like the enchantments related in eastern story, “an empire raised by the immolation of human victims, and cemented with human blood, crumbled and disappeared from the grasp of the magician, whilst he (to carry out the metaphor) lay chained upon the ocean rock, subdued by the spells of a more subtle genii. The Bourbon dynasty was once again restored, and their adherents gathered round them, ravenous for the spoils of their predecessors.

The palazzo already described, belonged to one of Murat’s generals. It now passed into Count d’Altino’s hands, the gift of the restored queen to her favourite. The countess, averse to mingle with the licentious train surrounding their Sicilian majesties, confined herself to this retired and beautiful residence, “the world forgetting by the world forgot.” Those fond fresh feelings of the heart, the yearning to gain and grant affection, that yields to woman so much of bliss or misery, had long since ceased to