

hood. Every effort was made to convert her to Catholicism, but without avail—her views of religion, imbibed from her amiable tutor, who was deeply pious, were too sound, and not to be shaken. Recourse was even had to violence, but she remained inflexible—she endeavoured to do her duty as a wife, but it was rendered arduous, painful, and most difficult; and it was on the birth of her child that she wrote to me—confiding all her anxieties, all her sorrows—well knowing how warmly I would sympathise in them—the name for her former lover was most properly never once alluded to. I endeavoured in my answer to strengthen her in her determination to adhere to the pure religion of her country, and to instil the same into the youthful mind of her little daughter—implored her to keep me informed of all that related to her—yet notwithstanding this, some years passed, and I heard no more. I dreaded to think what might have been the fate of my amiable friend; I was myself left a widow and had retired into Wales—all my early dreams of happiness flown forever. How well I remember one evening sitting in my lonely home, reviewing the past, the present, and the future. It was winter, and a fearful storm raged without. I was glad to draw into the blazing fire, in thankfulness for the blessings still left me, when I was suddenly startled by the sound of carriage wheels—followed by a loud knocking at the door. My servant asked the name of the intruders,—“Manfredonia,” was the reply. Judge my astonishment, my agitation—the door was immediately opened, when two females entered—in the one I beheld the faded form of my beloved Agnes, in the other her faithful Ursula, who carried in her arms a sleeping child.”

“Welcome, welcome, precious ones,” I exclaimed, “to my widowed heart, come share with me all I have, tell me your griefs and how I may assuage them.”

Fondly and affectionately did we embrace, and mingle our tears together; it was some time before either of us was sufficiently composed to ask or receive any explanation; at length, having partaken of some slight refreshment, and seen that her precious charge was placed safely in bed, I gathered from her a brief account of her troubles, and the cause of her flight from her husband. It appeared that after suffering every persecution, on account of her religion, the bigotted Father Anselm persuaded the weak Duke that in retaining a heretic for his wife, he committed a heinous crime—and his advice was that she should be immured in a cloister, and that her child should be taken from her and educated in the faith of her father, in order that at riper years she might take the veil. If even the motives of Father Anselm for this criminal proceeding had been purely religious, there would have been something to redeem him from reproach, however mis-

taken his zeal. But no such thing—his cupidities aimed at the wealth of his imbecile patron, which he coveted in order to enrich his convent, and he left nothing untried to effect his purpose. Some remaining attachment to Agnes made the Duke pause, for he was more weak than wicked; but his scruples were soon overruled by his subtle adviser, and the Duchess was told of the fate awaiting her, if she still remained determined. The idea of her child—her beautiful Amanda—her only solace in all her trials, being torn from her—had nearly destroyed her fortitude. She consulted with Ursula, now her only friend. She advised her writing to her father, who with his son, (her mother had been dead above a year), was in England, stating how painfully she was situated, and imploring him to receive her and her child. Will it be believed, that his answer was a positive refusal. He could not bear the idea of her giving up her high place in society—the rich palaces—the wealth of the Duke. And he told her that her first duty was to conform in every thing to the wishes of her husband, and become a convert to his religion. The unfortunate Duchess was, by this unlooked for, unnatural conduct, rendered more wretched than ever. She now, indeed, felt deserted by all—when Ursula mentioned my name, it acted in a moment as a spell. She knew that I would approve her conduct, and would stand her friend; but so long a time having elapsed since she had heard from me, she knew not where to address a letter to me. Indeed, she was now so well watched that it would have been difficult for her to have depicted one without discovery. By the aid of a faithful and attached friend of Ursula’s, every thing was put into training for an escape. The Duchess was, at this time, at one of the remote residences of her husband, surrounded by woods. He was engaged at his hunting seat, but the lynx-eyed Father Anselm was with her. It was his custom each night to see that every door was secured, and to keep possession of the keys, thus rendering the Duchess a prisoner in her own house. But all his efforts proved futile before the energy and determination of Ursula, who, with the aid of her friend, had false ones made, and by that means they stole from the chateau at midnight, and proceeded on mules to the next town. I will not tire your Lordship by relating all the hardships, anxiety, and fatigue these intrepid females encountered, and which never ceased until they found themselves on board a vessel bound to England. Ursula’s friend married her before their embarkation, and followed the Duchess, in charge of all the valuables she had collected together, while their attention was solely devoted to the beloved Amanda. On their arrival in England, she discovered my residence from my agents in town, and fearing to encounter her father, who, she knew, would give her up to her threshold, she set out immediately for Wales. Scarcely