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A TALE.

“My friends have often wondered why, when, after many crosses and disappointments, I was at length united to the chosen lover of my youth and heart, we should at the end of one short year, have separated—he to go to the wars, and I to bury myself in this convent. I therefore write this, that, after my death, they may know the real truth concerning these mysterious passages, and that those who may be tempted, like me, may hereby take warning from my fate.

“Above all things, it has been bitter to my soul, that whilst I bore the guilt of the blackest crime upon my conscience, I should have received the praises of the world, as a dutiful daughter, and a virtuous and devoted wife. It has been the horror of the shame that must have attended the acknowledgment of how vile and guilty a thing was thus cherished and caressed, that has hitherto restrained the confession which has so often trembled on my lips, and struggled for life and utterance.

“It is well known to all who are acquainted with me, that in my early youth I received the vows of Laurentio Gonsalvi; and that my heart acknowledged the influence of his passion; that our love was permitted until the accursed blight of avarice fell upon my parents’ hearts, and led them to wrench asunder those ties which no human power could otherwise have unloosed; and to rivet with fetters upon me a chain which nothing

but fetters could have held. This is the only palliation I have to offer for the awful crime I have perpetrated; and in the degree in which it lightens the load of guilt from me, it throws it upon those who gave me birth. But, alas, it relieves me only in the smallest possible degree. They separated me from the man I adored, and enforced my marriage with another.—Let me be just.

“The Count Braschi, whose bride I became, was young, accomplished, and might have been kind, but that I treated him with loathing and scorn; and tongues were not wanting to tell him that it was all for the sake of Laurentio Gonsalvi. We had lived together for something less than two years, when Laurentio returned from travel. On my marriage with the Count, he had gone abroad in order that he might avoid all opportunity of meeting me. But now he had returned, he encountered me in public, and saw that the light of a happy heart had left my eyes; and he saw, too, that the heart was breaking. And we met in private, and strong and bitter was the conflict; and the temptation was almost greater than we could bear. But we did bear it—and we overcame it—and we parted—but not for ever. Before we separated, we swore an oath, that if ever I became free, we would wed each other, and that neither of us would ever marry, unless with one another; and we invoked Heaven, and all the