

On Compulsory Laws respecting Marriage.

on the globe ; but it extends its influence, in a greater or lesser degree, to all nations that can assume to themselves the proud name of *civilized*. Among such people, laws have ever been contrived, which, by a stern inflexibility, overpower the voice of nature, and make man submit to her imperious decrees. The following affecting story evinces the truth of these remarks—would to God it were in the regions of despotism alone that such transactions were to be found. But in despotic and in free governments, the same cruel principle will be found to prevail. Even in Britain, which boasts of the happiness her people are permitted to enjoy, the same law in this respect prevails, as in that despotic state, where the transaction I am about to relate, took place. What follows is a literal translation of a letter from Rome, which appeared as an article of intelligence in the *Mercurio de Espana* for the month of December, 1786.

“ In this capital (Rome) we have just now witnessed an event, which has drawn tears from every body here. It is five years since a young gentleman of the family Amedei, married an amiable and virtuous young woman he loved, but whose birth was not equal to his. At the end of one year, they had a daughter as the fruit of their love ; but this tender union was in a short time, cruelly disturbed by the parents and relations of the gentleman, who exclaimed against his Marriage as clandestine, and obtained against the unhappy young man an order of the Pope, by virtue of which, they tore him from the arms of his spouse, and conducted him a prisoner to the castle of St. Angelo. A process was immediately instituted for annulling the marriage. The gentleman tried every means possible to prove that his marriage was valid, and to make it be ratified : his wife also went with her daughter in her arms, and threw herself at the feet of her judges ; but in vain. A sentence was at last pronounced, annulling the marriage, obliging the mother, that inconsolable wife, to write to her husband with her own hand, the fatal news of their eternal separation. Oppressed with the most cruel despair, she thus wrote to him : “ I find myself under the cruel necessity of renouncing those sweet and sacred bands, which till now have held our hearts firmly united : but I resign myself with less repugnance, from the consideration that it will be the means of terminating that long and cruel captivity which you have suffered for my sake. Live free, dear husband, (this alas ! is the last time that my lips will pronounce so sweet a name) : O live ! take comfort ; and if it be possible, live *happy* far from me. Since you love the mother, remember the daughter which she has given to you, and take care of her when you know that I no longer exist ; for the grief which this separation causes to me is so bitter, so penetrating, and absorbs in such a manner the faculties of my soul, that I want strength to resist it. Very soon I shall cease to live ; may my death satiate the inhumanity of our cruel persecutors ! God bless you !—Farewel !—Farewel !—forever !” Four days afterwards, that unhappy and tender wife died in horrible convulsions : and her death set the gentleman at liberty, whose despair has not yet been calmed.