

Corinne, Volume 1 (of 2) eBook

Corinne, Volume 1 (of 2) by Anne Louise Germaine de Staël

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INTRODUCTION.

In Lady Blennerhassett's enthusiastic and encyclopaedic book on Madame de Stael she quotes approvingly Sainte-Beuve's phrase that "with *Corinne* Madame de Stael ascended the Capitol." I forget in which of his many dealings with an author who, as he remarks in the "Coppet-and-Weimar" *causeries*, was "an idol of his youth and one that he never renounced," this fancy occurs. It must probably have been in one of his early essays; for in his later and better, Sainte-Beuve was not wont to give way to the little flashes and crackles of conceit and epigram which many Frenchmen and some Englishmen think to be criticism. There was, however, some excuse for this. In the first place (as one of Charles Lamb's literal friends would have pointed out), Madame de Stael, like her heroine, did actually "ascend the Capitol," and received attentions there from an Academy. In the second, there can be no doubt that *Corinne* in a manner fixed and settled the high literary reputation which she had already attained. Even by her severest critics, and even now when whatever slight recrudescence of biographical interest may have taken place in her, her works are little read, *Corinne* is ranked next to *De l'Allemagne* as her greatest production; while as a work of form, not of matter, as literature of power, not of knowledge, it has at last a chance of enduring when its companion is but a historical document—the record of a moment that has long passed away.

The advocates of the *milieu* theory—the theory which will have it that you can explain almost the whole of any work of art by examining the circumstances, history, and so forth of the artist—have a better chance with *Corinne* than with many books, though those who disagree with them (as I own that I do) may retort that this was precisely because Madame de Stael in literature has little idiosyncrasy, and is a receptive, not a creative, force. The moment at which this book was composed and appeared had really many of the characteristics of crisis and climax in the life of the author. She was bidding adieu to youth; and though her talents, her wealth, her great reputation, and her indomitable determination to surround herself with admirers still made her a sort of queen of society, some illusions at least must have been passing from her. The most serious of her many passions, that for Benjamin Constant, was coming, though it had not yet come, to an end. Her father, whom she unfeignedly idolised, was not long dead. The conviction must have been for some time forcing itself on her, though she did not even yet give up hope, that Napoleon's resolve not to allow her presence in her still more idolised Paris was unconquerable. Her husband, who indeed had long been nothing to her, was dead also, and the fancy for replacing him with the boy Rocca had not yet arisen. The influence of the actual chief



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of her usual herd of lovers, courtiers, teachers, friends (to use whichever term, or combination of terms, the charitable reader pleases), A.W. Schlegel, though it never could incline her innately unpoetical and unreligious mind to either poetry or religion, drove her towards aesthetics of one kind and another. Lastly, the immense intellectual excitement of her visits to Weimar, Berlin, and Italy, added its stimulus to produce a fresh intellectual ferment in her. On the purely intellectual side the result was *De l'Allemagne*, which does not concern us; on the side of feeling, tinged with aesthetic philosophy, of study of the archaic and the picturesque illuminated by emotion—the result was *Corinne*.

If there had been only one difference between this and its author's earlier attempt at novel-writing, that difference would have given *Corinne* a great advantage. *Delphine* had been irreverently described by Sydney Smith, when it appeared a few years earlier, as "this dismal trash which has nearly dislocated the jaws of every critic with gaping." The Whigs had not then taken up Madame de Stael, as they did afterwards, or it is quite certain that Mr Sydney would not have been allowed to exercise such Britannic frankness. *Corinne* met with gentler treatment from his friends, if not from himself. Sir James Mackintosh, in particular, was full of the wildest enthusiasm about it, though he admitted that it was "full of faults so obvious as not to be worth mentioning." It must be granted to be in more than one, or two important points a very great advance on *Delphine*. One is that the easy and illegitimate source of interest which is drawn upon in the earlier book is here quite neglected. *Delphine* presents the eternal French situation of the "triangle;" the line of *Corinne* is straight, and the only question is which pair of three points it is to unite in an honourable way. A French biographer of Madame de Stael, who is not only an excellent critic and an extremely clever writer, but a historian of great weight and acuteness, M. Albert Sorel, has indeed admitted that both Leonce, the hero of *Delphine*, who will not make himself and his beloved happy because he has an objection to divorcing his wife, and Lord Nelvil, who refuses either to seduce or to marry the woman who loves him and whom he loves, are equal donkeys with a national difference. Leonce is more of a "fool;" Lord Nelvil more of a "snob." It is something to find a Frenchman who will admit that any national characteristic is foolish: I could have better reciprocated M. Sorel's candour if he had used the word "prig" instead of "snob" of Lord Nelvil. But indeed I have often suspected that Frenchmen confuse these two engaging attributes of the Britannic nature.



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A “higher moral tone” (as the phrase goes) is not the only advantage which *Corinne* possesses over its forerunner. *Delphine* is almost avowedly autobiographical; and though Madame de Stael had the wit and the prudence to mix and perplex her portraits and her reminiscences so that it was nearly impossible to fit definite caps on the personages, there could be no doubt that *Delphine* was herself—as she at least would have liked to be—drawn as close as she dared. These personalities have in the hands of the really great masters of fiction sometimes produced astonishing results; but no one probably would contend that Madame de Stael was a born novelist. Although *Delphine* has many more personages and much more action of the purely novel kind than *Corinne*, it is certainly not an interesting book; I think, though I have been reproached for, to say the least, lacking fervour as a Staelite, that *Corinne* is.

But it is by no means unimportant that intending readers should know the sort of interest that they are to expect from this novel; and for that purpose it is almost imperative that they should know what kind of person was this novelist. A good deal of biographical pains has been spent, as has been already more than once hinted, on Madame de Stael. She was most undoubtedly of European reputation in her day; and between her day and this, quite independently of the real and unquestionable value of her work, a high estimate of her has been kept current by the fact that her daughter was the wife of Duke Victor and the mother of Duke Albert of Broglie, and that so a proper respect for her has been a necessary passport to favour in one of the greatest political and academic houses of France; while another not much less potent in both ways, that of the Counts d’Haussonville, also represents her. Still people, and especially English people, have so many non-literary things to think of, that it may not be quite unpardonable to supply that conception of the life of Anne Louise Germaine Necker, Baroness of Stael-Holstein, which is so necessary to the understanding of *Corinne*, and which may, in possible cases, be wanting.

She was born on the 22nd of April 1766, and was, as probably everybody knows, the daughter of the Swiss financier, Necker, whom the French Revolution first exalted to almost supreme power in France, and then cast off—fortunately for him, in a less tragical fashion than that in which it usually cast off its favourites. Her mother was Suzanne Curchod, the first love of Gibbon, a woman of a delicate beauty, of very considerable mental and social faculties, a kind of puritanical coquette, but devoted to her (by all accounts not particularly interesting) husband. Indeed, mother and daughter are said to have been from a very early period jealous of each other in relation to Necker. Germaine, as she was generally called, had, unluckily for her, inherited nothing of her mother’s

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delicacy of form and feature; indeed, her most rapturous admirers never dared to claim much physical beauty for her, except a pair of fine, though unfeminine, eyes. She was rather short than tall; her figure was square-set and heavy; her features, though not exactly ill-formed, matched her figure; her arms were massive, though not ill-shaped; and she was altogether distinctly what the French call *hommasse*. Nevertheless, her great wealth, and the high position of her father, attracted suitors, some of whom at least may not have overlooked the intellectual ability which she began very early to display. There was talk of her marrying William Pitt, but either Pitt's well-known "dislike of the fair," or some other reason, foiled the project. After one or two other negotiations she made a match which was not destined to good fortune, and which does not strike most observers as a very tempting one in any respect, though it carried with it some exceptional and rather eccentric guarantees for that position at court and in society on which Germaine was set. The King of Sweden, Gustavus, whose family oddity had taken, among less excusable forms, that of a platonic devotion to Marie Antoinette, gave a sort of perpetual brevet of his ministry at Paris to the Baron de Stael-Holstein, a nobleman of little fortune and fair family. This served, using clerical language, as his "title" to marriage with Germaine Necker. Such a marriage could not be expected to, and did not, turn out very well; but it did not turn out as ill as it might have done. Except that M. de Stael was rather extravagant (which he probably supposed he had bought the right to be) nothing serious is alleged against him; and though more than one thing serious might be alleged against his wife, it is doubtful whether either contracting party thought this out of the bargain. For business reasons, chiefly, a separation was effected between the pair in 1798, but they were nominally reconciled four years later, just before Stael's death.

Meanwhile the Revolution broke out, and Madame de Stael, who, as she was bound to do, had at first approved it, disapproved totally of the Terror, tried to save the Queen, and fled herself from France to England. Here she lived in Surrey with a questionable set of *emigres*, made the acquaintance of Miss Burney, and in consequence of the unconventionalities of her relations, especially with M. de Narbonne, received, from English society generally, a cold shoulder, which she has partly avenged, or tried to avenge, in *Corinne* itself. She had already written, or was soon to write, a good deal, but nothing of the first importance. Then she went to Coppet, her father's place, on the Lake of Geneva, which she was later to render so famous; and under the Directory was enabled to resume residence in Paris, though she was more than once under suspicion. It was at this time that she met Benjamin Constant, the future brilliant orator, and author of *Adolphe*, the only man perhaps



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whom she ever really loved, but, unluckily, a man whom it was by no means good to love. For some years she oscillated contentedly enough between Coppet and Paris. But the return of Bonaparte from Egypt was unlucky for her. Her boundless ambition, which, with her love of society, was her strongest passion, made her conceive the idea of fascinating him, and through him ruling the world. Napoleon, to use familiar English, "did not see it." When he liked women he liked them pretty and feminine; he had not the faintest idea of admitting any kind of partner in his glory; he had no literary taste; and not only did Madame de Stael herself meddle with politics, but her friend, Constant, under the Consulate, chose to give himself airs of opposition in the English sense. Moreover, she still wrote, and Bonaparte disliked and dreaded everyone who wrote with any freedom. Her book, *De la Litterature*, in 1800, was taken as a covert attack on the Napoleonic *regime*; her father shortly after republished another on finance and politics, which was disliked; and the success of *Delphine*, in 1803, put the finishing touch to the petty hatred of any kind of rival superiority which distinguished the Corsican more than any other man of equal genius. Madame de Stael was ordered not to approach within forty leagues of Paris, and this exile, with little softening and some excesses of rigour, lasted till the return of the Bourbons.

Then it was that the German and Italian journeys already mentioned (the death of M. Necker happening between them and recalling his daughter from the first) led to the writing of *Corinne*.

A very few words before we turn to the consideration of the book, as a book and by itself, may appropriately finish all that need be said here about the author's life. After the publication of *Corinne* she returned to Germany, and completed the observation which she thought necessary for the companion book *De l'Allemagne*. Its publication in 1810, when she had foolishly kindled afresh the Emperor's jealousy by appearing with her usual "tail" of worshippers or parasites as near Paris as she was permitted, completed her disgrace. She was ordered back to Coppet: her book was seized and destroyed. Then Albert de Rocca, a youth of twenty-three, who had seen some service, made his appearance at Geneva. Early in 1811, Madame de Stael, now aged forty-five, married him secretly. She was, or thought herself, more and more persecuted by Napoleon; she feared that Rocca might be ordered off on active duty, and she fled first to Vienna, then to St Petersburg, then to Stockholm, and so to England. Here she was received with ostentatious welcome and praises by the Whigs; with politeness by everybody; with more or less concealed terror by the best people, who found her rhapsodies and her political dissertations equally boring. Here too she was unlucky enough to express the opinion that Miss Austen's books were vulgar. The



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fall of Napoleon brought her back to Paris; and after the vicissitudes of 1814-15, enabled her to establish herself there for the short remainder of her life, with the interruption only of visits to Coppet and to Italy. She died on the 13th July 1817: her two last works, *Dix Annees d'Exil* and the posthumous *Considerations sur La Revolution Francaise*, being admittedly of considerable interest, and not despicable even by those who do not think highly of her political talents.

And now to *Corinne*, unhampered and perhaps a little helped by this survey of its author's character, career, and compositions. The heterogeneous nature of its plan can escape no reader long; and indeed is pretty frankly confessed by its title. It is a love story doubled with a guide-book: an eighteenth-century romance of "sensibility" blended with a transition or even nineteenth-century diatribe of aesthetics and "culture." If only the first of these two labels were applicable to it, its case would perhaps be something more gracious than it is; for there are more unfavourable situations for cultivating the affections, than in connection with the contemplation of the great works of art and nature, and it is possible to imagine many more disagreeable *ciceroni* than a lover of whichever sex. But *Corinne* and Nelvil (whom our contemporary translator^[1] has endeavoured to acclimatise a little more by Anglicising his name further to Nelville), do not content themselves with making love in the congenial neighbourhoods of Tiber or Poestum, or in the stimulating presence of the masterpieces of modern and ancient art. A purpose, and a double purpose, it might almost be said, animates the book. It aims at displaying "sensibility so charming"—the strange artificial eighteenth-century conception of love which is neither exactly flirtation nor exactly passion, which sets convention at defiance, but retains its own code of morality; at exhibiting the national differences, as Madame de Stael conceived them, of the English and French and Italian temperaments; and at preaching the new cult of aesthetics whereof Lessing and Winckelmann, Goethe, and Schlegel, were in different ways and degrees the apostles. And it seems to have been generally admitted, even by the most fervent admirers of Madame de Stael and of *Corinne* itself, that the first purpose has not had quite fair play with the other two. "A little thin," they confess of the story. In truth it could hardly be thinner, though the author has laid under contribution an at least ample share of the improbabilities and coincidences of romance.



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Nelvil, an English-Scottish peer who has lost his father, who accuses himself of disobedience and ingratitude to that father, and who has been grievously jilted by a Frenchwoman, arrives in Italy in a large black cloak, the deepest melancholy, and the company of a sprightly though penniless French *emigre*, the Count d'Erfeuil. After performing prodigies of valour in a fire at Ancona, he reaches Rome just when a beautiful and mysterious poetess, the delight of Roman society, is being crowned on the Capitol. The only name she is known by is Corinne. The pair are soon introduced by the mercurial Erfeuil, and promptly fall in love with each other, Corinne seeking partly to fix her hold on Nelvil, partly to remove his Britannic contempt for Italy and the Italians, by guiding him to all the great spectacles of Rome and indeed of the country generally, and by explaining to him at great length what she understands of the general theory of aesthetics, of Italian history, and of the contrasted character of the chief European nations. Nelvil on his side is distracted between the influence of the beauty, genius, and evident passion of Corinne, and his English prejudices; while the situation is further complicated by the regulation discovery that Corinne, though born in Italy of an Italian mother, is, strictly speaking, his own compatriot, being the elder and lawful daughter of a British peer, Lord Edgermond, his father's closest friend. Nay more, he had always been destined to wed this very girl; and it was only after her father's second marriage with an Englishwoman that the younger and wholly English daughter, Lucile, was substituted in the paternal schemes as his destined spouse. He hears, on the other hand, how Corinne had visited her fatherland and her step-mother, how she had found both intolerable, and how she had in a modified and decent degree "thrown her cap over the mill" by returning to Italy to live an independent life as a poetess, an improvisatrice, and, at least in private, an actress.

It is not necessary to supply fuller argument of the text which follows, and of which, when the reader has got this length, he is not likely to let the *denouement* escape him. But the action of *Corinne* gets rather slowly under weigh; and I have known those who complained that they found the book hard to read because they were so long in coming to any clear notion of "what it was all about." Therefore so much argument as has been given seems allowable.

But we ought by this time to have laid sufficient foundation to make it not rash to erect a small superstructure of critical comment on the book now once more submitted to English readers. Of that book I own that I was myself a good many years ago, and for a good many years, a harsh and even a rather unfair judge. I do not know whether years have brought me the philosophic mind, or whether the book—itsself, as has been said, the offspring of middle-aged emotions—appeals more directly to a middle-aged than to a young judgment. To the young of its own time and the times immediately succeeding it appealed readily enough, and scarcely Byron himself (who was not a little influenced by it) had more to do with the Italomania of Europe in the second quarter of this century than Madame de Stael.

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The faults of the novel indeed are those which impress themselves (as Mackintosh, we have seen, allowed) immediately and perhaps excessively. M. Sorel observes of its companion sententiously but truly, “Si le style de *Delphine* semble vieilli, c’est qu’il a été jeune.” If not merely the style but the sentiment, the whole properties and the whole stage management of *Corinne* seem out of date now, it is only because they were up to date then. It is easy to laugh—not perhaps very easy to abstain from laughing—at the “schall” twisted in Corinne’s hair, where even contemporaries mocked the hideous turban with which Madame de Stael chose to bedizen her not too beautiful head; at Nelvil’s inky cloak; at the putting out of the fire; at the queer stilted half-Ossianic, half-German rants put in the poetess’s mouth; at the endless mingling of gallantry and pedantry; at the hesitations of Nelvil; at the agonies of Corinne. When French critics tell us that as they allow the good-humoured satire on the Count d’Erfeuil to be just, we ought to do the same in reference to the “cant Britannique” of Nelvil and of the Edgermond circle, we can only respectfully answer that we should not presume to dispute their judgment in the first case, but that they really must leave us to ours in the second. As a matter of fact, Madame de Stael’s goody English characters, are rather like Miss Edgeworth’s naughty French ones in *Leonora* and elsewhere—clever generalisations from a little observation and a great deal of preconceived idea, not studies from the life.

But this (and a great deal more that might be said if it were not something like petty treason in an introduction-writer thus to play the devil’s advocate against his author) matters comparatively little, and leaves enough in *Corinne* to furnish forth a book almost great, interesting without any “almost,” and remarkable as a not very large shelf-ful in the infinite library of modern fiction deserves remark. For the passion of its two chief characters, however oddly, and to us unfashionably, presented, however lacking in the commanding and perennial qualities which make us indifferent to fashion in the work of the greatest masters, is *real*. And it is perhaps only after a pretty long study of literature that one perceives how very little real passion books, even pretty good books, contain, how much of what at times seems to us passionate in them owes its appeal to accident, mode, and the personal equation. Of the highest achievement of art—that which avails itself of, but subdues, personal thought and feeling in the elaboration of a perfectly live character—Madame de Stael was indeed incapable. But in the second order—that which, availing itself of, but not subduing, the personal element, keeps enough of its veracity and lively force to enliven a composite structure of character—she has here produced very noteworthy studies. Corinne is a very fair embodiment of the beauty which her



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author would so fain have had; of the youthful ardour which she had once actually possessed; of the ideas and cults to which she was sincerely enough devoted; of the instruction and talent which unquestionably distinguished her. And it is not, I think, fanciful to discover in this heroine, with all her "Empire" artifice and convention, all her smack of the theatre and the *salon*, a certain live quiver and throb, which, as has been already hinted, may be traced to the combined working in Madame de Stael's mind and heart of the excitements of foreign travel, the zest of new studies, new scenes, new company, with the chill regret for lost or passing youth and love, and the chillier anticipation of coming old age and death. It is a commonplace of psychology that in shocks and contrasts of this kind the liveliest workings of the imagination and the emotions are to be expected. If we once establish the contact and complete the circle, and feel something of the actual thrill that animated the author, we shall, I think, feel disposed to forgive Corinne many things—from the dress and attitude which recall that admirable frontispiece of Pickersgill's to Miss Austen's *Emma*, where Harriet Smith poses in rapt attitude with "schall" or scarf complete, to that more terrible portrait of Madame de Stael herself which editors with remorseless ferocity will persist in prefixing to her works, and especially to *Corinne*. We shall consent to sweep away all the *fatras* and paraphernalia of the work, and to see in the heroine a real woman enough—loving, not unworthy of being loved, unfortunate, and very undeserving of her ill fortune. We shall further see that besides other excuses for the mere guide-book detail, the enthusiasm for Italy which partly prompted it was genuine enough and very interesting as a sign of the times—of the approach of a period of what we may call popularised learning, culture, sentiment. In some respects *Corinne* is not merely a guide-book to Italy; it is a guide-book by prophecy to the nineteenth century.

The minor characters are a very great deal less interesting than Corinne herself, but they are not despicable, and they set off the heroine and carry out what story there is well enough. Nelvil of course is a thing shreddy and patchy enough. He reminds us by turns of Chateaubriand's Rene and Rousseau's Bomston, both of whom Madame de Stael of course knew; of Mackenzie's Man of Feeling, with whom she was very probably acquainted; but most of no special, even bookish, progenitor, but of a combination of theoretic deductions from supposed properties of man in general and Englishman in particular. Of Englishmen in particular Madame de Stael knew little more than a residence (chiefly in *emigre* society) for a short time in England, and occasional meetings elsewhere, could teach her. Of men in general her experience had been a little unfortunate. Her father had probity, financial skill, and, I suppose, a certain



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amount of talent in other directions; but while he must have had some domestic virtues he was a wooden pedant. Her husband hardly counted for more in her life than her *maitre d'hotel*, and though there seems to have been no particular harm in him, had no special talents and no special virtues. Her first regular lover, Narbonne, was a handsome, dignified, heartless *roue* of the old *regime*. Her second, Benjamin Constant, was a man of genius, and capable of passionate if inconstant attachment, but also what his own generation in England called a thorough "raff"—selfish, treacherous, fickle, incapable of considering either the happiness or the reputation of women, theatrical in his ways and language, venal, insolent, ungrateful. Schlegel, though he too had some touch of genius in him, was half pedant, half coxcomb, and full of intellectual and moral faultiness. The rest of her mighty herd of male friends and hangers-on ranged from Mathieu de Montmorency—of whom, in the words of Medora Trevilian it may be said, that he was "only an excellent person"—through respectable savants like Sismondi and Dumont, down to a very low level of toady and tuft-hunter. It is rather surprising that with such models and with no supreme creative faculty she should have been able to draw such creditable walking gentlemen as the Frenchman Erfeuil, the Englishman Edgermond, and the Italian Castel-Forte; and should not have produced a worse hero than Nelvil. For Nelvil, whatever faults he may have, and contemptible as his vacillating refusal to take the goods the gods provide him may be, is, after all, if not quite a live man, an excellent model of what a considerable number of the men of his time aimed at being, and would have liked to be. He is not a bit less life-like than Byron's usual hero for instance, who probably owes not a little to him.

And so we get to a fresh virtue of *Corinne*, or rather we reach its main virtue by a different side. It has an immense historical value as showing the temper, the aspirations, the ideas, and in a way the manners of a certain time and society. A book which does this can never wholly lose its interest; it must always retain that interest in a great measure, for those who are able to appreciate it. And it must interest them far more keenly, when, besides this secondary and, so to speak, historical merit, it exhibits such veracity in the portraiture of emotion, as, whatever be its drawbacks, whatever its little temptations to ridicule, distinguishes the hapless, and, when all is said, the noble and pathetic figure of Corinne.

GEORGE SAINTSBURY.

FOOTNOTE:



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[1] I am creditor neither to praise nor to blame for this translation, which is the old English version brought out in the same year as the original, but corrected by another hand for the present edition in the pretty numerous points where it was lax or unintelligent in actual rendering. In the places which I have compared, it seems to me to present that original very fairly now; and I am by no means sure that an excessively artificial style like that of the French Empire is not best left to contemporaries to reproduce. At any rate, a really good new translation of *Corinne* would be a task unlikely to be achieved except by rather exceptional talents working in labour of love: and I cannot blame the publishers of this issue for not waiting till such a translator appeared.

Book i.

OSWALD.

[Illustration]

CORINNE.

Chapter i.

Oswald, Lord Nelville, Peer of Scotland, quitted Edinburgh for Italy during the winter of 1794-5. He possessed a noble and handsome figure, an abundance of wit, an illustrious name, and an independent fortune, but his health was impaired by deeply-rooted sorrow, and his physicians, fearing that his lungs were attacked, had prescribed him the air of the South. Though indifferent as to the preservation of his life, he followed their advice. He expected, at least, to find in the diversity of objects he was about to see, something that might divert his mind from the melancholy that preyed upon it. The most exquisite of griefs—the loss of a father—was the cause of his malady; this was heightened by cruel circumstances, which, together with a remorse inspired by delicate scruples, increased his anguish, which was still further aggravated by the phantoms of the imagination. Those who suffer, easily persuade themselves that they are guilty, and violent grief will extend its painful influence even to the conscience.

At twenty-five years of age he was dissatisfied with life, his mind anticipated every thing that it could afford, and his wounded sensibility no longer enjoyed the illusions of the heart. Nobody appeared more complacent, more devoted to his friends when he was able to render them service; but not even the good he performed could afford him a pleasurable sensation.

He incessantly sacrificed his own taste to that of others; but it was impossible to explain, upon principles of generosity alone, this total abnegation of every selfish feeling, most



frequently to be attributed to that species of sadness which no longer permitted him to take any interest in his own fate. Those indifferent to him enjoyed this disposition so full of benignity and charm; but those who loved him perceived that he sought the happiness of others like a man who no longer expected any himself; and they almost experienced a pain from his conferring a felicity for which it was impossible to make him a return in kind.



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He was, notwithstanding, of a nature susceptible of emotion, sensibility and passion; he combined every thing that could evoke enthusiasm in others and in himself; but misfortune and repentance had taught him to tremble at that destiny whose anger he sought to disarm by forbearing to solicit any favour at her hands.

He expected to find in a strict attachment to all his duties, and in a renunciation of every lively enjoyment, a security against those pangs that tear the soul. What he had experienced struck fear into his heart; and nothing this world can afford, could, in his estimation, compensate the risk of those sufferings; but when one is capable of feeling them, what mode of life can shelter us from their power?

Lord Nelville flattered himself that he should be able to quit Scotland without regret, since he resided in it without pleasure; but the unhappy imagination of the children of sensibility is not so formed: he did not suspect what ties attached him to those scenes which were most painful to him,—to the home of his father. There were in this habitation, chambers, places, which he could not approach without shuddering, and, nevertheless, when he resolved to quit them, he felt himself still more solitary. His heart became dried up; he was no longer able to give vent to his sufferings in tears; he could no longer call up those little local circumstances which affected him deeply; his recollections no longer possessed anything of the vivid semblance of real existence; they were no longer in affinity with the objects that surrounded him; he did not think less on him whose loss he lamented, but he found it more difficult to recall his presence.

Sometimes also he reproached himself for abandoning those abodes where his father had dwelt. “Who knows,” said he to himself, “whether the shades of the departed are allowed to pursue every where the objects of their affection? Perhaps it is only permitted them to wander about the spot where their ashes repose! Perhaps at this moment my father regrets me, while distance prevents my hearing his voice exerted to recall his son. Alas! while he was living must not a concourse of strange events have persuaded him that I had betrayed his tenderness, that I was a rebel to my country, to his paternal will, to everything that is sacred on earth?”—These recollections excited in Lord Nelville a grief so insupportable that not only was he unable to confide it to others, but even dreaded himself to sound it to the bottom. So easily do our own reflections become to us an irreparable evil.

It costs us more to quit our native country when to leave it we must traverse the sea; all is solemn in a journey of which ocean marks the first steps. An abyss seems to open behind you, and to render your return for ever impossible. Besides, the sublime spectacle which the sea presents must always make a deep impression on the imagination; it is the image of that Infinity which continually attracts our thoughts, that run incessantly to lose themselves in it. Oswald, supporting himself on the helm, his eyes fixed on the waves, was apparently calm, for his pride, united to his timidity, would scarcely ever permit him to discover, even to his friends, what he felt; but he was internally racked with the most painful emotions.



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He brought to mind the time when the sight of the sea animated his youth with the desire of plunging into her waves, and measuring his force against her's.—“Why,” said he to himself, with the most bitter regret, “why do I yield so unremittingly to reflection? How many pleasures are there in active life, in those exercises which make us feel the energy of existence? Death itself then appears but an event, perhaps glorious, at least sudden, and not preceded by decline. But that death which comes without having been sought by courage, that death of darkness which steals from you in the night all that you hold most dear, which despises your lamentations, repulses your embrace, and pitilessly, opposes to you the eternal laws of nature and of time! such a death inspires a sort of contempt for human destiny, for the impotence of grief, for all those vain efforts that dash and break themselves upon the rock of necessity.”

Such were the sentiments that tormented Oswald; and what particularly characterised his unhappy situation, was the vivacity of youth united to thoughts of another age. He entered into those ideas which he conceived must have occupied his father's mind in the last moments of his life; and he carried the ardour of twenty-five into the melancholy reflections of old age. He was weary of every thing, and yet still regretted happiness, as if her illusions were still within his grasp. This contrast, quite in hostility with the ordinance of nature, which gives uniformity and graduation to the natural course of things, threw the soul of Oswald into disorder; but his manners always possessed considerable sweetness and harmony, and his sadness, far from souring his temper, only inspired him with more condescension and goodness towards others.

Two or three times during the passage from Harwich to Empden the sea put on the appearance of approaching storm; Lord Nelville counselled the sailors, restored confidence to the passengers, and when he himself assisted in working the ship, when he took for a moment the place of the steersman, there was in all he did, a skill and a power which could not be considered as merely the effect of the agility of the body,—there was soul in all that he did.

On his quitting the vessel all the crew crowded around Oswald to take leave of him; they all thanked him for a thousand little services which he had rendered them during the voyage, and which he no longer remembered. Upon one occasion, perhaps, it was a child which had occupied a large share of his attention; more often an old man, whose tottering steps he had supported when the wind agitated the ship. Such a general attention, without any regard to rank or quality, was perhaps never met with. During the whole day he would scarcely bestow a single moment upon himself: influenced alike by melancholy and benevolence, he gave his whole time to others. On leaving him the sailors said to him with one voice, “My dear Lord, may you be more happy!” Oswald had

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not once expressed the internal pain he felt; and the men of another rank, who had accompanied him in his passage, had not spoken a word to him on that subject. But the common people, in whom their superiors rarely confide, accustom themselves to discover sentiments and feelings by other means than speech: they pity you when you suffer, though they are ignorant of the cause of your grief, and their spontaneous pity is unmingled with either blame or advice.

Chapter ii.

Travelling, whatever may be said of it, is one of the saddest pleasures of life. When you find yourself comfortable in some foreign city it begins to feel, in some degree, like your own country; but to traverse unknown realms, to hear a language spoken which you hardly comprehend, to see human countenances which have no connection either with your past recollections or future prospects, is solitude and isolation, without dignity and without repose; for that eagerness, that haste to arrive where nobody expects us, that agitation, of which curiosity is the only cause, inspires us with very little esteem for ourselves, till the moment when new objects become a little old, and create around us some soft ties of sentiment and habit.

The grief of Oswald was, then, redoubled in traversing Germany in order to repair to Italy. On account of the war it was necessary to avoid France and its environs; it was also necessary to keep aloof from the armies who rendered the roads impracticable. This necessity of occupying his mind with particulars material to the journey, of adopting, every day, and almost every instant, some new resolution, was quite insupportable to Lord Nelville. His health, far from becoming better, often obliged him to stop, when he felt the strongest desire to hasten to his journey's end or at least to make a start. He spat blood, and took scarcely any care of himself; for he believed himself guilty, and became his own accuser with too great a degree of severity. He no longer wished for life but as it might become instrumental to the defence of his country. "Has not our country," said he, "some paternal claims upon us? But we should have the power to serve it usefully: we must not offer it such a debilitated existence as I drag along to ask of the sun some principle of life to enable me to struggle against my miseries. None but a father would receive me to his bosom, under such circumstances, with affection increased in proportion as I was abandoned by nature and by destiny."

Lord Nelville had flattered himself that the continual variety of external objects would distract his imagination a little from those ideas by which it was habitually occupied; but that circumstance was far from producing, at first, this happy effect. After any great misfortune we must become familiarised anew with everything that surrounds us; accustom ourselves to the faces that we behold again, to the house in which we dwell,

to the daily habits that we resume; each of these efforts is a painful shock, and nothing multiplies them like a journey.



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The only pleasure of Lord Nelville was to traverse the Tirolese Mountains upon a Scotch horse which he had brought with him, and which like the horses of that country ascended heights at a gallop: he quitted the high road in order to proceed by the most steep paths. The astonished peasants cried out at first with terror at beholding him thus upon the very brink of precipices, then clapped their hands in admiration of his address, his agility, and his courage. Oswald was fond of this sensation of danger; it supports the weight of affliction, it reconciles us, for a moment, with that life which we have reconquered, and which it so easy to lose.

Chapter iii.

In the town of Inspruck, before entering Italy, Oswald heard a merchant at whose house he had stopped some time, relate the story of a French emigre called the Count d'Erfeuil, which greatly interested him in his favour. This man had suffered the entire loss of a very large fortune with the most perfect serenity; he had, by his talent for music, supported himself and an old uncle, whom he had taken care of until his death; he had constantly refused to accept offers of pecuniary assistance pressingly made to him; he had manifested the most brilliant valour—a French valour—during the war, and the most invincible gaiety in the midst of reverses. He was desirous of going to Rome to see a relation, whose heir he was to be, and wished for a companion, or rather a friend, in order to render the journey more agreeable to both.

The most bitter recollections of Lord Nelville were connected with France; nevertheless he was exempt from those prejudices which divide the two nations; for a Frenchman had been his intimate friend, and he had found in this friend the most admirable union of all the qualities of the soul. He, therefore, offered to the merchant who related to him the story of the Count d'Erfeuil, to take this noble and unfortunate young man to Italy; and at the end of an hour the merchant came to inform Lord Nelville that his proposition was accepted with gratitude. Oswald was happy in being able to perform this service, but it cost him much to renounce his solitude; and his timidity was wounded at finding himself, all of a sudden, in an habitual relation with a man whom he did not know.

The Count d'Erfeuil came to pay a visit to Lord Nelville, in order to thank him. He possessed elegant manners, an easy politeness, good taste, and appeared, from the very first introduction, perfectly at his ease. In his company one would feel astonished at all that he had suffered, for he supported his fate with a courage approaching to oblivion; and there was in his conversation a facility truly admirable when he spoke of his own reverses; but less admirable, it must be confessed, when it extended to other subjects.



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"I owe you infinite obligation, my lord," said the Count d'Erfeuil, "for rescuing me from this Germany, where I was perishing with *ennui*." "You are here, nevertheless," replied Lord Nelville, "generally beloved and esteemed." "I have friends here," replied the Count d'Erfeuil, "whom I sincerely regret; for we meet in this country the best people in the world; but I do not know a word of German, and you will agree with me that it would be too long and fatiguing a task for me to set about learning it now. Since I have had the misfortune to lose my uncle I do not know what to do with my time, when I had the care of him it filled up my day, at present the twenty-four hours weigh heavily upon my hands." "The delicacy of your conduct towards your uncle," said Lord Nelville, "inspires everybody with the most profound esteem for your character, Count." "I have only done my duty," replied the Count d'Erfeuil; "the poor man had overwhelmed me with kindnesses during my childhood; I should never have deserted him had he lived a hundred years! But it is happy for him, however, that he is dead; it would be a happy thing for me also were I to follow him," added he, laughing; "for I have not much hope in this world. I used my best endeavours, during the war, to get killed; but, since fate has spared me, I must only live as well as I can." "I shall congratulate myself on my arrival here," answered Lord Nelville, "if you find yourself comfortable at Rome, and if—" "Oh, *mon Dieu*," interrupted the Count d'Erfeuil, "I shall find myself comfortable every where: when we are young and gay every thing accommodates itself to us. It is not from books, nor from meditation, that I have derived the philosophy which I possess, but from knowledge of the world, and trials of misfortune; and you see, my lord, that I have reason to reckon upon chance, since it has procured me the honour of travelling with you." In finishing these words the Count d'Erfeuil saluted Lord Nelville with the best grace in the world, settled the hour of departure for the following day, and took his leave.

The Count d'Erfeuil and Lord Nelville set out on the morrow. Oswald, after some expressions of politeness had passed between them, was several hours without saying a word; but perceiving that this silence was disagreeable to his companion, he asked him if he anticipated pleasure from a residence in Italy: "*Mon Dieu*," replied the Count d'Erfeuil, "I know what I have to expect from that country. I have no hope of any amusement there: a friend of mine, who had passed six months at Rome, has assured me there is not a province of France where one may not find a better theatre and a more agreeable society than at Rome, but in that ancient capital of the world I shall surely find some Frenchmen to chat with, and that is all I desire." "You have not attempted to learn Italian?" interrupted Oswald. "Not at all," replied the Count d'Erfeuil; "that did not enter into my plan of study." And in saying this he assumed such a serious air that one would have believed it was a resolution founded upon grave motives.



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“If I may speak my mind to you,” continued the Count d’Erfeuil, “as a nation, I love only the English and the French, one must either be proud like them or brilliant like us; all the rest is only imitation.” Oswald was silent; the Count d’Erfeuil some moments after resumed the conversation by the most lively sallies of wit and gaiety. He played with words and phrases in a very ingenious manner, but neither external objects nor intimate sentiments were the object of his discourse. His conversation proceeded, if it may be so expressed, neither from without nor within; it was neither reflective nor imaginative, and the bare relations of society were its subject.

He repeated twenty proper names to Lord Nelville, either in France, or in England, to know if he was acquainted with them, and related upon this occasion highly seasoned anecdotes with a most graceful turn; but one would have said, in hearing him, that the only discourse suitable to a man of taste was, to use the expression, the gossip of good company.

Lord Nelville reflected some time on the character of Count d’Erfeuil; that singular mixture of courage and frivolity, that contempt of misfortune, so great if it had cost more efforts, so heroic if it did not proceed from the same source that renders us incapable of deep affections. “An Englishman,” said Oswald to himself, “would be weighed down with sadness under similar circumstances.—Whence proceeds the resolution of this Frenchman? Whence proceeds also his mobility? Does the Count d’Erfeuil then truly understand the art of living? Is it only my own disordered mind that whispers to me I am superior to him? Does his light existence accord better than mine with the rapidity of human life? And must we shun reflection as an enemy, instead of giving up our whole soul to it?” Vainly would Oswald have cleared up those doubts; no one can escape from the intellectual region allotted him; and qualities are still more difficult to subdue than defects.

The Count d’Erfeuil paid no attention to Italy, and rendered it almost impossible for Lord Nelville to bestow a thought upon it; for he incessantly distracted him from that disposition of mind which excites admiration of a fine country, and gives a relish for its picturesque charms. Oswald listened as much as he could to the noise of the wind and to the murmuring of the waves; for all the voices of nature conveyed more gratification to his soul than he could possibly receive from the social conversation indulged in at the foot of the Alps, among the ruins, and on the borders of the sea.

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The sadness which consumed Oswald would have opposed fewer obstacles to the pleasure which he could have derived from Italy than the gaiety of Count d'Erfeuil, the sorrows of a sensitive mind will blend with the contemplation of nature and the enjoyment of the fine arts; but frivolity, in whatever form it presents itself, deprives attention of its force, thought of its originality, and sentiment of its profundity. One of the singular effects of this frivolity was to inspire Lord Nelville with a great deal of timidity in his intercourse with Count d'Erfeuil: embarrassment is nearly always on the side of him whose character is the more serious. Mental levity imposes upon the mind habitually disposed to meditation, and he who proclaims himself happy, appears wiser than he who suffers.

The Count d'Erfeuil was mild, obliging, and easy in every thing; serious only in self love, and worthy of being regarded as he regarded others; that is to say, as a good companion of pleasures and of perils; but he had no idea whatever of sharing sorrows: he was wearied to death with the melancholy of Oswald, and, as much from goodness of heart as from taste, was desirous of dissipating it.

“What is it you find wanting?” said he to him often; “are you not young, rich, and if you choose, in good health? for you are only ill because you are sad. For my part I have lost my fortune, my existence: I know not in fact what will become of me; nevertheless I enjoy life as if I possessed all the prosperity that earth can afford.” “You are endowed with a courage as rare as it is honourable,” replied Lord Nelville; “but the reverses which you have experienced are less injurious in their consequences than the grief which preys upon the heart.” “The grief which preys upon the heart,” cried the Count d'Erfeuil; “Oh! it is true, that is the most cruel of all;—but—but yet we should console ourselves under it; for a sensible man ought to drive away from his soul every thing that can neither be useful to others nor to himself. Are we not here below to be useful first and happy afterwards? My dear Nelville let us hold to that.”

What the Count d'Erfeuil said was reasonable, according to the general import of the word, for it savoured a good deal of what is usually called common sense: passionate characters are much more capable of folly than cool and superficial ones; but so far was the Count d'Erfeuil's mode of feeling from exciting the confidence of Lord Nelville that he would gladly have convinced him he was the most happy of men in order to avoid the pain which his consolation gave him.



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However the Count became greatly attached to Lord Nelville: his resignation and his simplicity, his modesty and his pride, inspired him with an involuntary respect for his character. He was concerned at the calm exterior of Oswald; he ransacked his head to bring to recollection all the most grave sayings which, in his childhood, he had heard from his aged parents, in order to try their effect upon Lord Nelville; and, quite astonished at not overcoming his apparent coldness, he said to himself: "Do I not possess courage, goodness, and openness of disposition? Am I not beloved in society? What is it then that I want to make an impression upon this man? There surely must be some misunderstanding between us which probably arises from his not understanding French sufficiently well."

Chapter iv.

An unforeseen circumstance greatly increased the sentiment of respect which the Count d'Erfeuil experienced already, almost without knowing it, for his travelling companion. The health of Lord Nelville had obliged him to stop some days at Ancona. The mountains and the sea render the situation of this city very fine, and the crowd of Greeks who work in front of their shops seated in the oriental manner, the diversity of costume of the inhabitants of the Levant, whom one meets in the streets, give it an original and interesting appearance. The art of civilization has a continual tendency to render all men alike in appearance and almost in reality; but the mind and the imagination take pleasure in the characteristic differences of nations: it is only by affectation and by calculation that men resemble each other; all that is natural is varied. The eyes then, at least, derive some little pleasure from diversity of costume; it seems to promise a new manner of feeling and of judging.

The Greek, the Catholic, and the Jewish worships exist simultaneously and peaceably in the city of Ancona. The ceremonies of these several religions differ widely from each other; but in those various forms of worship, the same sentiment lifts the soul to heaven—the same cry of grief, the same need of support.

The catholic church is on the top of a mountain, which dominates the sea: the roaring of the waves is often mingled with the song of the priests. The interior of the church is overladen with a crowd of rather tawdry ornaments; but if one stop beneath the portico of the temple, the soul is filled with the purest sentiments of religion, heightened by that sublime spectacle the sea, on whose bosom man has never been able to imprint the smallest trace. The earth is tilled by him, the mountains are cut through by his roads, and rivers shut up into canals to transport his merchandise; but if the waves are furrowed for a moment by his vessels the billows immediately efface this slight mark of servitude, and the sea appears again as it was the first day of the creation.

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Lord Nelville had fixed his departure for Rome for the morrow, when he heard, during the night the most dreadful cries in the city. He hastily quitted the inn in order to learn the cause, when he beheld a terrible fire, which proceeded from the port, and climbed from house to house even to the very top of the city. The flames were mirrored at a distance in the sea; the wind, which increased their fierceness, also disturbed their image in the surging waves, which reflected in a thousand ways the lurid traits of the conflagration.

The inhabitants of Ancona[2], not having among them pumps in good condition, were obliged to carry water to extinguish the flames, which they did with great eagerness. Amidst the din of different cries was heard the clank of chains, from the galley slaves, who were employed in saving that city which served them for a prison. The different nations of the Levant, which commerce draws to Ancona, expressed their fear by the stupor which appeared in their looks. The merchants, on beholding their warehouses in flames, entirely lost their presence of mind. Alarm for the loss of fortune affects the common order of men as much as the fear of death, and does not inspire that energy of the soul, that enthusiasm which brings resources to our aid.

The cries of sailors have always something doleful and prolonged in them, and were now rendered still more so by terror. The mariners on the shores of the Adriatic are clad in a red and brown hooded cloak of most singular appearance, and from the midst of this vestment emerged the animated countenances of the Italians, painting fear in a thousand shapes. The inhabitants, throwing themselves down in the streets, covered their heads with their cloaks, as if nothing remained for them now to do but to avoid seeing their disaster; others precipitated themselves into those flames from which they entertained no hope of escaping. A thoughtless fury and a blind resignation appeared by turns; but nowhere was seen that cool deliberation which redoubles our resources and our strength.

Oswald recollected that there were two English vessels in the harbour which had on board pumps of the best construction: he ran to the captain, who accompanied him in a boat to bring away these pumps. The inhabitants, seeing them enter the boat, exclaimed, "*Ah! strangers you do well to quit our unhappy city!*" "We shall come back again," said Oswald. They did not believe him. He returned however, fixed one of the pumps opposite the first house on fire, near the port, and the other facing that which was burning in the middle of the street. The Count d'Erfeuil exposed his life with carelessness, courage, and gaiety; the English sailors, and the domestics of Lord Nelville, all came to his aid; for the inhabitants of Ancona remained motionless, hardly comprehending what these strangers were about, and not expecting the least success from them.

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The bells rang in every quarter, the priests made processions, the women lamented and prostrated themselves before the images of the saints at the corners of the streets; but no one thought of those natural means which God has given to man for his defence. However, when the inhabitants perceived the happy effect of Oswald's activity; when they saw that the flames were being extinguished, and that their houses would be saved, they passed from astonishment to enthusiasm; they thronged about Lord Nelville, and kissed his hands with such lively eagerness that he was obliged to appear angry in order to drive away from him all who might obstruct the rapid succession of orders, and of efforts necessary to save the city. Every body was arranged under his command; for, in the least as well as in the greatest circumstances, when danger presents itself courage assumes its proper station; as soon as men are possessed with fear they cease to be jealous of one another.

Oswald, however, amid the general din, distinguished some cries more horrible than the rest, which resounded from the other extremity of the city. He demanded whence these cries proceeded, and was informed that they came from the quarter which was allotted for the Jews: the officer of the police was accustomed to shut the gates of this quarter in the evening, and, the fire having reached that part of the city, the Jews had no means of escape.

Oswald shuddered at this idea, and demanded that the gate should be immediately opened; but some women of the people who heard him threw themselves at his feet, entreating him to desist.—“*You see very well,*” said they, “*our good angel! that it is certainly on account of these Jews who reside here that we have suffered this fire, it is they who bring calamity upon us, and if you set them at liberty all the water in the sea will not extinguish the flames.*” And they besought Oswald to let the Jews be burnt with as much eloquence and tenderness as if they were soliciting an act of clemency. This was not the effect of natural cruelty, but of a superstitious imagination acutely impressed by a great misfortune; however, Oswald could hardly contain his indignation on hearing these strange entreaties.

He sent four English sailors with hatchets to break open the gates which inclosed these unfortunate people, who spread themselves in an instant through the city, running to their merchandise with that greed of possession which has something very melancholy in it, when it induces mortals to risk their lives for worldly wealth. One would say that in the present state of society the simple blessing of life is esteemed by man of little value.



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There now remained but one house at the top of the city, which the flames surrounded in such a manner that it was impossible to extinguish them, and more impossible to enter it. The inhabitants of Ancona had manifested so little concern for this house, that the English sailors, not believing it to be inhabited, had dragged their pumps towards the harbour. Oswald himself, stunned by the cries of those who surrounded him and solicited his aid, had not paid attention to it. The fire had extended the latest to that quarter, but had made considerable progress there. Lord Nelville demanded so impatiently what house that was, that at length a man informed him it was the madhouse. At this idea his whole soul was agitated; he turned, but found none of the sailors around him; the Count d'Erfeuil was not there either, and he would vainly have addressed himself to the inhabitants of Ancona: they were almost all occupied in saving their merchandise, and considered it absurd to run any risk to rescue men, of whom there was not one who was not incurably mad: "*It is a blessing from Heaven,*" said they, "*for them, and for their relations, that they should die in this manner; without any one incurring a crime by their death.*"

Whilst they held such language as this around Oswald, he proceeded with the utmost speed towards the madhouse, and the crowd, by whom he was censured, followed him with a confused sentiment of involuntary enthusiasm. As Oswald approached the house, he saw, at the only window which was not surrounded with flames, a number of lunatics, who regarded the progress of the fire with that horrid kind of smile which either supposes ignorance of all the ills of life, or so much grief at the bottom of the soul that death in no shape can terrify it. An inexpressible shudder seized upon Oswald at this sight; he had felt in the most dreadful moment of his despair, that his reason was on the point of being affected, and since that epoch, the aspect of madness always inspired him with the most sorrowful emotions of pity. He seized a ladder which he found near the spot, fixed it against the wall, and entered by the window into an apartment where the unhappy people who remained in the madhouse were assembled together.

Their insanity was so harmless, that they were suffered to be at large in the interior of the house with the exception of one, who was chained in this very room, where the flames already began to appear through the door, but had not yet consumed the floor. These miserable creatures, quite degraded by disease and suffering, were so surprised and enchanted by the appearance of Oswald among them, that they obeyed him at first without resistance. He ordered them to descend before him, one after another, by means of the ladder, which the flames might devour in a moment. The first of these wretched people obeyed without uttering a word; the accent and the physiognomy of Lord Nelville had entirely subdued him. A third wished to resist, without suspecting the danger that he incurred by each moment of delay, and without thinking of the peril to which he exposed Oswald in detaining him. The people, who felt all the horrors of his situation, cried out to Lord Nelville to return, and to let those maniacs get away how they could. But the deliverer would listen to nothing till he had achieved his generous enterprise.



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Of the six lunatics who were in the madhouse, five were already saved; there now only remained the sixth who was chained. Oswald loosened his irons, and endeavoured to make him take the same means of escaping as his companions had done; but it was a poor young man, whose reason was entirely destroyed, and, finding himself at liberty, after being chained for two years, he darted about the room with an extravagant joy. This joy rose to fury, when Oswald tried to make him go out at the window. Lord Nelville perceiving that it was impossible to prevail upon this maniac to save himself, though the flames increased around them, seized him in his arms, in spite of the efforts of the unhappy wretch, who struggled against his benefactor. He carried him off, without knowing where he placed his feet, so much was his sight obscured by the smoke; he leaped from nearly the middle of the ladder, and consigned the lunatic, who loaded him with curses, to some people whom he made promise to take care of him.

Oswald, animated by the danger he had just run, his hair dishevelled, his look so proud yet so mild, struck the crowd who beheld him with admiration, and almost with fanaticism; the women, above all, expressed themselves with that imagination which is an almost universal gift in Italy, and even gives a nobleness to the conversation of the common people. They threw themselves on their knees before him, and cried, "*You are surely St Michael, the patron of our city; display thy wings most holy saint! but do not quit us: deign to ascend the steeple of the cathedral, that all the city may behold, and pray to thee.*" "My child is sick," said one, "heal him." "Tell me," said another, "*where my husband is, who has been absent several years?*" Oswald sought a means of escape. The Count d'Erfeuil arrived, and said to him, pressing his hand, "My dear Nelville, we ought to share all things with our friends; it is unkind of you thus to monopolise all the danger." "Release me from these people," said Oswald to him, in a low voice. A moment of darkness favoured their flight, and both of them went in haste to get post horses.

Lord Nelville experienced, at first, some pleasure from the good action he had just performed, but with whom could he enjoy it now that his best friend was no more? How unhappy is the lot of orphans! The most fortunate events, as well as the most painful, make them feel alike the solitude of the heart. How is it possible, in effect, ever to replace that affection which is born with us, that intelligence, that sympathy of blood, that friendship prepared by heaven between the child and the father? We may still, it is true, find an object of love; but one in whom we can confide our whole soul is a happiness which can never be found again.

FOOTNOTE:

[2] Ancona is now pretty nearly in the same predicament that it was then.

Chapter v.



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Oswald pursued his journey through the Marches of Ancona, and the Ecclesiastical States, without any thing attracting his observation, or exciting his interest: this was occasioned as well by the melancholy habit of his soul, as by a certain natural indolence, from which he was only to be aroused by strong passions. His taste for the arts had not yet unfolded itself; he had never dwelt but in France, where society is all in all, and in London, where political interests absorb almost every other: his imagination, concentrated in his sufferings, had not yet learnt to take pleasure in the wonders of nature and the masterpieces of art.

The Count d'Erfeuil traversed every town with the "Traveller's Guide" in his hand, and had at once the double pleasure of losing his time in seeing every thing, and of declaring, that he had seen nothing which could excite admiration in any person acquainted with France. The *ennui* of Count d'Erfeuil discouraged Oswald; he, besides, entertained prejudices against the Italians and against Italy: he did not yet penetrate the mystery of this nation or of this country;—a mystery which must be comprehended by the imagination, rather than by that faculty of judgment which is particularly developed by an English education.

The Italians are much more remarkable for what they have been, and for what they might be than for what they actually are. The deserts which surround the city of Rome, that land which, fatigued with glory, seems to hold in contempt the praise of being productive, presents but an uncultivated and neglected country to him who considers it with regard to utility. Oswald, accustomed from his infancy to the love of order and public prosperity, received, at first, unfavourable impressions in traversing those deserted plains which announce the approach to that city formerly the queen of the world: he blamed the indolence of the inhabitants and that of their rulers. Lord Nelville judged of Italy as an enlightened administrator, the Count d'Erfeuil as a man of the world: thus the one from reason, and the other from levity, were not sensible of that effect which the country about Rome produces upon the imagination, when it is impressed with the recollections, the sympathies, the natural beauties and the illustrious misfortunes which spread over these regions an undefinable charm.

The Count made ludicrous lamentations on the environs of Rome. "What," said he, "no country house, no carriage, nothing that announces the vicinity of a great city? Heavens! what a melancholy prospect!" In approaching Rome, the postillions cried, with transport, "*See! See, there is the dome of St Peter's!*" It is thus that the Neapolitans shew mount Vesuvius, and the sea excites the same emotions of pride in the inhabitants of the coast. "One would have thought they had seen the dome of *Les Invalides*;" cried the Count d'Erfeuil. This comparison, more patriotic than just, destroyed the impression

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which Oswald might have received on beholding this magnificent wonder of human creation. They entered Rome, not on a fine day—not on a fine night—but on a gloomy evening, which tarnished and confounded every object. They traversed the Tiber without remarking it; they arrived at Rome by the Porta del Popolo which conducts immediately to the Corso, to the largest street of the modern city, but to that part of Rome which possesses the least originality, because it resembles more the other cities of Europe.

Crowds were walking in the streets; the puppet shows and the charlatans were formed in groups in the square, where stands the column of Antoninus. All the attention of Oswald was captivated by the objects nearest to him. The name of Rome no longer vibrated through his soul; he felt nothing but that isolation which oppresses the heart when we enter a strange city, when we behold that multitude of people to whom our existence is unknown, and who have no interest in common with us. Those reflections, so sad for every man, are still more so for the English, who are accustomed to live among themselves, and who with difficulty enter into the manners of other nations. In the vast caravansary of Rome everything is foreign, even the Romans seem to inhabit there not as the possessors, *but like pilgrims who repose beneath the ruins*[3]. Oswald, oppressed with painful sensations, shut himself up at home, and went not out to see the city. He was very far from thinking that this country, which he entered under such sadness and dejection of spirits, would soon become for him a source of so many new ideas and enjoyments.

FOOTNOTE:

[3] This reflection is taken from a letter on Rome, by M. de Humboldt, brother of the celebrated Traveller, and Prussian Minister at Rome. It is difficult to find anywhere a man whose conversation and writings bespeak more knowledge and ideas.

Book ii.

CORINNE AT THE CAPITOL.

[Illustration]

Chapter i.

Oswald awoke in Rome. His first looks were saluted by the brilliancy of an Italian sun, and his soul was penetrated with a sentiment of love and gratitude towards that Power which seemed manifested in its resplendent beams. He heard the bells of the different churches of the city; the firing of cannon at intervals announced some great solemnity.



He demanded the cause of it, and was informed that that morning was to be crowned, at the Capitol, the most celebrated woman in Italy. Corinne, poetess, writer, *improvisatrice*, and one of the greatest beauties of Rome. He made some enquiries respecting this ceremony consecrated by the names of Petrarch and of Tasso, and all the answers that he received strongly excited his curiosity.



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There is certainly nothing more contrary to the habits and opinions of an Englishman, than this great publicity given to the destiny of a woman; but even foreigners are affected, at least for a moment, with that enthusiasm which is inspired in the Italians by all those talents that belong to the imagination, and they forget the prejudices of their country amidst a nation so warm in the expression of its feelings. The common people of Rome reason with taste upon their statues, pictures, monuments and antiquities; and literary merit, carried to a certain pitch, excites in them a national interest.

Oswald quitted his lodgings to repair to the public square, where he heard everybody speaking of the genius and talents of Corinne. The streets through which she was to pass had been decorated; the people, who rarely assemble together except to pay their homage to fortune or power, were, upon this occasion, almost in a tumult to behold a female whose mind was her only claim to distinction. In the actual state of the Italians the field of glory is only open to them in the fine arts, and they possess a sensibility for genius in that department, which ought to give birth to great men, if applause alone were sufficient to produce them, if the stress of vigorous life, great interests and an independent existence were not necessary to nourish thought.

Oswald walked the streets of Rome, waiting the arrival of Corinne. At every instant he heard her name accompanied with some anecdote concerning her, which implied the possession of all those talents that captivate the imagination. One said that her voice was the most touching in Italy; another, that nobody played tragedy like her; somebody else, that she danced like a nymph, and designed with as much taste as invention: all said that nobody had ever written or improvised such fine verses, and that, in habitual conversation she possessed by turns, a grace and an eloquence which charmed every mind. Disputes were entered into as to what city of Rome had given her birth; but the Romans maintained, warmly, that she must have been born in Rome to speak Italian in such purity as she did. No one was acquainted with her family name. Her first work had appeared five years before, and only bore the name of Corinne; nobody knew where she had lived, nor what she had been before that time: she was, however, nearly twenty-six years of age. This mystery and publicity both at the same time, this woman of whom everybody spoke, but whose real name was known to nobody, appeared to Lord Nelville one of the wonders of the singular country he had just come to live in. He would have judged very severely of such a woman in England, but he did not apply the usual etiquette of society to Italy, and the coronation of Corinne inspired him beforehand with that interest to which an adventure of Ariosto would give birth.

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Very fine and brilliant music preceded the arrival of the triumphal procession. Any event, whatever it may be, which is announced by music, always produces emotion. A great number of Roman Lords, and some foreigners, preceded the car of Corinne. "*That is the train of her admirers!*" said a Roman. "Yes," replied the other, "*she receives the incense of everybody; but she grants nobody a decided preference: she is rich and independent; it is even believed, and certainly her appearance bespeaks it, that she is a woman of illustrious birth who desires to remain unknown.*" "Be it as it may," replied a third, "*she is a goddess wrapt in a cloud.*" Oswald looked at the man who spoke thus, and every thing about him indicated that he belonged to the most obscure rank in society; but in the south people so naturally make use of poetical expressions, that one would say they were inhaled with the air and inspired by the sun.

At length way was made through the crowd for the four white horses that drew the car of Corinne. Corinne was seated in this car which was constructed upon an antique model, and young girls, dressed in white, walked on each side of her. Wherever she passed an abundance of perfumes was thrown into the air; the windows, decorated with flowers and scarlet tapestry, were crowded with spectators; every body cried, "*Long live Corinne!*" "*Long live Genius and Beauty!*" The emotion was general but Lord Nelville did not yet share it, and though he had observed in his own mind that in order to judge of such a ceremony we must lay aside the reserve of the English and the pleasantry of the French, he did not share heartily in the *fete* till at last he beheld Corinne.

[Illustration: *Corinne at the Capitol.*]

She was dressed like the Sybil of Domenichino; an Indian shawl twisted about her head, and her hair of the finest jet black, entwined with this shawl; her dress was white, with blue drapery from her bosom downwards, and her costume was very picturesque, at the same time without departing so much from established modes as to savour of affectation. Her attitude on the car was noble and modest: it was easily perceived that she was pleased with being admired, but a sense of timidity was mingled with her joy, and seemed to ask pardon for her triumph. The expression of her physiognomy, of her eyes, of her smile, interested all in her favour, and the first look made Lord Nelville her friend, even before that sentiment was subdued by a warmer impression. Her arms were of dazzling beauty; her shape, tall, but rather full, after the manner of the Grecian statues, energetically characterised youth and happiness; and there was something inspired in her look. One might perceive in her manner of greeting and returning thanks for the applause which she received, a kind of disposition which heightened the lustre of the extraordinary situation in which she was placed.



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She gave at once the idea of a priestess of Apollo advancing towards the temple of the Sun, and of a woman of perfect simplicity in the common relations of life. To conclude, in her every motion there was a charm which excited interest, curiosity, astonishment and affection. The admiration of the people increased in proportion as she advanced towards the Capitol—that spot so fertile in memories. The beauty of the sky, the enthusiasm of these Romans, and above all Corinne, electrified the imagination of Oswald. He had often, in his own country, seen statesmen carried in triumph by the people, but this was the first time he had been a witness of the honours paid to a woman—a woman illustrious only by the gifts of genius. Her chariot of victory was not purchased at the cost of the tears of any human being, and no regret, no terror overshadowed that admiration which the highest endowments of nature, imagination, sentiment and mind, could not fail to excite.

Oswald was so absorbed in his reflections, so occupied by novel ideas, that he did not remark the antique and celebrated places through which the car of Corinne passed. It was at the foot of the flight of steps which leads to the Capitol, that the car stopped, and at that moment all the friends of Corinne rushed forward to offer her their hands. She chose that of the prince Castel-Forte, the most esteemed of the Roman nobility, for his intellect and for his disposition: every one approved the choice of Corinne, and she ascended the steps of the Capitol whose imposing majesty seemed to receive, with kind condescension, the light footsteps of a woman. A new flourish of music was heard at the moment of Corinne's arrival, the cannon resounded and the triumphant Sybil entered the palace prepared for her reception.

At the lower end of the hall in which she was received were placed the senator who was to crown her, and the conservators of the senate; on one side all the cardinals and the most distinguished women of the country; on the other the men of letters of the academy of Rome; and at the opposite extremity the hall was occupied by a part of the immense crowd who had followed Corinne. The chair destined for her was placed a step below that of the senator. Corinne, before she seated herself in it, made a genuflection on the first step, agreeably to the etiquette required in this august assembly. She did it with so much nobleness and modesty, so much gentleness and dignity, that Lord Nelville in that moment felt his eyes moist with tears: he was astonished at his own tenderness, but in the midst of all her pomp and triumph it seemed to him that Corinne had implored, by her looks, the protection of a friend—that protection which no woman, however superior, can dispense with; and how sweet, said he within himself, would it be to become the support of her to whom sensibility alone renders that support necessary.



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As soon as Corinne was seated the Roman poets began to read the sonnets and odes which they had composed for the occasion. They all exalted her to the skies, but the praises which they lavishly bestowed upon her did not draw any characteristic features of distinction between her and other women of superior talents. They were only pleasing combinations of images, and allusions to mythology, which might, from the days of Sappho to those in which we live, have been addressed indiscriminately to any woman who had rendered herself illustrious by her literary talents.

Already Lord Nelville felt hurt at this manner of praising Corinne; he thought, in beholding her, that he could at that very instant draw a portrait of her, more true, more just, more characteristic—a portrait in fact that could only belong to Corinne.

Chapter ii.

The Prince Castel-Forte then rose to speak, and his observations upon the merits of Corinne excited the attention of the whole assembly. He was about fifty years of age, and there was in his speech and in his deportment much deliberate ease and dignity. The assurances which Lord Nelville received from those about him, that he was only the friend of Corinne, excited, in his lordship's mind, an interest for the portrait which he drew of her, unmixed with any other emotion. Without such a security a confused sentiment of jealousy would have already disturbed the soul of Oswald.

The Prince Castel-Forte read some unpretentious pages of prose which were particularly calculated to display the genius of Corinne. He first pointed out the peculiar merit of her work, and said that that merit partly consisted of her profound study of foreign literature: she united, in the highest degree, imagination, florid description and all the brilliancy of the south, with that knowledge, that observation of the human heart, which falls to the share of those countries where external objects excite less interest.

He extolled the elegant graces and the lively disposition of Corinne—a gaiety which partook of no improper levity, but proceeded solely from the vivacity of the mind and the freshness of the imagination. He attempted to praise her sensibility, but it was easily perceived that personal regret mingled itself with this part of his speech. He lamented the difficulty which a woman of her superior cast experienced of meeting with the object of which she has formed to herself an ideal portrait—a portrait clad with every endowment the heart and mind can wish for. He however took pleasure in painting the passionate sensibility which the poetry of Corinne inspired, and the art she possessed of seizing every striking relation between the beauties of nature and the most intimate impressions of the soul. He exalted the originality of Corinne's expressions, those expressions which were the offspring of her character and manner of feeling, without ever permitting any shade of affectation to disfigure a species of charm not only natural but involuntary.



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He spoke of her eloquence as possessing an irresistible force and energy which must the more transport her hearers the more they possessed within themselves true intellectual sensibility. "Corinne," said he, "is indubitably the most celebrated woman of our country, and nevertheless it is only her friends who can properly delineate her; for we must always have recourse, in some degree, to conjecture, in order to discover the genuine qualities of the soul. They may be concealed from our knowledge by celebrity as well as obscurity, if some sort of sympathy does not assist us to penetrate them." He enlarged upon her talent for extemporisation, which did not resemble any thing of that description known in Italy. "It is not only to the fecundity of her mind that we ought to attribute it;" said he; "but to the deep emotion which every generous thought excites in her. She cannot pronounce a word that recalls such thoughts without enthusiasm, that inexhaustible source of sentiments and of ideas animating and inspiring her." The Prince Castel-Forte also made his audience sensible of the beauties of a style always pure and harmonious. "The poetry of Corinne," added he, "is an intellectual melody which can alone express the charm of the most fugitive and delicate impressions."

He praised the conversation of his heroine in a manner that easily made it perceived he had experienced its delight. "Imagination and simplicity, justness and elevation, strength and tenderness, are united," said he, "in the same person to give incessant variety to all the pleasures of the mind: we may apply to her, this charming verse of Petrarch:

Il parlar che nell' anima si sente.[4]

and, I believe, in her will be found that grace so much boasted of, that oriental charm which the ancients attributed to Cleopatra.

"The places I have visited with her, the music we have heard together, the pictures she has pointed out to me, the books she has made me comprehend, compose the universe of my imagination. There is in all these objects a spark of her life; and if I were to exist at a distance from her I would wish at least to be surrounded by those objects, certain as I am of finding nowhere else that trace of fire, that trace of herself in fact, which she has left in them. Yes," continued he (and at that moment his eyes fell by chance upon Oswald), "behold Corinne; if you can pass your life with her, if that double existence which it is in her power to give can be assured to you for a long time; but do not behold her if you are condemned to quit her; you will seek in vain as long as you live that creative soul which shares and multiplies your sentiments and your thoughts; you will never behold her like again."



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Oswald started at these words, his eyes fixed themselves upon Corinne, who heard them with an emotion that was not inspired by self-love, but which was allied to the most amiable and delicate feelings. The Prince Castel-Forte was much affected for a moment, and then resumed his speech. He spoke of Corinne's talent for music, for painting, for declamation and for dancing: In all these talents, he said, she was entirely herself, not confined to any particular manner, or to any particular rule, but expressing in various languages the same powers of the imagination, and the same witchery of the fine arts under all their different forms.

"I do not flatter myself," said the Prince Castel-Forte in concluding, "that I have been able to paint a lady of whom it is impossible to form an idea without having heard her; but her presence is, for us at Rome, as one of the benefits of our brilliant sky and our inspired nature. Corinne is the tie that unites her friends together; she is the moving principle and the interest of our life. We reckon upon her goodness; we are proud of her genius; we say to strangers, 'Behold her! She is the image of our beautiful Italy; she is what we should be without the ignorance, the envy, the discord and the indolence to which our fate has condemned us.' We take pleasure in contemplating her as an admirable production of our climate and of our fine arts,—as a scion shooting out of the past, as a prophecy of the future. When foreigners insult this country, whence has issued that intelligence which has shed its light over Europe; when they are without pity for our defects, which arise out of our misfortunes, we will say to them: 'Behold Corinne! 'Tis our desire to follow her footsteps; we would endeavour to become, as men, what she is as woman, if man like woman could create a world in his own heart; and if our genius, necessarily dependent upon social relations and external circumstances, could be kindled by the torch of poetry alone.'"

The moment the Prince Castel-Forte left off speaking unanimous applause was heard on all sides, and though towards the conclusion of his speech he indirectly blamed the present state of the Italians, all the nobles of the state approved of it; so true it is that we find in Italy that sort of liberality which does not lead men to alter institutions, but which pardons in superior minds a tranquil opposition to existing prejudices. The reputation of Prince Castel-Forte was very great in Rome. He spoke with a rare sagacity, which is a remarkable gift in a nation who exhibit more intellect in their conduct than in their conversation. He did not in his worldly concerns shew that address which often distinguishes the Italians, but he took delight in thought, and did not dread the fatigue of meditation. The happy inhabitants of the south sometimes shrink from this fatigue, and flatter themselves that imagination will do everything for them, as their fertile soil produces fruit without cultivation assisted only by the bounty of the sky.



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FOOTNOTE:

[4] The language which is felt in the depth of the soul.

Chapter iii.

Corinne arose when the Prince Castel-Forte had ceased speaking; she thanked him by an inclination of the head so dignified yet so gentle, that it expressed at once the modesty and joy so natural at having received praise according to her heart's desire. It was the custom that every poet crowned at the Capitol should recite or extemporise some piece of poetry, before the destined laurel was placed on his head. Corinne ordered her lyre to be brought to her—the instrument of her choice—which greatly resembled the harp, but was however more antique in form and more simple in its sounds. In tuning it she was seized with uncommon timidity, and it was with a trembling voice that she asked to know the subject imposed on her. “*The glory and happiness of Italy!*” cried all around her with a unanimous voice. “Very well,” replied she already fired with enthusiasm, already supported by her genius, “*the glory and happiness of Italy;*” and feeling herself animated by the love of her country she commenced the most charming strains, of which prose can give but a very imperfect idea.

* * * * *

The Improvisation of Corinne, at the Capitol.

“Italy, empire of the sun! Italy, mistress of the world! Italy, the cradle of letters, I salute thee! How often has the human race been subjected to thee, tributary to thy arms, to thy art and to thy sky.

“A deity quitted Olympus to take refuge in Ausonia; the aspect of this country recalled the virtues of the golden age;—man appeared there too happy to be supposed guilty.

“Rome conquered the universe by her genius, and became sovereign by liberty. The Roman character was imprinted everywhere, and the invasion of the Barbarians, in destroying Italy obscured the whole world.

“Italy appeared again with the divine treasures which the fugitive Greeks brought back to her bosom; heaven revealed its laws to her; the daring of her children discovered a new hemisphere; she again became sovereign by the sceptre of thought, but this laurelled sceptre only produced ingratitude.

“Imagination restored to her the universe which she had lost. The painters and the poets created for her an earth, an Olympus, a hell, and a heaven; and her native fire, better guarded by her genius than by the Pagan deity, found not in Europe a Prometheus to ravish it from her.



“Why am I at the Capitol? Why is my humble forehead about to receive the crown which Petrarch, has worn, and which remained suspended on the gloomy cypress that weeps over the tomb of Tasso?—Why, if you were not so enamoured of glory, my fellow-countrymen, that you recompense its worship as much as its success?”

“Well, if you so love this glory which too often chooses its victims among the conquerors which it has crowned, reflect with pride upon those ages which beheld the new birth of the arts. Dante, the modern Homer, the hero of thought, the sacred poet of our religious mysteries, plunged his genius into the Styx to land in the infernal regions, and his mind was profound as the abyss which he has described.”



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“Italy in the days of her power was wholly revived in Dante. Animated by a republican spirit, warrior as well as poet, he breathed the flame of action among the dead; and his shadows have a more vivid existence than the living here below.

“Terrestrial remembrances pursue them still; their aimless passions devour one another in the heart; they are moved at the past which seems to them less irrevocable than their eternal future.

“One would say that Dante, banished from his country, has transported into imaginary regions the pangs which devoured him. His shades incessantly demand news from the scene of mortal existence, as the poet himself eagerly enquires after his native country; and hell presents itself to him in the form of exile.

“All, in his eyes, are clothed in the costume of Florence. The ancient dead whom he invokes, seem to be born again as completely Tuscan as himself. It was not that his mind was limited—it was the energy of his soul, that embraced the whole universe within the circle of his thoughts.

“A mystical chain of circles and of spheres conducts him from hell to purgatory, from purgatory to paradise. Faithful historian of his vision, he pours a flood of light upon the most obscure regions, and the world which he creates in his triple poem is as complete, as animated and as brilliant as a planet newly-discovered in the firmament.

“At his voice the whole earth assumes a poetical form, its objects, ideas, laws and phenomena, seem a new Olympus of new deities; but this mythology of the imagination is annihilated, like paganism, at the aspect of paradise, of that ocean of light, sparkling with rays and with stars, with virtues and with love.

“The magic words of our great poet are the prism of the universe; all its wonders are there reflected, divided, and recomposed; sounds imitate colours, and colours are blended in harmony; rhyme, sonorous or bizarre, rapid or prolonged, is inspired by this poetical divination; supreme beauty of art! triumph of genius! which discovers in nature every secret in affinity with the heart of man.

“Dante hoped from his poem the termination of his exile; he reckoned on Fame as his mediator; but he died too soon to receive the palm of his country. Often is the fleeting life of man worn out in adversity! and if glory triumph, if at length he land upon a happier shore, he no sooner enters the port than the grave yawns before him, and destiny, in a thousand shapes, often announces the end of life by the return of happiness.

“Thus unfortunate Tasso, whom your homage, Romans, was to console for all the injustice he had suffered; Tasso, the handsome, the gentle, the heroic, dreaming of exploits, feeling the love which he sang, approached these walls as his heroes did those of Jerusalem—with respect and gratitude. But on the eve of the day chosen for his

coronation, Death claimed him for its terrible festival: Heaven is jealous of earth, and recalls her favourites from the treacherous shores of Time!



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“In an age more proud and more free than that of Tasso, Petrarch was, like Dante, the valorous poet of Italian independence. In other climes he is only known by his amours, —here, more severe recollections encircle his name with never-fading honour; for it is known that he was inspired by his country more than by Laura herself.

“He re-animated antiquity by his vigils; and, far from his imagination raising any obstacle to the most profound studies, its creative power, in submitting the future to his will, revealed to him the secrets of past ages. He discovered how greatly knowledge assists invention; and his genius was so much the more original, since, like the eternal forces, he could be present at all periods of time.

“Ariosto derived inspiration from our serene atmosphere, and our delicious climate. He is the rainbow which appeared after our long wars; brilliant and many-hued, like that herald of fine weather, he seems to sport familiarly with life; his light and gentle gaiety is the smile of nature and not the irony of man.

“Michael Angelo, Raphael, Pergolese, Galileo, and you, intrepid travellers, greedy of new countries, though nature could offer nothing finer than your own, join your glory also to that of the poets. Artists, scholars, philosophers! you are, like them, the children of that sun which by turns develops the imagination, animates thought, excites courage, lulls us into a happy slumber, and seems to promise everything, or cause it to be forgotten.

“Do you know that land where the Orange-trees bloom, which the rays of heaven make fertile with love? Have you heard those melodious sounds which celebrate the mildness of the nights? Have you breathed those perfumes which are the luxury of that air, already so pure and so mild? Answer, strangers; is nature in your countries so beautiful and so beneficent?

“In other regions, when social calamities afflict a country, the people must believe themselves abandoned by the Deity; but here we ever feel the protection of heaven; we see that he interests himself for man, that he has deigned to treat him as a noble being.

“It is not only with vine branches, and with ears of corn, that Nature is here adorned; she prodigally strews beneath the feet of man, as on the birthday of a sovereign, an abundance of useless plants and flowers, which, destined to please, will not stoop to serve.

“The most delicate pleasures nourished by nature are enjoyed by a nation worthy of them—a nation who are satisfied with the most simple dishes; who do not become intoxicated at the fountains of wine which plenty prepares for them;—a nation who love their sun, their arts, their monuments, their country, at once antique and in the spring of youth;—a nation that stand equally aloof from the refined pleasures of luxury, as from the gross and sordid pleasures of a mercenary people.”



“Here sensations are confounded with ideas; life is drawn in all its fulness from the same spring, and the soul, like the air, inhabits the confines of earth, and of heaven. Genius is untrammelled because here reverie is sweet: its holy calm soothes the soul when perturbed, lavishes upon it a thousand illusions when it regrets a lost purpose, and when oppressed by man nature is ready to welcome it.”



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“Thus is our country ever beneficent, and her succouring hand heals every wound. Here, even the pangs of the heart receive consolation, in admiring a God of kindness, and penetrating the secrets of his love; the passing troubles of our ephemeral life are lost in the fertile and majestic bosom of the immortal universe.”

Corinne was interrupted, for some moments, by a torrent of applause. Oswald alone took no share in the noisy transports that surrounded him. He had leaned his head upon his hand, when Corinne said: “*Here, even the pangs of the heart receive consolation;*” and had not raised it since. Corinne remarked it, and soon, from his features, the colour of his hair, his costume, his lofty figure, from his whole manner in short, she knew him for an Englishman: she was struck with his mourning habit, and the melancholy pictured in his countenance. His look, at that moment fixed upon her, seemed full of gentle reproaches; she guessed the thoughts that occupied his mind, and felt the necessity of satisfying him, by speaking of happiness with less confidence, by consecrating some verses to death in the midst of a festival. She then resumed her lyre, with this design, and having produced silence in the assembly, by the moving and prolonged sounds which she drew from her instrument, began thus:

“There are griefs however which our consoling sky cannot efface, but in what retreat can sorrow make a more sweet and more noble impression upon the soul than here?”

“In other countries hardly do the living find space sufficient for their rapid motions and their ardent desires; here, ruins, deserts and uninhabited palaces, afford an asylum for the shades of the departed. Is not Rome now the land of tombs?”

“The Coliseum, the obelisks, all the wonders which from Egypt and from Greece, from the extremity of ages, from Romulus to Leo X. are assembled here, as if grandeur attracted grandeur, and as if the same spot was to enclose all that man could secure from the ravages of time; all these wonders are consecrated to the monuments of the dead. Our indolent life is scarcely perceived, the silence of the living is homage paid to the dead; they endure and we pass away.

“They only are honoured, they are still celebrated: our obscure destinies serve only to heighten the lustre of our ancestors: our present existence leaves nothing standing but the past; it will exact no tribute from future recollections! All our masterpieces are the work of those who are no more, and genius itself is numbered among the illustrious dead.

“Perhaps one of the secret charms of Rome, is to reconcile the imagination with the sleep of death. Here we learn resignation, and suffer less pangs of regret for the objects of our love. The people of the south picture to themselves the end of life in colours less gloomy than the inhabitants of the north. The sun, like glory, warms even the tomb.



“The cold and isolation of the sepulchre beneath our lovely sky, by the side of so many funereal urns, have less terrors for the human mind. We believe a crowd of spirits is waiting for our company; and from our solitary city to the subterranean one the transition seems easy and gentle.



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“Thus the edge of grief is taken off; not that the heart becomes indifferent, or the soul dried up; but a more perfect harmony, a more odoriferous air, mingles with existence. We abandon ourselves to nature with less fear—to nature, of whom the Creator has said: ‘Consider the lilies of the field; they toil not neither do they spin: yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.’”

Oswald was so ravished with these last strains, that he gave the most lively testimonies of his admiration; and, upon this occasion, the transports of the Italians themselves did not equal his. In fact, it was to him more than to the Romans, that the second improvisation of Corinne was directed.

The greater part of the Italians have, in reading poetry, a kind of singing monotony, called *cantilene*, which destroys all emotion[5]. It is in vain that the words vary—the impression remains the same; since the accent, more essential than even the words, hardly varies at all. But Corinne recited with a variety of tone, which did not destroy the sustained charm of the harmony;—it was like several different airs played on some celestial instrument.

The tones of Corinne’s voice, full of sensibility and emotion, giving effect to the Italian language, so pompous and so sonorous, produced upon Oswald an impression entirely novel. The English prosody is uniform and veiled, its natural beauties are all of a sombre cast; its colouring has been formed by clouds, and its modulation by the roaring of the sea; but when Italian words, brilliant as an Italian festival, resonant like those instruments of victory, which have been compared to scarlet among colours; when these words, bearing the stamp of that joy which a fine climate spreads through every heart, are pronounced in a moving voice, their lustre softened, their strength concentrated, the soul is affected in a manner as acute as unforeseen. The intention of nature seems baffled, her benefits of no use, her offers rejected, and the expression of pain, in the midst of so many enjoyments, astonishes and affects us more deeply than the grief which is sung in those northern languages which it seems to inspire.

FOOTNOTE:

[5] We must expect from this censure upon the Italian mode of declamation, the celebrated Monti, who recites verses as well as he composes them. It is really one of the greatest dramatic pleasures that can be experienced, to hear him recite the Episode of Ugolin, of Francesca da Rimini, the Death of Clorinda, &c.

Chapter iv.

The Senator took the crown of myrtle and laurel which he was to place on the head of Corinne. She removed the shawl which graced her forehead, and all her ebon hair fell in ringlets about her shoulders. She advanced with her head bare, and her look



animated by a sentiment of pleasure and gratitude which she sought not to conceal. She a second time bent her knee, to receive the crown; but she displayed less agitation and tremor than at first; she had just spoken; she had just filled her mind with the most noble thoughts, and enthusiasm conquered diffidence. She was no longer a timid woman, but an inspired priestess who joyfully consecrated herself to the worship of genius.



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As soon as the crown was placed on the head of Corinne all the instruments were heard in those triumphant airs which fill the soul with the most sublime emotion. The sound of kettle-drums, and the flourish of trumpets, inspired Corinne with new feelings—her eyes were filled with tears—she sat down a moment, and covered her face with her handkerchief. Oswald, most sensibly affected, quitted the crowd, and advanced to speak to her, but was withheld by an invincible embarrassment. Corinne looked at him for some time, taking care nevertheless, that he should not observe the attention she paid him; but when the Prince Castel-Forte came to take her hand, in order to conduct her to the car, she yielded to his politeness with an absent mind; and, while she permitted him to hand her along, turned her head several times, under various pretexts, to take another view of Oswald.

He followed her, and at the moment when she descended the steps accompanied by her train, she made a retrograde movement, in order to behold him once more, when her crown fell off. Oswald hastened to pick it up; and in restoring it to her, said in Italian, that an humble mortal like himself might venture to place at the feet of a goddess that crown which he dared not presume to place on her head[6]. Corinne thanked Lord Nelville in English, with that pure national accent—that pure insular accent, which has scarcely ever been successfully imitated on the continent. What was the astonishment of Oswald in hearing her! He remained at first immovably fixed to the spot where he was, and feeling confused he leaned against one of the lions of basalt at the foot of the stairway descending from the Capitol. Corinne viewed him again, forcibly struck with the emotion he betrayed; but she was dragged away towards the car, and the whole crowd disappeared long before Oswald had recovered his strength and his presence of mind.

Corinne, till then, had enchanted him as the most charming of foreigners—as one of the wonders of that country he had come to visit; but her English accent recalled every recollection of his native country, and in a manner naturalised all the charms of Corinne. Was she English? Had she passed several years of her life in England? He was lost in conjecture; but it was impossible that study alone could have taught her to speak thus—Corinne and Lord Nelville must have lived in the same country. Who knows whether their families were not intimate? Perhaps even, he had seen her in his infancy! We often have in our hearts, we know not what kind of innate image of that which we love, which may persuade us that we recognise it in an object we behold for the first time.

Oswald had cherished many prejudices against the Italians; he believed them passionate, but changeable, and incapable of any deep and lasting affection. Already the language of Corinne at the Capitol had inspired him with a different idea. What would be his fortune, then, if he could at once revive the recollections of his native country, and receive by imagination a new existence,—live again for the future without forgetting the past!



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In the midst of his reveries, Oswald found himself upon the bridge of St Angelo, which leads to the castle of the same name, or rather to the tomb of Adrian, which has been converted into a fortress. The silence of the place, the pale waves of the Tiber, the moon-beams which shed their mild radiance upon the statues placed on the bridge, and gave to those statues the appearance of white spectres steadfastly regarding the current of the waters, and the flight of time which no longer concerned them; all these objects led him back to his habitual ideas. He put his hand upon his breast, and felt the portrait of his father which he always carried there; he untied it, contemplated the features, and the momentary happiness which he had just experienced, as well as the cause of that happiness, only recalled, with too severe a remembrance, the sentiment which had already rendered him so guilty towards his father: This reflection renewed his remorse.

“Eternal recollection of my life!” cried he: “Friend so offended, yet so generous! Could I have believed that any pleasurable sensation would so soon have found access to my heart? It is not thou, best and most indulgent of men,—it is not thou who reproachest me with them—it was thy wish that I should be happy, and, in spite of my errors, that is still thy desire: but at least, may I not misconceive thy voice, if thou speak to me from heaven, as I have misconceived it upon earth!”

FOOTNOTE:

[6] Lord Nelville seems to have alluded to this beautiful distich of Propertius:

“Ut caput in Magnis ubi non est ponere signis,
Ponitur hic imos ante corona pedes.”

Book iii.

CORINNE

[Illustration]

Chapter i.

The Count d’Erfeuil was present at the ceremony of the Capitol: He came the next day to Lord Nelville, and said to him, “My dear Oswald, shall I take you this evening to see Corinne?” “How!” interrupted Oswald; “are you acquainted with her, then?” “No,” replied the Count d’Erfeuil; “but so celebrated a lady is always flattered when people express a desire to see her; and I have written to her this morning to request permission to visit her in the evening accompanied by you.” “I could have wished,” replied Oswald blushing, “that you had not named me in this manner without my consent.” “Do not be angry with me,” replied the Count d’Erfeuil, “for having spared you some tiresome



formalities: Instead of going to an ambassador, who would have taken you to a cardinal, who would have conducted you to a lady, who would have introduced you to Corinne, I present you—you present me, and we shall both of us be very well received I have no doubt.”



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"I am less confident on that subject than you," replied Lord Nelville, "and certainly not without reason. I am afraid that this forward request may have displeased Corinne." "Not at all, I assure you," said the Count d'Erfeuil; "she has too much good sense for that; and her answer is extremely polite." "How! she has answered you," replied Lord Nelville; "and what has she said to you, my dear Count?" "Ah, my dear Count?" said M. d'Erfeuil, laughing, "you change your note then, since you know that Corinne has answered me; however, *I love you, and all is pardoned*. I will confess to you then, modestly, that in my note I had spoken of myself more than of you, and that, in her answer she seems to have named you first, but I am never jealous of my friends." "Indeed," replied Lord Nelville, "I do not think that either you or I have any reason to flatter ourselves with being agreeable to Corinne; and as to me, all that I desire is sometimes to enjoy the society of so extraordinary a lady: so adieu till this evening, since you have arranged it so." "You will accompany me then?" said the Count d'Erfeuil. "Well, yes, I will," answered Lord Nelville with visible embarrassment. "Why then," continued the Count, "find fault with what I have done? You finish as I have begun, but however, I must allow you the honour of being more reserved than I, provided you lose nothing by it. Corinne is certainly a charming lady, she is graceful and witty; I could not comprehend what she said very well, because she spoke Italian; but I would venture to lay a wager, from only seeing her, that she knows French very well: however, we shall judge of that in the evening. She leads a very singular life; she is rich, young, and independent; yet no one can tell, to a certainty, whether she has lovers or not. It appears certain, notwithstanding, that, at present she gives a preference to no one; indeed," added he, "it may be the case that she has not been able to find in this country a man worthy of her: that would not astonish me at all."

The Count held this kind of discourse some time longer without being interrupted by Lord Nelville. He said nothing that was discourteous; but he always wounded the delicate feelings of Oswald by speaking with too much boldness or too much levity upon what interested him. There is a certain tact that even wit and knowledge of the world will not teach; so that, without being wanting in the most perfect politeness, we may often wound the heart.

Lord Nelville was very much agitated the whole day in thinking of the visit he was to make in the evening; but he drove away from him as much as he could the reflections which disturbed him, and endeavoured to persuade himself that he might find pleasure in a sentiment, without permitting it to decide the fate of his life. False security! for the soul receives no pleasure from anything which it deems transient.

Oswald and the Count arrived at Corinne's house, which was situated in the *Quartiere di Trastevere*, a little beyond the castle of St Angelo.



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The view of the Tiber gave an additional embellishment to this house, which was ornamented, internally, with the most perfect elegance. The saloon was decorated with copies, in plaster, of the best statues in Italy—Niobe, Laocoon, Venus de Medicis, and the Dying Gladiator. In the apartment where Corinne received company were instruments of music, books, and furniture not more remarkable for its simplicity than for its convenience, being merely arranged so as to render the conversation easy, and to draw the circle more closely together. Corinne had not yet made her appearance when Oswald arrived; while waiting for her he walked about the apartment with much eager curiosity, remarking in every particular a happy medley of all that is most agreeable in the English, French and Italian nations; the love of literature, the taste for society, and a passion for the fine arts.

Corinne at length appeared; her costume was still picturesque without being over-studied. Her hair was ornamented with antique cameos and she wore a necklace of coral: her politeness was noble and easy: in beholding her in the familiar circle of her friends, you might discover in her the goddess of the Capitol, notwithstanding she was perfectly simple and natural in everything. She first saluted the Count d'Erfeuil, her eyes fixed upon Oswald; and then, as if she repented this piece of falsehood, she advanced towards the latter—and it might be remarked that in addressing him by the title of Lord Nelville, that name seemed to produce a singular effect upon her, and twice she repeated it with a faltering voice, as if it recalled some affecting remembrances.

At length, in the most graceful manner, she thanked Lord Nelville, in Italian, for his obliging behaviour on the preceding day in picking up her crown. Oswald answered by expressing the admiration with which she inspired him, and gently complained of her not speaking to him upon this occasion in English: "Am I more an alien to you to-day," added he, "than I was yesterday?" "No certainly," replied Corinne; "but when people have, like me, for several years, been in the habit of speaking two or three different languages, they are apt to employ that which will best convey the sentiments they wish to express." "Surely," said Oswald, "English is your natural language, that which you speak to your friends, that—" "I am an Italian," interrupted Corinne—"pardon me, my lord, but I think I discover in you that national pride which often characterises your countrymen. In this country we are more modest; we are neither pleased with ourselves like the French, nor proud of ourselves like the English: we only ask a little indulgence of foreigners, and as we have long ceased to be considered a nation, we are guilty of sometimes being wanting, as individuals, in that dignity which is not allowed us as a people. But when you are acquainted with the Italians, you will see that they possess in their character, some traces of ancient greatness, some rare traces which, though now effaced, may appear again in happier times. I will speak English to you sometimes, but not always: Italian is dear to me; for I have endured much," added she, "to reside in Italy."



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The Count d'Erfeuil politely reproached Corinne with having entirely forgotten him, by expressing herself in languages he did not understand. "Lovely Corinne," said he to her, "pray talk French; indeed you are worthy of such an accomplishment." Corinne smiled at this compliment, and began to speak French, with great purity and much facility, but with an English accent. Lord Nelville and the Count d'Erfeuil were equally astonished, but the Count, who believed he might say anything, provided it was done with grace, and who imagined that impoliteness consisted in the form, and not the substance, asked directly of Corinne, the reason of this singularity. She was at first a little discomposed at this sudden interrogation; but recovering her presence of mind, she said to the Count—"Apparently, Sir, I have learnt French of an Englishman?" He renewed his questions smilingly, but with much earnestness. Corinne more and more embarrassed, said to him at last, "For these four years past, Sir, since I have settled at Rome, none of my friends, none of those who, I am sure, are most interested on my account have questioned me concerning my destiny; they easily perceived that it was painful to me to speak on the subject."

Those words put an end to the questions of the Count; but Corinne was afraid she had offended him, and as he appeared to be very intimately connected with Lord Nelville, she feared still more, without asking herself the reason of such fear, that he might speak disadvantageously of her to his friend; and therefore she set about taking much pains to please him.

The Prince Castel-Forte arrived at this moment, with several Romans, friends of his and of Corinne. They were men of an amiable mind and lively disposition, very prepossessing in their appearance, and so easily animated by the conversation of others that it was a great pleasure to converse with them, so exquisitely did they appear to feel every thing that was worthy of being felt. The indolence of the Italians prevents them from displaying in company, or often in any way whatever, all the wit they possess. The greater part of them do not even cultivate in retirement, the intellectual faculties that nature has given them; but they enjoy with transport, that which comes to them without trouble.

Corinne possessed a very gay turn of wit; she perceived the ridiculous with the keen sense of a French woman, and coloured it with the imagination of an Italian; but in every instance it was mingled with goodness of heart; nothing was ever seen in her, either premeditated or hostile; for, in every thing, it is coldness that offends—and imagination on the contrary, is always accompanied with good-nature.

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Oswald discovered a grace in Corinne which was entirely new to him. One great and terrible circumstance of his life was connected with the remembrance of a very amiable and intelligent French woman; but Corinne resembled her in nothing—her conversation was a mixture of every kind of intellectual endowment, enthusiasm for the fine arts, and knowledge of the world; refinement of ideas, and depth of sentiment; in short, all the charms of a vivacious and rapid mind were observable in her, without her thoughts ever being on that account incomplete, or her reflections superficial. Oswald was at once surprised and charmed, uneasy and transported; he was unable to comprehend how one person alone could combine all the qualifications of Corinne. He asked himself whether the union of all these qualities was the effect of an inconsistent or a superior character; whether it was by the force of universal feeling, or because she forgot every thing successively, that she passed thus, almost in the same instant, from melancholy to gaiety, from profundity to grace—from conversation the most astonishing, by the knowledge and the ideas it displayed, to the coquetry of a woman who seeks to please, and desires to captivate; but there was, even in that coquetry, such perfect nobleness that it imposed as much respect as the most severe reserve.

The Prince Castel-Forte was very much taken up with Corinne, and the sentiments of all his party were manifested towards her by attention and the most delicate and assiduous respect; and the habitual worship with which they surrounded her, made every day of her life a sort of festival. Corinne felt herself happy in being thus beloved; but it was that sort of happiness which we feel in living in a mild climate, hearing nothing but harmonious sounds, and receiving, in short, nothing but agreeable impressions. The serious and profound passion of love was not painted on her countenance, where every emotion of her soul was expressed by a most bright and mobile physiognomy. Oswald beheld her in silence; his presence animated Corinne, and inspired her with the desire of pleasing. However, she sometimes checked herself in those moments when her conversation was the most brilliant, astonished at the calm exterior of Oswald, not knowing whether he approved her or blamed her secretly, or whether his English ideas would permit him to applaud this display of talents in a woman.

Oswald was too much captivated by the charms of Corinne, to call to mind his old opinions upon that obscurity which became women; but he was inquiring of himself, whether it were possible to be beloved by her; whether any man could expect to concentrate in himself so many rays of light. In fact, he was at the same time dazzled and disturbed; and although, at his departure, she invited him, very politely, to come and see her again, he suffered a whole day to pass without availing himself of the invitation, experiencing a sort of terror from the sentiment by which he felt himself impelled.



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Sometimes he compared this sentiment with the fatal error of the first moments of his youth, but immediately banished such a comparison from his mind—for then it was a perfidious art that had overcome him; but who could doubt the truth of Corinne? Was that peculiar charm she possessed the effect of magic, or of poetical inspiration? Was she an Armida, or a Sappho? Was there any hope of captivating so lofty and brilliant a genius! It was impossible to decide; but at least it was easily seen, that not society, but heaven itself, could have formed this extraordinary being, and that her mind could no more be imitated, than her character feigned. “Oh, my father!” said Oswald, “if you had known Corinne what would you have thought of her?”

Chapter ii.

The Count d’Erfeuil came in the morning, according to custom, to see Lord Nelville, and reproaching him for not having been to see Corinne the day before, said, “Had you come, you would have been very happy.” “Why so?” replied Oswald. “Because yesterday I discovered, to a certainty, that you have greatly interested her.” “Still this levity,” interrupted Lord Nelville; “know that I neither can nor will endure it.” “Do you call levity,” said the Count, “the promptitude of my observation? Am I less in the right, because more quickly so? You were made to live in the happy time of the Patriarchs, when the age of man was five centuries; but mind, I give you notice that four of them at least are lopped off in our days.” “Be it so,” answered Oswald, “and what discovery have you made by these rapid observations?”—“That Corinne loves you. Yesterday, when I arrived at her house, she received me very kindly, to be sure; but her eyes were fixed on the door, to see whether you followed me. She tried for a moment to talk of something else; but as she is a lady of a very ingenuous and natural disposition, she asked me, quite frankly, why you had not come with me? I blamed you very much; I said that you were a very odd, gloomy sort of creature; but you will excuse my relating all that I said over and above in your praise.”

“‘He is very sad,’ said Corinne; ‘he must certainly have lost some one very dear to him. Whom is he in mourning for?’ ‘His father, Madam,’ said I; ‘though it is more than a year since he lost him; and as the law of nature obliges us all to survive our parents, I imagine there is some other secret cause for so long and deep a melancholy.’ ‘Oh!’ replied Corinne, ‘I am very far from thinking that griefs, similar in appearance, are felt alike by all men. I am very much tempted to believe that the father of your friend, and your friend himself, are exceptions from the general rule.’ Her voice was very tender, my dear Oswald, when she said these words.” “Are these,” replied Oswald, “your proofs of that interest you spoke of?” “In truth,” replied the Count d’Erfeuil, “these are quite enough, according to my way of thinking, to convince



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a man that he is beloved by a lady; but since you wish for better, you shall have them; I have reserved the strongest for the last. Prince Castel-Forte arrived, and related your adventure at Ancona, without knowing that he was speaking of you: he related it with much fire and imagination, as well as I could judge from the two lessons of Italian I have taken; but there are so many French words in the foreign languages, that we comprehend them, almost all, without even knowing them. Besides, the countenance of Corinne would have explained to me what I did not understand. One might read in it so visibly the agitation of her heart! She did not breathe, for fear of losing a single word; and when she asked if he knew the name of this generous and intrepid Englishman, such was her anxiety, that it was easy to judge how much she dreaded to hear pronounced any other name than yours.

“Prince Castel-Forte said he did not know the gentleman’s name; and Corinne, turning quickly towards me, cried, ‘Is it not true, Sir, that it was Lord Nelville?’ ‘Yes, Madam,’ answered I, ‘it was he, himself;’ and Corinne then melted in tears. She had not wept during the story; what was there then more affecting in the name of the hero than in the recital itself?” “She wept!” cried Nelville, “Ah!—why was I not there?” Then, checking himself all of a sudden, he cast down his eyes, and his manly countenance was expressive of the most delicate timidity: he hastened to resume the conversation, for fear that the Count might disturb his secret joy by observing it. “If the adventure of Ancona deserves to be related,” said Oswald, “’tis to you, also, my dear Count, that the honour of it belongs.” “It is true,” answered d’Erfeuil, laughing, “that they mentioned an amiable Frenchman, who was along with you, my lord; but no one save myself paid attention to this parenthesis in the narration. The lovely Corinne prefers you; she believes you, without doubt, the more faithful of the two: perhaps she may be mistaken; you may even cause her more grief than I should; but women are fond of pain, provided it is a little romantic; so you will suit her.”

Lord Nelville suffered from every word of the Count, but what could he say to him? He never argued; he never listened attentively enough to change his opinion; his words, once uttered, gave him no farther concern, and the best way was to forget them, if possible, as soon as he himself did.

Chapter iii.

Oswald arrived in the evening at Corinne’s, with a sentiment entirely new; he thought that he was expected. What enchantment there is in that first gleam of intercourse with the object of our love!—before remembrance enters into partnership with hope—before words have expressed our sentiments,—before eloquence has painted what we feel, there is in these first moments, something so indefinite, a mystery of the imagination, more fleeting than happiness, it must be owned, but also more celestial.



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Oswald, on entering the apartment of Corinne, felt more timid than ever. He saw that she was alone, and that circumstance almost gave him pain: he could have wished to see her longer in the midst of society; he could have wished to be convinced, in some manner, of her preference, instead of finding himself all of a sudden engaged in a conversation which might make Corinne cool towards him, if, as was certain, he should appear embarrassed, and cold in consequence of that embarrassment.

Whether Corinne perceived this disposition of Oswald, or whether it was that a similar disposition produced in her a desire to animate the conversation in order to remove restraint, she asked his Lordship whether he had seen any of the monuments of Rome. "No," answered Oswald. "What did you do with yourself yesterday, then?" replied Corinne smiling. "I passed the whole day at home," said Oswald. "Since I have been at Rome, Madam, my time has been divided between solitude and you." Corinne wished to introduce the subject of his behaviour at Ancona; she began by these words: "Yesterday I learnt—" then she stopped and said, "I will speak to you of that when the company comes." There was a dignity in the manners of Lord Nelville that intimidated Corinne; and, besides, she feared, lest in reminding him of his noble conduct, she should betray too much emotion; conceiving that emotion would be less when they were no longer alone. Oswald was deeply touched with the reserve of Corinne, and the frankness with which she testified, without thinking, the motives of that reserve; but the more he was affected the less was he able to express what he felt.

He arose all of a sudden, and advanced towards the window; then he felt that Corinne would be unable to explain the meaning of this movement, and more disconcerted than ever, he returned to his place without saying anything. There was in the conversation of Corinne more confidence than in that of Oswald; nevertheless, she partook of the embarrassment which he exhibited; and in her absence of mind, seeking to recover her countenance, she placed her fingers upon the harp which was standing by her side, and struck some chords, without connection or design. These harmonious sounds, by increasing the emotion of Oswald, seemed to inspire him with more boldness. He could now look at Corinne, and who but must have been struck, in beholding her, with that divine inspiration which was painted in her eyes! Encouraged at the same moment by that mild expression which veiled the majesty of her looks, he would then perhaps have spoken, but was prevented by the entrance of Prince Castel-Forte.



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It was not without pain that he beheld Nelville *tete-a-tete* with Corinne, but he was accustomed to dissimulate his feelings. This habit, which is often found in the Italians united with great vehemence of sensation, was in him rather the result of indolence and of natural gentleness. He was content not to be the first object of Corinne's affections; he was no longer young; he possessed great intelligence, considerable taste for the arts, an imagination sufficiently animated to diversify life without disturbing it, and such a desire to pass all his evenings with Corinne, that if she were to be married he would conjure her husband to let him come every day, to see her as usual, and upon this condition he would not have been very unhappy at seeing her united to another. The grief of the heart is not found in Italy complicated with the sufferings of vanity, so that we find there, men either passionate enough to stab their rival through jealousy, or men modest enough to take willingly the second rank in the favour of a lady whose conversation is agreeable to them; but rarely will be found any who for fear of being thought despised, would refuse to preserve any sort of connection which they found pleasing. The empire of society over self-esteem is almost null in this country.

The Count d'Erfeuil and the company that met every evening at Corinne's house being assembled, the conversation turned upon the talent for improvisation which their heroine had so gloriously displayed at the Capitol, and they went so far as to ask her own opinion of it. "It is something so rare," said Prince Castel-Forte, "to find any one at once susceptible of enthusiasm and of analysis, gifted as an artist and capable of observing herself, that we must intreat her to reveal to us the secrets of her genius." "The talent for improvisation," replied Corinne, "is not more extraordinary in the languages of the south, than the eloquence of the tribune, or the brilliant vivacity of conversation in other tongues. I will even say that, unfortunately it is with us more easy to make verses *impromptu* than to speak well in prose. The language of poetry is so different from that of prose, that from the first verses the attention is commanded by the expressions themselves, which, if I may so express it, place the poet at a distance from his auditors. It is not only to the softness of the Italian language, but much more to its strong and pronounced vibration of sonorous syllables, that we must attribute the empire of poetry amongst us. There is a kind of musical charm in Italian, by which the bare sound of words, almost independently of the ideas, produces pleasure; besides, these words have almost all something picturesque in them; they paint what they express. You feel that it is in the midst of the arts, and under an auspicious sky that this melodious, and highly-coloured language has been formed. It is therefore more easy in Italy than any where else, to seduce with



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words, without profundity of thought or novelty of imagery. Poetry, like all the fine arts, captivates the senses, as much as the intellect. I dare venture to say, however, that I have never improvised without feeling myself animated by some real emotion, some idea which I believed new, therefore I hope that I have trusted less than others to our bewitching language. It is possible, if I may say so, to prelude at random, and convey a lively pleasure by the charm of rhythm and of harmony alone.”

“You believe then,” interrupted one of the friends of Corinne, “that the talent for improvisation injures our literature; I thought so once myself, but hearing you, madam, has made me entirely alter that opinion.” “I have said,” replied Corinne, “that there resulted from this facility, this literary abundance, a quantity of inferior poetry; but I am as pleased with this fecundity, which exists in Italy, as I am with seeing our fields covered with a thousand superfluous products. This liberality of nature makes me proud. I am particularly pleased with the improvisations of the lower classes of the people; it discovers their imagination to us, which is concealed everywhere else, and is only developed amongst us. They give a poetical character to the lowest orders of society, and spare us the contempt which we cannot help feeling for every thing that is vulgar. When our Sicilians, conveying travellers in their vessels, so delicately and politely felicitate them in their pleasing dialect, and wish them in verse a sweet and long adieu, one would say the pure breeze of heaven and of the sea produces the same effect upon the imagination of men as the wind on the AEolian harp, and that poetry, like the chords of that instrument, is the echo of nature. One thing makes me attach an additional value to our talent for improvisation, and that is, that it would be almost impossible in a society disposed to mockery. It requires the good humour of the south, or rather of those countries where people love to amuse themselves without taking pleasure in criticising that which affords them amusement, to encourage poets to venture on so perilous an enterprise. One jeering smile would be sufficient to destroy that presence of mind necessary for a sudden and uninterrupted composition: your audience must become animated with you, and inspire you with their applause.”

“But madam,” said Oswald at last, who till then had kept silence without having for a moment ceased to behold Corinne, “to which of your poetical talents do you yourself give the preference? To the work of inflection, or of momentary inspiration?” “My lord,” answered Corinne, with a look that expressed the highest interest and the most delicate sentiment of respectful consideration, “it is you that I would wish to make the judge of that; but if you ask me to examine my own thoughts upon this subject, I would say that improvisation is to me as an animated conversation. I do not confine myself

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to any particular subject, I yield entirely to the impression produced on me by the attention of my hearers, and it is to my friends, in this instance, that I owe the greatest part of my talent. Sometimes the impassioned interest with which I am inspired by a conversation in which we have spoken of some great and noble question that relates to the moral existence of man, his destiny, his end, his duties and his affections; sometimes this interest elevates me above my strength, makes me discover in nature, in my own heart, bold truths, expressions full of life, that solitary reflection would not have given birth to. I then believe myself acted upon by a supernatural enthusiasm, and feel that what is speaking within me is greater than myself. Often I quit the rhythm of poetry to express my thoughts in prose; sometimes I quote the finest verses of the different languages I am acquainted with. These divine verses, with which my soul is penetrated, have become my own. Sometimes also I finish upon my lyre by chords, by simple and national airs, the sentiments and thoughts which have escaped me in speaking. In a word, I feel myself a poet, not only when a happy choice of rhymes and harmonious syllables, or a happy combination of images dazzles my auditors, but when my soul is elevated to the highest degree and looks down with contempt upon every thing that is selfish and base: in short, when a noble action appears most easy to me, it is then that my poetry is in its greatest perfection. I am a poet when I admire, when I despise, when I hate, not from personal feeling, not on my own account, but for the dignity of human nature and the glory of the world.”

Corinne then perceiving how the conversation had carried her away, blushed a little, and turning towards Lord Nelville said to him, “you see, my lord, I cannot touch upon any of those subjects that affect me without experiencing that sort of shock which is the source of ideal beauty in the arts, of religion in solitary minds, of generosity in heroes, and of disinterestedness among men. Pardon me, my lord, although such a woman resemble but little those whom your nation approves.” “Who could resemble you?” replied Lord Nelville; “can we make laws for one who is without her like?”

The Count d’Erfeuil was absolutely enchanted, notwithstanding he had not understood all that Corinne had said; but her gestures, the sound of her voice, and her pronunciation, charmed him.—It was the first time that any grace which was not French had produced an effect upon him. But indeed the great celebrity of Corinne at Rome put him a little in the way of what he should think of her, and in his admiration of this extraordinary lady he did not drop the good custom of letting himself be guided by the opinion of others.



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He quitted Corinne's house along with Lord Nelville, and said to him on their way home, "allow, my dear Oswald, that I may lay claim to some merit for not having paid my court to so charming a lady." "But," observed Nelville, "it seems, according to general opinion, that she is not easy to please in that respect." "It is said so," replied the Count, "but I can hardly believe it. A single woman of independent means who leads nearly the life of an artist ought not to be so difficult to captivate." Lord Nelville was wounded by this reflection. The Count, whether he did not perceive it, or whether he wished to pursue the train of his own ideas, continued thus:

"I do not mean to say, however, that if I entertained much faith in a lady's virtue, I might not as readily believe in that of Corinne as in that of any other. She has certainly a thousand times more expression in her look, and vivacity in her arguments than would be necessary in your country, or even in ours, to excite suspicion of the rigidity of a lady's virtue; but she is a person of so superior a mind, such profound knowledge, and such fine tact, that the ordinary rules by which we judge a woman cannot apply to her. In fact, would you believe it, notwithstanding the openness of her disposition, and the freedom of her conversation, she really imposes reserve upon me. It was my wish, yesterday, with all due respect to her predilection for you, to say a few words, at random, upon my own account: they were words that take their chance; if they are heard, well and good; if not, well and good still; and do you know Corinne gave me such cold looks that I was quite disconcerted. It is, however, singular that one should feel any timidity in the company of an Italian, a poet, an artist, every thing, in short, that ought to produce quite a contrary effect." "Her name is unknown," observed Nelville, "but her manners would make one believe that her birth is illustrious." "Ah! it is in romances," said the Count, "that we see the finest part of a character concealed, but in real life people are more disposed to exhibit all that is most honourable in their life, and even a little more than all." "Yes," interrupted Oswald, "in some societies where people think of nothing but the effect they can produce upon one another; but in one whose existence is internal there may be mysteries in circumstances, as there are secrets in thought, and he only who would espouse Corinne might be able to know them." "Espouse Corinne!" interrupted the Count, bursting out laughing, "truly that idea never occurred to me! Take my advice, my dear Nelville, if you wish to do foolish things let them be such as will admit of reparation; but as for marriage, you must always consider propriety. I appear frivolous in your eyes, nevertheless I wager that in the conduct of life I shall be more reasonable than you." "I believe so too," answered Lord Nelville, and said not another word.



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In effect, he might have told the Count d'Erfeuil that there is often a great deal of egotism in frivolity, and that such egotism can never betray people into those errors of sentiment in which we always sacrifice our own personal considerations to those of others! Frivolous characters are very likely to acquire address in the pursuit of their own interests; for in all that is called the political science of private, as well as of public life, people succeed oftener by those qualities which they have not than by those which they possess. Absence of enthusiasm, absence of opinion, absence of sensibility, a little understanding, combined with this negative treasure, and social life, that is to say, fortune and rank, may be acquired or supported well enough. The pleasantries of the Count however pained Lord Nelville; he blamed them, but nevertheless they continually occupied his thoughts.

Book iv.

ROME.

[Illustration]

Chapter i.

A fortnight passed away, during which Lord Nelville dedicated himself entirely to the society of Corinne. He quitted his lodgings but to go and visit her—he saw nothing—he sought nothing but her; and, without ever mentioning his passion, he made her sensible of it at every moment of the day. She was accustomed to the lively and flattering homage of the Italians; but Oswald's dignity of manners, his apparent coldness, and the sensibility which he betrayed in spite of himself, produced a more powerful effect upon her imagination.—Never did he relate a generous action, never did he speak of a misfortune, without his eyes being filled with tears; but he always endeavoured to conceal his emotion. He inspired Corinne with a sentiment of respect such as she had not felt for a long time before. No wit, however sparkling, could dazzle her; but she was deeply interested by elevation and dignity of character. Lord Nelville joined to these qualities, a nobleness in his expressions, an elegance in the least actions of his life, which formed a striking contrast to the negligence and familiarity of the greater part of the Roman nobility.

Though the tastes of Oswald were in some respects different from those of Corinne, they mutually understood each other in a most wonderful manner. Nelville conjectured the impressions of Corinne with perfect sagacity, and Corinne discovered, in the slightest alteration of Nelville's countenance, what passed in his mind. Accustomed to the stormy demonstrations of passion that characterise the Italians, this timid but proud attachment, this passion, incessantly proved, but never avowed, spread a new charm over her existence: she felt as if encircled with a calmer and purer atmosphere, and

every instant of the day inspired her with a sentiment of happiness which she loved to enjoy without accounting for it.



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One morning Prince Castel-Forte visited her—he appeared sorrowful—she asked him the cause of his sorrow. “This Scotsman,” said he to her, “is about to deprive us of your affections; and who knows even, whether he will not rob us of you entirely?” Corinne was silent for some moments, and then answered, “I assure you he has not even once told me that he loved me.” “You are, notwithstanding, convinced of it,” answered Prince Castel-Forte; “his conduct is sufficiently eloquent, and even his silence is a powerful means of interesting you.—What can language express that you have not heard? What kind of praise is there that has not been offered you? What species of homage is there that you are not accustomed to receive? But there is something concealed in the character of Lord Nelville which will never allow you to know him entirely as you know us. There is no person in the world whose character is more easy than yours to become acquainted with; but it is precisely because you shew yourself without disguise that mystery and reserve have a pleasing ascendancy over you. That which is unknown, be it what it may, influences you more strongly than all the sentiments which are manifested to you.” Corinne smiled; “You believe then, my dear Prince,” said she, “that my heart is ungrateful, and my imagination capricious. Methinks however that Lord Nelville possesses and displays qualities sufficiently remarkable to render it impossible that I can flatter myself with having discovered them.” “He is, I agree,” answered Prince Castel-Forte, “proud, generous and intelligent; with much sensibility too, and particularly melancholy; but I am very much deceived, or there is not the least sympathy of taste between you. You do not perceive it while he is under the charm of your presence, but your empire over him would not hold if he were absent from you. Obstacles would fatigue him; his soul has contracted by the grief which he has experienced, a kind of discouragement, which must destroy the energy of his resolutions; and you know, besides, how much the English in general are enslaved to the manners and habits of their country.”

At these words Corinne was silent and sighed. Painful reflections on the first events of her life were retraced in her mind; but in the evening she saw Oswald again, more her slave than ever; and all that remained in her mind of the conversation of Prince Castel-Forte was the desire of fixing Lord Nelville in Italy by making him enamoured of the beauties of every kind with which that country abounds. It was with this intention that she wrote to him the following letter. The freedom of the life which is led in Rome excused this proceeding, and Corinne in particular, though she might be reproached with too much openness and enthusiasm, knew how to preserve dignity with independence, and modesty with vivacity.

Corinne to Lord Nelville.
Dec. 15th, 1794.

“I do not know, my lord, whether you will think me too confident in myself, or whether you will do justice to the motives which may excuse that confidence. Yesterday I heard you say that you had not yet seen Rome, that you were neither acquainted with the masterpieces of our fine arts, nor those ancient ruins which teach us history by

imagination and sentiment, and I have conceived the idea of presuming to offer myself as your guide in this journey through a course of centuries.



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“Without doubt, Rome could easily present a great number of scholars whose profound erudition might be much more useful to you, but if I can succeed in inspiring you with a love for this retreat, towards which I have always felt myself so imperiously attracted, your own studies will finish the rude draft which I shall have begun.

“Many foreigners come to Rome as they would go to London or to Paris, to seek the dissipation of a great city; and if they dared confess they were bored at Rome, I believe the greater part would confess it; but it is equally true that here may be found a charm that never tires. Will you pardon me, my lord, a wish that this charm were known to you.

“It is true that here you must forget all the political interests in the world, but when these interests are not united to sacred sentiments and duties they chill the heart. Here too you must renounce what would be called the pleasures of society, but these pleasures almost invariably wither up the imagination. In Rome you may enjoy an existence at once solitary and animated, which freely develops all that Heaven has implanted in us. I repeat it, my lord; pardon this love of my country, which begets a desire to make it beloved by such a man as you; and do not judge, with the severity of an Englishman, those testimonies of good-will which an Italian hopes she may give you without sinking either in her own estimation or in yours.

CORRINE.”

In vain would Oswald have endeavoured to conceal the exquisite pleasure he received from this letter; he caught a glimpse of a confused future of enjoyment and happiness: imagination, love, enthusiasm, all that is divine in the soul of man, appeared to him united with the project of seeing Rome with Corinne. For, this time he did not reflect; this time he set out the very instant to visit Corinne, and by the way he contemplated the sky, he enjoyed the charm of the weather, life sat lightly on him. His griefs and his fears were lost in the clouds of hope; his heart, so long oppressed by sadness, palpitated and leaped with joy; he feared, it is true, that so happy a disposition of mind might not last; but the very idea that it was fleeting gave to this fever of enjoyment more force and activity.

“What, are you come already?” said Corinne, seeing Lord Nelville enter; “Ah, thanks!” and she stretched forth her hand. Oswald seized it, and imprinted his lips on it with the warmest tenderness; nor did he suffer now that timidity which often mingled itself with his most agreeable impressions, and caused him sometimes to endure, in the company of those he loved best, the most bitter and painful feelings. The intimacy had commenced between Oswald and Corinne since they had parted; it was the letter of Corinne which had established it: they were satisfied with each other, and mutually felt the most tender gratitude.



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"This morning then," said Corinne, "I will shew you the Pantheon and St Peter's: I had, indeed, some hope," added she smiling, "that you would accept my offer to make the tour of Rome with you, so my horses are ready. I have expected you; you have arrived; 'tis very well, let us set out." "Astonishing woman!" said Oswald; "Who then, art thou? Whence hast thou derived so many opposite charms, which it would seem ought to exclude each other;—sensibility, gaiety, profound reflection, external grace, freedom, and modesty? Art thou an illusion? art thou some supernatural blessing, destined to make happy the life of him who is fortunate enough to meet with thee?" "Ah!" replied Corinne, "if I have it in my power to do you any service you must not think I will ever give up the merit of it." "Take care," said Oswald, seizing Corinne's hand with emotion; "take care what service it is you are about to render me. For these two years the iron hand of affliction has closed up my heart; if your sweet presence has afforded me relief; if, while with you, I breathe again, what will become of me when once more abandoned to my destiny?—What will become of me?" "Let us leave to time and to chance," interrupted Corinne, "to decide whether this impression of a day, which I have produced upon you, will be longer than a day in its duration. If there be a mutual sympathy between our souls, our mutual affection will not be transient. Be that as it may, let us go and admire together all that can elevate our mind and our sentiments; we shall thus taste some moments of happiness."

In finishing these words Corinne went down stairs, and Nelville followed her, astonished at her answer. It seemed to him that she admitted the possibility of a half sentiment,—a momentary attraction. In short, he thought he perceived something like levity in the manner in which she had expressed herself, and he was hurt at it.

He placed himself, without saying a word, in Corinne's carriage; who, guessing his thoughts, said to him, "I do not believe that the heart of man is so formed that he must always feel either no love at all or the most invincible passion. There are beginnings of sentiment which a more profound examination may dissipate. We flatter and then undeceive ourselves, and even the enthusiasm of which we are susceptible, if it renders the enchantment more rapid, may also cause coldness to succeed the more quickly." "You have, then, reflected deeply on the tender passion," said Oswald with bitterness. Corinne blushed at this word, and was silent for some moments; then resuming the conversation, with a striking mixture of frankness and dignity, "I do not believe," said she, "that a woman of sensibility has ever arrived at the age of twenty-six years, without having known the illusion of love; but if never having been happy, if never having met the object who could merit all the affections of my heart, be any claim to interest in the bosom of man, I have a claim to yours." These words, and the accent with which Corinne pronounced them, dissipated a little, the cloud which had spread over the soul of Lord Nelville; nevertheless he said to himself: "She is the most fascinating of women, but an Italian; and hers is not that timid, innocent heart, to herself unknown, which the young English lady that my father destined for me must possess."



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The name of this young English lady was Lucilia Edgermond, daughter to the best friend of Lord Nelville's father; but she was too young when Oswald quitted England for him to marry her, or even foresee, with certainty, what she would one day become.

Chapter ii.

Oswald and Corinne went first to the Pantheon, which is now called *St Mary of the Rotunda*. In every part of Italy Catholicism has inherited something of Paganism, but the Pantheon is the only ancient Temple of Rome which is preserved entire, the only one where may be remarked in its *ensemble* the beauty of the architecture of the ancients, and the particular character of their worship. Oswald and Corinne stopped in the square of the Pantheon to admire the portico of this Temple and the pillars that support it.

Corinne made Nelville observe that the Pantheon was constructed in such a manner as to appear greater than it was. "The church of St Peter," said she, "will produce quite a different effect upon you; you will believe it at first less stupendous than it is in reality. This illusion, so favourable to the Pantheon, comes, as I am assured, from there being more space between the pillars, and the air playing freely around it; but principally from your not perceiving any of that detailed ornament with which St Peter's is overladen. It is thus that the ancient poets only designed large masses, and left the imagination of the hearer to fill up the intervals, and supply the developments; but we moderns in all things say too much."

"This Temple," continued Corinne, "was consecrated by Agrippa, the favourite of Augustus, to his friend, or rather to his master. However, the master had the modesty to refuse the dedication of the Temple, and Agrippa was obliged to dedicate it to all the gods in Olympus, in order to take the place of Power, the god of the earth. There was a car of bronze on the top of the Pantheon, on which were placed the statues of Augustus and of Agrippa. On each side of the portico these same statues were placed in another form, and on the pediment of the Temple is still to be read: '*Consecrated by Agrippa.*' Augustus gave his name to the age in which he lived because he made that age an epoch of the human mind. The masterpieces of every kind produced by his contemporaries form the rays of glory that encircle his head. He knew how to honour the men of genius who cultivated letters, and he has found his recompense in posterity."

"Let us enter the temple," said Corinne. "You see it remains uncovered, almost the same as it was formerly. They say that this light, proceeding from the top, was the emblem of that God who was superior to all the other deities. The Pagans have always been fond of symbolic images. It seems, in effect, that this language is more fitting than speech to religion. The rain often falls upon this marble court, but the rays of the sun also



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enter to enlighten devotion. What serenity! What an air of festivity is remarkable in this edifice! The Pagans have deified life, and the Christians have deified death. Such is the spirit of the two worships, but the Roman Catholic religion here, however, is less sombre than in the northern countries. You will observe it when we visit St Peter's. Inside the sanctuary of the Pantheon are the busts of our most celebrated artists, they adorn the niches where were placed the gods of the ancients.—As, since the destruction of the empire of the Caesars, we have hardly ever had political independence in Italy, you do not find here either statesmen or great commanders. It is the genius of imagination which constitutes our own glory; but do you not think, my lord, that a people who honour talents in this manner ought to merit a nobler fate?" "I am very severe towards nations," answered Oswald; "I always believe that they deserve their fate let it be what it may." "That is hard," replied Corinne; "perhaps after a longer residence in Italy you will experience a sentiment of compassion towards this unhappy country, which nature seems to have decorated as a victim; but, at least, you will remember that the dearest hope of us artists, of us lovers of glory, is to obtain a place here. I have already fixed upon mine," said she pointing to a niche still vacant. "Oswald! who knows whether you will not come again to this same enclosure when my bust shall be placed there? Then—"

Oswald interrupted her quickly and said, "In the shining splendour of youth and beauty can you talk thus to one whom misfortune and suffering have already bent towards the grave?" "Ah!" replied Corinne, "the storm may in a moment snap asunder those flowers that now have their heads upreared in life and bloom. Oswald, dear Oswald!" added she; "why should you not be happy? Why—" "Never interrogate me," replied Lord Nelville, "you have your secrets—I have mine, let us mutually respect each other's silence. No—you know not what emotion I should feel were I obliged to relate my misfortunes." Corinne was silent, and her steps in leaving the temple were slower, and her looks more thoughtful.

She stopped beneath the portico:—"There," said she to Lord Nelville, "was a most beautiful urn of porphyry, now transferred to St John of Lateran; it contained the ashes of Agrippa, which were placed at the foot of the statue that he had raised to himself. The ancients took so much care to soften the idea of dissolution that they knew how to strip it of every thing that was doleful and repulsive. There was, besides, so much magnificence in their tombs that the contrast was less felt between the blank of death and the splendours of life. It is true that the hope of another world being less vivid among the Pagans than amongst Christians, they endeavoured to dispute with death the future remembrance which we place, without fear, in the bosom of the Eternal."

Oswald sighed and was silent. Melancholy ideas have many charms when we have not been ourselves deeply wretched, but when grief in all its asperity has seized upon the

soul, we no longer hear without shuddering certain words which formerly only excited in us reveries more or less pleasing.



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Chapter iii.

On the way to St Peter's the bridge of St Angelo is passed, and Corinne and Lord Nelville crossed it on foot. "It was on this bridge," said Oswald, "that, in returning from the Capitol, I for the first time thought deeply of you." "I did not flatter myself," replied Corinne, "that the coronation at the Capitol would have procured me a friend, but however, in the pursuit of fame it was always my endeavour to make myself beloved.—What would fame be to woman without such a hope?" "Let us stop here a few minutes," said Oswald. "What remembrance of past ages can produce such welcome recollections as this spot, which brings to mind the day when first I saw you." "I know not whether I deceive myself," replied Corinne; "but it seems to me that we become more dear to one another in admiring together those monuments which speak to the soul by true grandeur. The edifices of Rome are neither cold nor dumb, they have been conceived by genius, and consecrated by memorable events. Perhaps, Oswald, it is even necessary that we should be enamoured of such a character as yours, in order to derive such pleasure from feeling with you all that is noble and fine in the universe." "Yes," replied Lord Nelville; "but in beholding you, and listening to your observations, I feel no want of other wonders." Corinne thanked him in a bewitching smile.

On their way to St Peter's they stopped before the castle of St Angelo. "There," said Corinne, "is one of those edifices whose exterior is most original; this is the tomb of Adrian, which, changed into a fortress by the Goths, bears the double character of its first and second destination. Built for the dead, an impenetrable enclosure surrounds it; and, nevertheless, the living have added something hostile to it by the external fortifications, which form a contrast with the silence and noble inutility of a funereal monument. On the top is seen an angel of bronze with a naked sword[7], and in the interior the most cruel prisons are contrived. Every event of Roman history, from Adrian to our time, is connected with this monument. It was here that Belisarius defended himself against the Goths, and, almost as barbarous as they who attacked him, threw at his enemy the beautiful statues that adorned the interior of the edifice[8]. Crescentius, Arnault de Brescia, Nicolas Rienzi, those friends of Roman liberty who so often mistook memories for hopes, defended themselves for a long time in this imperial tomb. I love these stones which are connected with so many illustrious facts. I love this luxury of the master of the world—a magnificent tomb. There is something great in the man who, possessing every enjoyment, every terrestrial pomp, is not dismayed from making preparations for his death a long time before hand. Moral ideas and disinterested sentiments fill the soul when it in a manner breaks through the boundaries of mortality.



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“It is from here that we ought to perceive St Peter’s. The pillars before it were to extend as far as here:—such was the superb plan of Michael Angelo; he expected, at least, that it would be so finished after his death; but the men of our days no longer think of posterity. When once enthusiasm has been turned into ridicule every thing except money and power is destroyed.” “It is you who will revive that sentiment,” cried Lord Nelville. “Who ever experienced the happiness I enjoy? Rome shewn by you, Rome interpreted by imagination and genius, *Rome, that is a world animated by sentiment, without which the world itself is a desert*[9]. Ah, Corinne! what will succeed to these days, more happy than my heart and my fate permit!” Corinne answered him with sweetness: “All sincere affections proceed from heaven, Oswald! Why should it not protect what it inspires? To that Power belongs our fate.”

At that moment St Peter’s appeared to them, the greatest building that man has ever raised; for the pyramids of Egypt themselves are inferior to it in height. “Perhaps,” said Corinne, “I ought to have shewn you the finest of our buildings last, but that is not my system. It is my opinion that to beget a sensibility for the fine arts, we must begin by beholding objects that inspire a deep and lively admiration. This sentiment once felt, reveals, if I may so express myself, a new sphere of ideas, and renders us afterwards more capable of loving, and of judging, what even in an inferior order recalls the first impression we have received. All those gradations, those prudent methods, one tint after another, to prepare for great effects, are not to my taste; we cannot arrive at the sublime by degrees; infinite distances separate it even from that which is only beautiful.” Oswald felt an altogether extraordinary emotion on arriving opposite St Peter’s. It was the first time that the work of man had produced upon him the same effect as one of the wonders of nature. This is the only work of art, now on our earth, possessing that kind of grandeur which characterises the immediate works of the creation. Corinne enjoyed the astonishment of Oswald. “I have chosen,” said she, “a day when the sun is in all its lustre, to shew you this edifice. I have in reserve for you a still more exquisite, more religious pleasure, when you shall contemplate it by moonlight: but you must first witness the most brilliant intellectual feast—the genius of man adorned with the magnificence of nature.”

The square of St Peter is surrounded by pillars—those at a distance of a light, and those near of a massive structure. The ground, which is upon a gentle ascent up to the portico of the church, still adds to the effect which it produces. An obelisk, 80 feet high, stands in the middle of the square, but its height appears as nothing in presence of the cupola of St Peter’s. The form of an obelisk alone has something in it that pleases the imagination;



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its summit is lost in the air, and seems to lift the mind of man to heaven. This monument, which was constructed in Egypt to adorn the baths of Caligula, and which Sixtus Quintus caused to be transported to the foot of the temple of St Peter, this cotemporary of so many centuries, which have spent their fury upon it in vain, inspires us with a sentiment of respect; man, sensible of his own fleeting existence, cannot contemplate without emotion that which appears to be immutable. At some distance on each side of the obelisk are two fountains, whose waters form a perpetual and abundant cascade. This murmuring of waters, which we are accustomed to hear in the open country, produces, in this enclosure, an entirely new sensation; but this sensation is quite in harmony with that to which the aspect of a majestic temple gives birth.

Painting and sculpture, imitating generally the human figure or some object existing in nature, awaken in our soul perfectly clear and positive ideas; but a beautiful architectural monument has not any determinate meaning, if it may be so expressed, so that we are seized, in contemplating it, with that kind of aimless reverie, which leads us into a boundless ocean of thought. The sound of fountains harmonises with all these vague and deep impressions; it is uniform as the edifice is regular.

“Eternal motion, and eternal rest,”

are thus blended with each other. It is particularly in a spot like this that Time seems stript of his power, for he appears no more able to dry up the fountains than to shake these immovable stones. The waters, which spout in sheaves from these fountains, are so light and cloudlike that on a fine day the rays of the sun produce on them little rainbows, formed of the most beautiful colours.

“Stop here a moment,” said Corinne to Lord Nelville, when they had already reached the portico of the church; “stop a little before you lift up the curtain which covers the door of the temple. Does not your heart beat as you approach this sanctuary? And do not you feel at the moment of entrance all that excites expectation of a solemn event?” Corinne herself lifted up the curtain and held it to let Nelville pass; she displayed so much grace in this attitude that the first look of Oswald was to admire her as she stood, and for some moments she engrossed his whole observation. However, he proceeded into the temple, and the impression which he received beneath these immense arches was so deep, and so solemn, that love itself was no longer able to fill his soul entirely. He walked slowly by the side of Corinne, both preserving silence. Indeed here every thing seemed to command silence; the least noise re-echoes to such a distance that no language seems worthy of being repeated in an abode which may almost be called eternal! Prayer alone, the voice of calamity, produces a powerful emotion in these vast regions; and when beneath these immense domes you hear some old man dragging his feeble steps along the polished marble, watered with so many tears, you feel that man is imposing even by the infirmity of his nature which subjects his divine soul to so many

sufferings; and that Christianity, the worship of suffering, contains the true guide for the conduct of man upon earth.



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Corinne interrupted the reverie of Oswald, and said to him, "You have seen Gothic churches in England and in Germany; you must have remarked that they have a much more gloomy effect than this church. There was something mysterious in the Catholicism of the northern nations; ours speaks to the imagination by external objects. Michael Angelo said on beholding the cupola of the Pantheon, 'I will place it in the air;' and, in effect, St Peter's is a temple built upon a church. There is some connection between the ancient religions and Christianity, in the effect which the interior of this edifice produces upon the imagination. I often come and walk here to restore to my soul that serenity which it sometimes loses: the sight of such a monument is like continual and sustained music, which waits to do you good when you approach; and certainly we must reckon among the claims of our nation to glory, the patience, the courage and the disinterestedness of the heads of the church, who have devoted one hundred and fifty years, so much money, and so much labour, to the completion of an edifice which they who built it could not expect to enjoy[10]. It is even a service rendered to the public morals to present a nation with a monument which is the emblem of so many noble and generous ideas." "Yes," answered Oswald; "here the arts possess grandeur, and imagination and invention are full of genius; but how is the dignity of man himself protected here! What institutions! what feebleness in the greater part of the governments of Italy! and, nevertheless, what subjugation in the mind!" "Other nations," interrupted Corinne, "have borne the yoke the same as we, and have lacked the imagination to dream of another fate.

'Servi siam si, ma servi ognor frementi.'

'*Yes! we are slaves, but slaves ever quivering with hope,*'

says Alfieri, the most bold of our modern writers. There is so much soul in our fine arts that perhaps one day our character will be equal to our genius.

"Behold," continued Corinne, "those statues placed on the tombs, those pictures in mosaic—patient and faithful copies of the masterpieces of our great artists. I never examine St Peter's in detail, because I do not wish to discover those multiplied beauties which disturb in some degree the impression of the whole. But what a monument is that, where the masterpieces of the human mind appear superfluous ornaments! This temple is like a world by itself; it affords an asylum against heat and cold; it has its own peculiar season—a perpetual spring, which the external atmosphere can never change. A subterraneous church is built beneath this temple;—the popes, and several foreign potentates, are buried there: Christina after her abdication—the Stuarts since the overthrow of their dynasty. Rome has long afforded an asylum to exiles from every part of the world. Is not Rome herself dethroned? Her aspect affords consolation to kings, fallen like herself.

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'Cadono le citta, cadono i regni,
E l'uom, d'esser mortal, par che si sdegni.'

*'Cities fall. Empires disappear,
and yet man is angry at being mortal!'*

"Place yourself here," said Corinne to Lord Nelville, "near the altar in the middle of the cupola; you will perceive through the iron grating, the church of the dead, which is beneath our feet, and lifting up your eyes, their ken will hardly reach the summit of the vault. This dome, viewing it even from below, inspires us with a sentiment of terror; we imagine that we see an abyss suspended over our head. All that is beyond a certain proportion causes man, limited creature as he is, an invincible dread. That which we know is as inexplicable as that which is unknown, but then we are accustomed to our habitual darkness, whilst new mysteries terrify us and disturb our faculties.

"All this church is ornamented with antique marble, and its stones know more than we concerning the ages that are past. There is the statue of Jupiter, which has been converted into St Peter, by adding the nimbus to the head. The general expression of this temple perfectly characterises the mixture of gloomy tenets with brilliant ceremonies; a depth of sadness in ideas, but the softness and vivacity of the south in external application; severe intentions, but mild interpretations; the Christian theology, and the images of Paganism; in a word, the most admirable union of splendour and majesty that man can infuse into his worship of the deity.

"The tombs, decorated by the wonders of the fine arts, do not present death under a formidable aspect. It is not altogether like the ancients, who engraved dances and games upon their sarcophagi; but the mind is abstracted from the contemplation of a coffin by the masterpieces of genius. They recall immortality, even upon the altar of death; and the imagination animated by the admiration which they inspire, does not feel, as in the north, silence and cold, the immutable guardians of sepulchres." "Without doubt," said Oswald, "we wish death to be surrounded by sadness; and even before we were enlightened by Christianity our ancient mythology, our Ossian, made lamentations and dirges concomitants of the tomb. Here one wishes to forget and to enjoy. I know not whether I should be desirous of such a benefit from your fine sky." "Do not believe, however," replied Corinne, "that our character is light, or our mind frivolous; it is only vanity that causes frivolity. Indolence may introduce some intervals of sleep, or of forgetfulness into our lives, but it neither wears out nor dries up the heart; and unfortunately for us we may be aroused from this state by passions more deep, and more terrible than those of souls habitually active."



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In finishing these words, Corinne and Lord Nelville approached the door of the church. "Another glance towards this immense sanctuary," said she to Nelville: "See how little man appears in presence of religion, even when we are reduced to consider only its material emblem! See what immobility, what eternity, mortals can give to their works, whilst they themselves pass away so rapidly, and only survive themselves by their genius! This temple is an image of the infinite, and there is no limit to the sentiments to which it gives birth—to the ideas which it revives—to the immense quantity of years which it recalls to our reflection, either of past or future ages; and on quitting its walls we seem to pass from celestial thoughts to worldly interests, from the eternity of religion to the atmosphere of time."

When they were outside the church Corinne pointed out to Nelville Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which were represented on the gates in basso-relievo. "We are not scandalised in Rome," said she to him, "with the images of Paganism when they have been consecrated by the fine arts. The wonders of genius always make a religious impression on the soul, and we make an offering to the Christian religion of all the masterpieces which other modes of worship have inspired." Oswald smiled at this explanation. "Believe me, my lord," continued Corinne, "there is much sincerity in the sentiments of nations who possess a very lively imagination. But to-morrow if you choose I will conduct you to the Capitol. I have, I hope, many other walks to propose to you. When they are finished will you go? Will you—" She stopped, fearing she had said too much. "No Corinne," replied Oswald; "no, I will never renounce that gleam of happiness which my guardian angel, perhaps, causes to shine upon me from the height of heaven."

FOOTNOTES:

[7] A Frenchman in the late war, commanded the Castle of St Angelo; the Neapolitan troops summoned him to capitulate; he answered that the fortress should be surrendered when the Angel of Bronze should sheathe his sword.

[8] These facts are to be found in the *History of the Italian Republics of the Middle Ages*, by M. Simonde, of Geneva. This history will certainly be considered as an authority; for we perceive, in reading it, that its author is a man of profound sagacity, as conscientious as he is energetic in his manner of relating and describing.

[9]

"Eine Welt zwar bist du o Rom; doch ohne die Liebe,
Waere die Welt nicht die Welt, waere denn Rom auch nicht Rom."

These two verses are from Goethe, the German poet, the philosopher, the man of letters, whose originality and imagination are most remarkable.

[10] The Church of St Peter is said to be one of the chief causes of the Reformation, inasmuch as it cost the Popes so much money that they had recourse to the multiplication of indulgences in order to build it.



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Chapter iv.

The next day Oswald and Corinne set out with more confidence and serenity. They were friends travelling together;—they began to say *we*. Ah! how touching is that *we* when pronounced by love! How timidly, yet how vividly expressed, is the declaration which it contains! “We will go to the Capitol then,” said Corinne. “Yes, we will go there,” replied Oswald. Simplicity was in his words—softness and tenderness in his accent. “From the height of the Capitol, such as it is now,” said Corinne, “we can easily perceive the seven hills; we will survey them all, one after another; there is not one of them which does not preserve in it some traces of history.”

Corinne and Lord Nelville took what was formerly called the *Via Sacra* or Triumphal Way. “’Tis this way that your car passed,” said Oswald to Corinne. “Yes,” answered she; “this ancient dust might be astonished at bearing such a car; but since the Roman republic, so many criminal traces have been imprinted on it that the sentiment of respect which it inspires is much weakened.” They then arrived at the foot of the steps of the present Capitol. The entrance to the ancient Capitol was through the Forum. “I could wish,” said Corinne, “that these steps were the same that Scipio mounted, when, repelling calumny by glory, he entered the temple to return thanks to the gods for the victories which he had gained. But these new steps, this new Capitol, has been built upon the ruins of the old, in order to receive the peaceable magistrate who bears in himself alone the immense title of Roman Senator, formerly an object of respect to the whole universe. Here we have no longer any thing but names; yet their harmony, their ancient dignity, inspire us with a pleasing sensation, mingled with regret. I asked a poor woman, whom I met the other day, where she lived? ‘*At the Tarpeian Rock,*’ answered she. This word, however stripped of the ideas which formerly attached to it, still vibrates upon the imagination.”

Oswald and Corinne stopped to contemplate the two lions of basalt at the foot of the steps[11]. They came from Egypt. The Egyptian sculptors were more happy in seizing the figure of animals than that of man. These lions of the Capitol are nobly peaceful, and their physiognomy is the true image of tranquillity in strength.

“A guisa di leon, quando si posa.”
DANTE.

“In the manner of the lion, when he reposes.”

Not far from these lions is a statue of Rome, mutilated, which the modern Romans have placed there, without thinking that they were thus giving the most perfect emblem of their city as it now is. This statue has neither head nor feet, but the body and the drapery which still remain have something of their ancient beauty. At the top of the steps are two colossal figures which represent as it is believed Castor and Pollux; then



the trophies of Marius; then two millitary columns which served for the admeasurement of the Roman universe; and the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius, noble and calm in the midst of these several recollections. Thus, the whole Roman history is here emblematically represented: The heroic age by the Dioscuri; the republic by the lions; the civil wars by Marius; and the golden age of the emperors by Marcus Aurelius.



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Advancing towards the modern Capitol, we see to the right and to the left two churches, built on the ruins of the temples of the Feretrian and Capitoline Jupiter. Before the vestibule is a fountain, over which preside two rivers, the Nile and the Tiber, with the she-wolf of Romulus. The name of the Tiber is not pronounced like that of inglorious rivers; it is one of the pleasures of the Romans, to say, "*Conduct me to the borders of the Tiber; let us cross the Tiber.*" In pronouncing these words they seem to invoke history and to re-animate the dead. In going to the Capitol, by way of the Forum, we find, to the right, the Mamertine prisons.—These prisons were at first constructed by Ancus Martius, and were then employed for ordinary criminals. But Servius Tullius caused more horrid ones to be dug under ground for state criminals, as if such prisoners were not those who deserve most consideration, since their errors might be united with sincerity. Jugurtha and the accomplices of Cataline perished in these prisons. It is also said that St Peter and St Paul have been incarcerated in them. On the other side of the Capitol is the Tarpeian Rock, and at the foot of this rock we find at the present time a hospital, called The Hospital of Consolation. It seems that thus in Rome the severe spirit of antiquity and the mildness of Christianity meet each other throughout the ages, and present themselves to our sight as well as to our reflection.

When Oswald and Corinne had reached the top of the tower of the Capitol, she showed him the Seven Hills; the city of Rome bounded at first by Mount Palatine, then by the walls of Servius Tullius, which enclose the Seven Hills; lastly by the walls of Aurelian, which still serve as an enclosure to the greatest part of Rome. Corinne recalled to mind the verses of Tibullus and Propertius[12], who are proud of the weak beginnings whence has sprung the mistress of the world. Mount Palatine was in itself the whole of Rome for some time, but afterwards the palace of the Emperors filled the space which had before sufficed for a nation. A poet, in the time of Nero, made the following epigram upon this occasion.[13] *Rome will soon be only a palace. Go to Veii Romans, if this palace does not now occupy Veii itself.*

The Seven Hills are infinitely less elevated than formerly when they deserved the name of the Steep Mountains. Modern Rome is raised forty feet above the ancient city. The valleys which separated the hills are almost filled up by time with the ruins of edifices; but what is more singular yet, a heap of broken vases has raised two new hills;[14] and we almost discover an image of modern times, in this progress, or rather this wreck of civilisation, levelling mountains with valleys, effacing in the moral as well as the physical world all those beautiful inequalities produced by nature.

Three other hills,[15] not comprised in the seven famous ones, give something picturesque to the city of Rome, which perhaps is the only city that of itself, and in its own boundaries, offers the most magnificent points of observation. It presents such a remarkable mixture of ruins, edifices, fields and deserts, that we may contemplate Rome on all sides, and always find a striking picture in the opposite perspective.



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Oswald could never feel tired of viewing the traces of ancient Rome from the elevated point of the Capitol to which Corinne had conducted him. The reading of history, and the reflections which it excites, produce a less powerful effect upon the soul than those heaps of stones, those ruins mingled with new habitations. So strongly do our eyes carry conviction to the mind, that after having beheld these ruins of Rome we believe the history of the ancient Romans as if we had been cotemporary with them. The recollections of the mind are acquired by study; the recollections of the imagination are born of a more immediate and intimate impression, which gives body to thought, and renders us, if I may so express it, witnesses of what we have learnt. Undoubtedly one is vexed sometimes at those modern buildings which intrude themselves among the venerable spoils of antiquity. But a portico by the side of a humble cottage, pillars, between which appear the little windows of a church, a tomb affording an asylum to a whole rustic family, produce an indescribable mixture of great and simple ideas, a newly-discovered pleasure which inspires a continual interest. The greater part of our European cities have externally a common and prosaic appearance; and Rome, oftener than any other, presents the melancholy aspect of misery and degradation; but all of a sudden a broken column, a bas-relief half-destroyed, stones knit together in the indestructible manner of the ancient architects, remind us that there is in man an eternal power, a divine spark, which he must never cease to excite in himself and revive in others.

This Forum, whose enclosure is so narrow in compass, and which has witnessed so many astonishing things, is a striking proof of the moral greatness of man. When the universe, in the latter times of Rome, was subjected to inglorious masters, we find whole centuries, of which history has scarcely preserved any events; and this Forum, this little space in the centre of a city, at that time very circumscribed, whose inhabitants were fighting all around them for their territory, has it not occupied by the memories which it recalls, the most sublime geniuses of every age! Honour then, eternal honour, to nations, courageous and free, since they thus captivate the admiration of posterity!

Corinne observed to Lord Nelville that there were very few remains of the Republican age to be found at Rome. The aqueducts, the canals formed under ground, for the distribution of water, were the only luxury of the Republic and the kings who preceded it. They have only left us useful edifices: tombs raised to the memory of their great men, and some temples of brick, which still subsist. It was not until after the conquest of Sicily that the Romans for the first time made use of marble for their monuments; but it is sufficient to behold places where great actions have occurred, to experience an indefinable emotion. It is to this disposition of the soul that we must attribute the religious power of pilgrimages. Celebrated countries of every kind, even when stripped of their great men and of their monuments, preserve their effect upon the imagination. What struck our sight no longer exists, but the charm of recollection remains.

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This Forum no longer presents us with any trace of that famous Tribune, from which the Roman people were governed by eloquence. Three pillars remain of a temple, raised by Augustus in honour of Jupiter Tonans, when the thunderbolt fell at his feet without striking him, and an arch which the senate raised to Septimus Severus in reward of his exploits. The names of his two sons, Caracalla and Geta, were inscribed on the fronton of the arch; but when Caracalla had assassinated Geta he caused his name to be erased, and some traces of the cancelled letters are still to be seen. At some distance is a temple to Faustina, a monument of the blind weakness of Marcus Aurelius; a temple to Venus which, in the time of the republic, was consecrated to Pallas—and farther on, the ruins of a temple dedicated to the Sun and Moon, built by the Emperor Adrian, who was jealous of Apollodorus, the famous Grecian architect, and put him to death for having found fault with the proportions of his edifice.

On the other side of the square we behold the ruins of some monuments consecrated to nobler and purer aims. The pillars of a temple which is believed to have been that of Jupiter Stator, who prevented the Romans from ever flying before their enemies. A pillar remaining of the Temple of Jupiter Guardian, placed, we are told, not far from the abyss into which Curtius precipitated himself. Pillars also of a temple, raised, some say, to Concord, others to Victory. Perhaps these two ideas are confounded by conquering nations, who probably think no real peace can exist till they have subdued the universe! At the extremity of Mount Palatine is a beautiful triumphal arch, dedicated to Titus, for the conquest of Jerusalem. We are informed that the Jews who are at Rome never pass under this arch, and a little path is shewn which they take to avoid it. It is to be wished, for the honour of the Jews, that this anecdote may be true; long recollections suit long misfortunes.

Not far from thence is the arch of Constantine, embellished with some bas-reliefs taken away from the forum of Trajan, by the Christians, who wished to adorn the monument consecrated to the *founder of repose*; so they called Constantine. The arts at this epoch were already on the decline, and they stripped the past to honour new exploits. These triumphal gates, which are seen at Rome, give perpetuity as much as man can give it, to the honours paid to glory. There was a place upon their summits destined for flute and trumpet players, in order that the victor when passing might be intoxicated at the same time by music and praise, and taste at the same moment all the most exalted emotions.

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Facing these triumphal arches are the ruins of the temple of Peace built by Vespasian; it was so decorated with brass and with gold, internally, that when consumed by fire, the streams of burning metal that flowed from it extended even to the Forum. Lastly, the Coliseum, the most beautiful ruin of Rome, terminates this noble enclosure, which embraces all history in its compass. This superb edifice, of which only the stones remain, stript of the gold and the marble, served as an amphitheatre for the combats of the gladiators, with wild beasts. It was thus that the Roman people were amused and deceived by strong emotions, when natural sentiments could no longer soar. The entrance to the Coliseum is by two doors, one consecrated to the victors, and by the other were carried out the dead: strange contempt for the human race, which made the life or death of man dependent upon the pastime of a public spectacle! Titus, the best of emperors, dedicated the Coliseum to the Roman people,—and these admirable ruins bear such fine traits of magnificence and genius, that we are led into an illusion on the subject of true greatness, and tempted to grant that admiration to the masterpieces of art, which is only the due of monuments consecrated to generous institutions.

Oswald did not indulge in that admiration which Corinne felt in contemplating these four galleries; these four edifices, rising one upon another; this medley of pomp and barbarism, which at once inspires respect and compassion. He beheld in these scenes nothing but the luxury of the master, and the blood of the slaves, and felt indignant at the arts which, regardless of their aim, lavish their gifts upon whatever object they may be destined for. Corinne endeavoured to combat this disposition:—"Do not," said she, to Lord Nelville, "carry the rigour of your principles of morality and justice into the contemplation of the Italian monuments; they, for the most part, recall, as I have told you, rather the splendour, the elegance of taste of ancient forms, than the glorious epoch of Roman virtue. But do you not find some traces of the moral greatness possessed by the first ages, in the gigantic luxury of the monuments which have succeeded them? Even the degradation of the Roman people still commands respect: the mourning of her liberty covers the world with wonders, and the genius of ideal beauty seeks to console man for the true and real dignity which he has lost. Behold those immense baths, open to all those who were willing to taste oriental voluptuousness—those circuses destined for the elephants which were brought there to combat with tigers, and those aqueducts which in a moment converted the amphitheatre into a lake, where galleys too fought in their turn, and crocodiles appeared where lions were seen before:—such was the luxury of the Romans when luxury was their pride! Those obelisks which were brought from Egypt, stolen from African shades, in order to adorn the Roman sepulchres; that population of statues which formerly existed in Rome cannot be looked upon in the same light as the useless pageantry of the Asiatic despots: it is the Roman genius which conquered the world, and to which the arts have given an external form. There is something supernatural in this magnificence, and its poetical splendour makes us forget its origin and its aim."



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The eloquence of Corinne excited the admiration of Oswald without convincing him; he sought for some moral sentiment in all this, without which all the magic of the arts could not satisfy him. Corinne then recollected that in this very amphitheatre the persecuted Christians died victims of their perseverance, and showing Lord Nelville the altars which are raised in honour of their ashes, as well as the path of the cross, which is trodden by penitents, at the foot of the most magnificent wrecks of worldly grandeur, asked him if the ashes of martyrs conveyed no language to his heart? "Yes," cried he, "I deeply admire the triumph of the soul and of the will over the pains of death. A sacrifice, whatever it may be, is nobler and more difficult than all the flights of the soul and of thought.—An exalted imagination may produce miracles of genius, but it is only in devoting ourselves to our opinion or to our sentiments that we are truly virtuous;—it is then alone that a celestial power subdues the mortal man in us."

This language, so noble and so pure, yet gave uneasiness to Corinne. She looked at Nelville—then cast down her eyes—and though, at that moment, he took her hand and pressed it against his heart, she shuddered at the idea that such a man could sacrifice others or himself to the worship of opinions, of principles, or of duties, which he might have chosen.

FOOTNOTES:

[11] Mineralogists affirm that these lions are not of basalt, because the volcanic stone to-day known under that name could not have existed in Egypt; but as Pliny calls the Egyptian stone out of which these lions have been carved, basalt, and as Winckelmann, the historian of the arts, also retains this appellation, I have deemed myself justified in using it in its primitive acceptance.

[12]

"Carpite nunc, tauri, de septem collibus herbas,
Dum licet. Hic magnae jam locus urbis erit."

TIBULLUS.

"Hoc quodcunque vides hospes quam maxima Roma est,
Ante Phrygem Enean collis et herba fuit."
PROPERTIUS, Book IV. el. 1.

[13]

Roma domus fiet: Veios migrate, Quirites;
Si non et Veios occupat ista domus.

[14] Mounts Citorio and Testacio.



[15] The Janicula, Mount Vaticano and Mount Mario.

Chapter v.

After the excursion to the Capitol and the Forum, Corinne and Nelville spent two days in visiting the Seven Hills. The Romans formerly observed a festival in honour of them. These hills, enclosed in her bosom, are one of the original beauties of Rome; and we may easily conceive what delight was experienced by feelings attached to their native soil, in celebrating this singularity.



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Oswald and Corinne, having seen the Capitoline Hill the day before, began their walks by Mount Palatine; it was entirely occupied by the palace of the Caesars, called *the golden palace*. This hill offers nothing to our view, at present, but the ruins of that palace. The four sides of it were built by Augustus Tiberius, Caligula, and Nero; but the stones, covered with fertile plants, are all that now remain of it: Nature has there resumed her empire over the labours of man, and the beauty of the flowers consoles us for the destruction of the palace. The luxury of the times of the kings and of the Republic only consisted in public edifices; private houses were very small, and very simple. Cicero, Hortensius, and the Gracchi, dwelt upon Mount Palatine, which, at the decline of Rome, was scarcely sufficient for the abode of a single man. In the latter ages, the nation was nothing more than an anonymous crowd, merely designated by the era of its master. We look in vain here for the two laurels planted before the door of Augustus, the laurel of war, and that of the fine arts cultivated by peace; both have disappeared.

There is still remaining, on Mount Palatine, some chambers of the Baths of Livia; we are there shown the holes which contained the precious stones that were then lavished upon ceilings, as a common ornament, and paintings are to be seen there whose colours are yet perfectly untouched; the fragility of the colours adds to our astonishment at seeing them preserved, and seems to carry us back nearer to past ages. If it be true that Livia shortened the days of Augustus, it is in one of these rooms that the crime was conceived, and the eyes of the sovereign of the world, betrayed in his most intimate affections, were perhaps fixed upon one of those pictures whose elegant flowers still remain[16]. What, in old age, were his thoughts upon his life and his pomp? Did he recall to mind his proscriptions or his glory? Did he hope, or did he fear a world to come? Does the last thought, which reveals everything to man; does the last thought of a master of the universe still wander beneath these vaults?

Mount Aventine offers more traces than any other of the first periods of the Roman History. Exactly opposite the Palace, raised by Tiberius, we see the ruins of the Temple of Liberty, which was built by the father of the Gracchi. At the foot of Mount Aventine stood the temple dedicated to the Fortune of men by Servius Tullius, to thank the gods for having raised him from the condition of a slave to the rank of a king. Without the walls of Rome we find also the ruins of a temple, which was consecrated to the Fortune of women when Veturia stopped the progress of Coriolanus. Opposite Mount Aventine is Mount Janicula, on which Porsenna placed his army. It was opposite this Mount that Horatius Cocles caused the bridge leading to Rome to be cut away behind him. The foundation of this bridge is still to be seen;



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there stands on the bank of the river a triumphal arch, built of brick, as simple as the action which it recalls was grand; this arch having been raised, it is said, in honour of Horatius Cocles. In the middle of the Tiber is perceived an island formed of sheaves of corn gathered in the fields of Tarquin, which were a long time exposed on the river because the Roman people would not take them, believing that they should entail bad fortune on themselves by so doing. It would be difficult in our days to cast a malediction upon riches of any sort which could prevent everybody from seizing them.

On Mount Aventine were placed the temple of patrician, and that of plebeian modesty. At the foot of this hill is seen the temple of Vesta, which yet remains whole, though it has been often menaced by the inundations of the Tiber. Not far from thence is the ruin of a prison for debt, where it is said a fine trait of filial piety was displayed, which is pretty generally known. It was also in this place that Clelia and her companions, prisoners of Porsenna, crossed the Tiber in order to rejoin the Romans. This Aventine Mount affords the soul repose after the painful reflections which the other hills awaken, and its aspect is as beautiful as the memories it recalls. The name of *Pulchrum Littus*, Beautiful Shore, was given to the banks of the river, which rolls at its foot, which was the walk of the Roman orators when they quitted the forum—it was there that Caesar and Pompey met like private citizens, and sought to captivate Cicero whose independent eloquence was then of more importance to them than even the power of their armies.

Poetry too lends its aid to embellish this retreat; Virgil has placed the cavern of Cacus upon Mount Aventine, and the Romans, so great by their history, are still more so by the heroic fictions with which the bards have decorated their fabulous origin. Lastly, in returning from this mountain is seen the house of Nicholas Rienzi, who vainly endeavoured to revive ancient times among the moderns, and this memento, feeble as it is, by the side of so many others, gives birth to much reflection. Mount Caelius is remarkable because there we behold the remains of the Praetorian camp, and that of the foreign soldiers. This inscription has been found in the ruins of the edifice built for the reception of these soldiers:—"To the hallowed genius of foreign camps!" Hallowed indeed, for those whose power it maintained! What remains of these ancient barracks, enables us to judge that they were built after the manner of cloisters, or rather, that cloisters have been built upon their model.



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Mount Esquiline was called the *Poets' Mount*, because Mecenat having his palace on this hill, Horace, Propertius and Tibullus dwelt there also. Not far from here are the ruins of the Thermae of Titus, and of Trajan. It is believed that Raphael took the model of his arabesques from the fresco paintings of the Thermae of Titus. It is there, also, that was discovered the group of the Laocoon. The freshness of water affords such pleasure in hot countries that delight is taken in assembling together all the pomp of luxury, and every enjoyment of the imagination, in the places appropriated for bathing. It was there that the Romans exposed their masterpieces of painting and of sculpture. They were seen by the light of lamps, for it appears by the construction of these buildings, that daylight never entered them: they wished thus to preserve themselves from the rays of the sun, so burning in the south: the sensation they produce must certainly have been the cause of the ancients calling them the darts of Apollo. It is reasonable to suppose, from observing the extreme precaution of the ancients to guard against heat, that the climate was then more burning than it is in our days. It is in the Thermae of Caracalla, that were placed the Hercules Farnese, the Flora, and the group of Dirce. In the baths of Nero near Ostia was found the Apollo Belvedere. Is it possible to conceive that in contemplating this noble figure Nero did not feel some generous emotions?

The Thermae and the Circuses are the only kind of buildings appropriated to public amusements of which there remain any relics at Rome. There is no theatre except that of Marcellus whose ruins still exist. Pliny relates that there were three hundred and sixty pillars of marble, and three thousand statues employed in a theatre, which was only to last a few days. Sometimes the Romans raised fabrics so strong that they resisted the shock of earthquakes; at others they took pleasure in devoting immense labour to buildings which they themselves destroyed as soon as their feasts were over; thus they sported with time in every shape. Besides, the Romans were not like the Greeks—influenced by a passion for dramatic representations. It was by Grecian work, and Grecian artists, that the fine arts flourished at Rome, and Roman greatness expressed itself rather by the colossal magnificence of architecture than by the masterpieces of the imagination. This gigantic luxury, these wonders of riches, possess great and characteristic dignity, which, though not the dignity of liberty, is that of power. The monuments appropriated for public baths, were called provinces; in them were united all the divers productions and divers establishments which a whole country can produce. The circus (called *Circus Maximus*) of which the remains are still to be seen, was so near the palace of the Caesars that Nero could from his windows give the signal for the games. The circus was large enough to contain three hundred thousand persons. The nation almost in its entirety was amused at the same moment, and these immense festivals might be considered as a kind of popular institution, which united every man in the cause of pleasure as they were formerly united in the cause of glory.



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Mount Quirinal and Mount Viminal are so near each other that it is difficult to distinguish them: it was here that the houses of Sallust and of Pompey, formerly stood; it is here also that the Pope has now fixed his abode. We cannot take one step in Rome without bringing the present near to the past, and different periods of the past near to each other. But we learn to reconcile ourselves to the events of our own time, in beholding the eternal mutability of the history of man; and we feel ashamed of letting our own lot disturb us in the presence of so many ages, which have all overthrown the work of the preceding ones.

By the side of the Seven Hills, on their declivities or on their summits, are seen a multitude of steeples, and of obelisks; Trajan's column, the column of Antoninus, the Tower of Conti (whence it is said Nero beheld the conflagration of Rome), and the Dome of St Peter's, whose commanding grandeur eclipses that of every other object. It appears as if the air were peopled with all these monuments, which extend towards Heaven, and as if an aerial city were majestically hovering over the terrestrial one.

On entering Rome again Corinne made Oswald pass under the portico of Octavia, she who loved so well, and suffered so much; then they traversed the *Path of Infamy*, by which the infamous Tullia passed, trampling her father's corpse beneath the feet of her horses. At a distance from this spot is seen the temple raised by Agrippina in honour of Claudius whom she caused to be poisoned. And lastly we pass the tomb of Augustus, whose enclosure now serves as an amphitheatre for the combats of beasts.

"I have caused you to run over very rapidly," said Corinne to Lord Nelville, "some traces of ancient history; but you will comprehend the pleasure to be found in these researches, at once learned and poetic, which speak to the imagination as well as to the mind. There are in Rome many distinguished men whose only occupation is to discover some new relation between history and the ruins." "I know no study that would more captivate and interest me," replied Lord Nelville, "if I felt sufficiently at rest to give my mind to it: this species of erudition is much more animated than that which is acquired from books: one would say that we make what we discover to live again, and that the past re-appears from beneath the dust in which it has been buried." "Undoubtedly," said Corinne, "this passion for antiquity is not a vain prejudice. We live in an age when personal interest seems to be the only principle of all the actions of men, and what sympathy, what emotion, what enthusiasm, can ever result from such a principle? It is sweeter to dream of those days of devotion, of personal sacrifice and heroism, which however, have existed, and of which the earth still bears some honourable testimonies."

FOOTNOTE:

[16] Augustus died at Nola, on his way to the waters of Brindisi, which had been prescribed him; but he left Rome in a dying state.



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Chapter vi.

Corinne flattered herself in secret with having captivated the heart of Oswald, but as she knew his reserve and his severity, she had not dared make known to him all the interest he had excited in her heart, though she was disposed, by character, to conceal nothing that she felt. Perhaps also she believed that even in speaking on subjects foreign to their growing passion there was a tenderness of accent in their voice, which betrayed their mutual affection, and that a secret avowal of love was painted in their looks, and in that melancholy and veiled language which penetrates so deeply into the soul.

One morning, when Corinne was getting ready to continue her walks with Oswald, she received a note from him, somewhat ceremonious, informing her that the bad state of his health would confine him at home for some days. A painful disquietude seized upon the heart of Corinne: she at first feared he might be dangerously ill, but the Count d'Erfeuil, whom she saw at night, told her it was one of those melancholy fits to which he was very much subject and, during which he would not speak to anybody.—“He will not see *even me*,” said the Count d'Erfeuil, “when he is so.”—This *even me* was highly displeasing to Corinne, but she was upon her guard not to betray any symptoms of that displeasure to the only man who might be able to give her news of Lord Nelville. She interrogated him, flattering herself that a man of so much apparent levity would tell her all he knew. But on a sudden, whether he wished to conceal from her by an air of mystery that Oswald had confided nothing to him, or whether he believed it more honourable to refuse what was asked of him than to grant it, he opposed an invincible silence to the ardent curiosity of Corinne. She who had always had an ascendancy over those with whom she conversed, could not comprehend why all her means of persuasion were without effect upon the Count d'Erfeuil: did she not know that there is nothing in the world so inflexible as self-love?

What resource remained then to Corinne to know what was passing in the heart of Oswald! should she write to him? The formality it would require was too foreign to her open disposition. Three days glided away, during which she did not see Lord Nelville, and was tormented by the most cruel agitation.—“What have I done then,” said she, “to drive him from me? I have not told him that I loved him.—I have not been guilty of that crime, so terrible in England, but so pardonable in Italy. Has he guessed it? But why should he esteem me the less for it?” Oswald had only absented himself from Corinne because he felt the power of her charms becoming too strong to resist. Though he had not given his word to espouse Lucilia Edgermond, he knew it was his father's wish that she should become his wife, and to that wish he desired to conform. Besides, Corinne was not known by her real name, and



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had, for several years, led a life much too independent. Such a marriage, Lord Nelville believed would not have obtained the approbation of his father, and he felt that it was not thus he could expiate the transgressions he had been guilty of towards him. Such were his motives for removing himself from the presence of Corinne. He had formed the project of writing to her on quitting Rome, stating the motives that condemned him to this resolution; but as he could not find strength to do that, he contented himself with abstaining from visiting her, and even this sacrifice became almost too painful to bear from the second day of his absence.

Corinne was struck with an idea that she should never behold Oswald again; that he would go away without bidding her adieu. She expected every instant to receive the news of his departure, and this fear so increased the agony of her feelings that she felt herself all of a sudden seized by passion, that vulture beneath whose talons happiness and independence sink. Unable to endure the house that Lord Nelville no longer visited, she frequently wandered in the gardens of Rome, hoping to meet with him. The hours so spent were the least insupportable, since they afforded some chance of seeing the object of her wanderings. The ardent imagination of Corinne was the source of her talents; but, unfortunately for her, it was united to her natural sensibility, which often rendered it extremely painful to her.

On the evening of the fourth day of this cruel absence, the moon shone beautifully bright, and the silence of the night gives Rome a fine effect: it seems then to be inhabited by the shades of its illustrious ancients. Corinne, returning from the house of a female friend, oppressed with grief, quitted her carriage, to sit for a few moments near the fountain of Trevi; before that abundant cascade, which, falling in the midst of Rome, seems like the vital principle of this tranquil abode. When this cascade ceases to play for some days, one would say that Rome is struck with stupor. It is the noise of carriages that we expect to hear in other capitals; but at Rome, it is the murmuring of this immense fountain, which seems to be an accompaniment necessary to the pensive life people lead there: the image of Corinne was painted in this stream, so pure, that for several centuries past it has borne the name of the *Virgin Spring*. Oswald, who had stopped in the same place a few moments afterwards, beheld the charming features of his love reflected in the water. He was seized with so lively an emotion, that he did not know, at first, whether it was not his imagination which presented to him the shadow of Corinne, as it had so often done that of his father; he bent towards the fountain to observe more distinctly, when his own countenance was reflected by the side of Corinne's. She knew him, uttered a cry, and darting towards him rapidly, seized his arm as if she were afraid he would leave her again; but hardly had she yielded to this impetuous emotion than recollecting the character of Nelville, she blushed at having given him this lively testimony of her feelings, and letting fall the hand which held Oswald, she covered her face with the other to conceal her tears.



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“Corinne!” said Oswald, “dear Corinne! my absence has then rendered you unhappy!” “Oh yes,” answered she, “you were sure of that! Why then pain me! have I deserved to suffer at your hand?” “No, certainly,” cried Nelville, “but if I do not think myself free; if I feel in my heart a storm of grief, why should I associate you with such a torture of sentiment and dread?”—“It is too late,” interrupted Corinne, “it is too late, grief has already seized upon my bosom—spare me.”—“Do you mention grief?” replied Oswald, “in the midst of so brilliant a career, of such renown, and possessing so lively an imagination?”—“Hold,” said Corinne, “you do not know me; of all the faculties I possess, the most powerful is that of suffering. I am born for happiness, my disposition is open, my imagination animated; but pain excites in me a certain impetuosity, powerful enough to disturb my reason or bring me to my grave; therefore I beseech you, spare me. My gaiety and mobility are only superficial; but there are in my soul abysses of sadness, which I can only escape by guarding against love.”

Corinne pronounced these words with an expression that deeply affected Oswald.—“I will come and see you to-morrow morning,” said he. “Do you swear it?” said she, with a disquietude which she vainly endeavoured to conceal. “Yes, I swear it,” cried Lord Nelville, and disappeared.

Book v.

THE TOMBS, THE CHURCHES, AND THE PALACES.

[Illustration]

Chapter i.

The next day, Oswald and Corinne felt much embarrassed at meeting each other. Corinne was no longer confident of the love which she inspired. Oswald was dissatisfied with himself; he knew there was a weakness in his character which sometimes made him feel irritated at his own sentiments as at a species of tyranny; and both endeavoured to avoid speaking of their mutual affection. “I have to propose to-day,” said Corinne, “rather a solemn walk; but one that will certainly prove highly interesting: let us go and see the tombs, let us go and see the last asylum of those who inhabited the monuments whose ruins we have contemplated.”—“Yes,” answered Oswald, “you have conjectured what will suit the present disposition of my soul;” and he pronounced these words in so dolorous an accent, that Corinne was silent some moments, not daring to speak to him. But the desire of affording consolation to Oswald, and the lively interest she took in every thing they were to see together, inspired her with courage, and she said to him: “You know my lord, that, among the ancients, so far was the aspect of the tombs from dispiriting the living, that they endeavoured to excite a new emulation by placing these tombs on the public roads, in order that by recalling to

young people the remembrance of illustrious men, they might silently admonish them to follow their example.” “Ah! how I envy all those,”



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said Oswald, "whose grief is not mingled with remorse!" "Do you talk of remorse," cried Corinne; "you whose only failings, if they may be so called, are an excess of virtue, a scrupulosity of heart, an exalted delicacy—" "Corinne, Corinne, do not approach that subject," interrupted Oswald, "in your happy country, sombre thoughts disappear before the lustre of a brilliant sky; but that grief which has penetrated to the depths of our soul, must for ever sap the foundation of our existence." "You form an erroneous judgment of me," replied Corinne; "I have already told you, that though I am formed by the nature of my character, for lively enjoyment, I should suffer more exquisitely than you if—" She did not conclude; but changed the discourse.—"My only desire, my lord, is to divert your attention for a moment; I hope for nothing more." The sweetness of this reply moved Lord Nelville, and seeing a melancholy expression in the looks of Corinne, naturally so interesting and so full of fire, he reproached himself for having afflicted a woman, born for the most tender and lively sensations, and endeavoured to atone for it. But the disquietude which Corinne experienced with regard to the future intentions of Oswald, and the possibility of his departure, entirely disturbed her accustomed serenity.

She conducted Lord Nelville outside the gates of the city, where are to be seen the ancient vestiges of the Appian way. These vestiges are indicated in the midst of the Campagna, by the tombs to the right and to the left, which extend out of sight for several miles beyond the walls. The Romans would not permit their dead to be buried inside the city: the emperors alone were allowed that privilege. One private citizen, however, named Publius Bibulus, obtained this favour in reward of his obscure virtues.—Cotemporaries are always more willing to honour virtues of that description than any other.

It is the gate of St Sebastian, formerly called *Capene*, that conducts to the Appian way. Cicero tells us, that the first tombs we meet after passing this gate, are those of the Metelli, the Scipios, and the Servilii. The family tomb of the Scipios has been found in this very spot and since transplanted to the Vatican. It is almost a sacrilege to displace the ashes of the dead or to change the aspect of ruins. Imagination is more closely connected with morality than is generally believed, and should not be offended. Among so many tombs which strike our sight, names are ascribed to some without any positive certainty; but even the emotion which this uncertainty inspires will not permit us to contemplate any of these monuments with indifference. There are some in which houses for the peasantry are built; for the Romans consecrated an extensive space and vast edifices to the funereal urns of their friends or their illustrious fellow-citizens. They were not influenced by that dry principle of utility which fertilized a few corners of the earth, while blasting with sterility the vast domain of sentiment and of thought.



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At some distance from the Appian way is seen a temple, raised by the republic to Honour and Virtue; another to the god who caused Hannibal to turn back, and also the fountain of Egeria, where Numa went to consult the god of all good men,—conscience interrogated in solitude. It seems that about these tombs no traces but those of virtue have subsisted. No monument of the ages of crime is to be found by the side of those where repose the illustrious dead; they are surrounded by an honourable space, where the noblest memories may preserve their reign undisturbed.

The aspect of the country about Rome has something in it singularly remarkable: undoubtedly it is a desert, for it contains neither trees nor habitation; but the earth is covered with wild plants which the energy of vegetation incessantly renews. These parasitic plants glide among the tombs, adorn the ruins, and seem only there to honour the dead. One would say, that proud Nature has rejected all the labours of man, since Cincinnatus no longer guided the plough which furrowed her bosom. She produces plants by chance, without permitting the living to make use of her riches. These uncultivated plains must be displeasing to the agriculturist, to administrators, to all those who speculate upon the earth, and who would lay it under contribution to supply the wants of man. But pensive minds, which are occupied as much by death as by life, take pleasure in contemplating this Roman Campagna upon which the present age has imprinted no trace; this land which cherishes its dead, and covers them lovingly with useless flowers, with useless plants which creep upon the earth, and never rise sufficiently to separate themselves from the ashes which they appear to caress.

Oswald agreed that in this spot the mind felt more calm than it possibly could any where else; besides, here the soul does not suffer so much from the images that grief presents to it; one seems still to share with those who are no more, the charms of that air, of that sun, and of that verdure. Corinne observed the impression that Lord Nelville received, and conceived some hopes from it: she did not flatter herself with being able to console Oswald; she had not even wished to efface from his heart the just regret he must feel at the loss of his father; but there is, even in this regret, something tender and harmonious, which we must endeavour to make known to those who have hitherto only felt its bitterness; it is the only benefit we can confer upon them.

“Let us stop here,” said Corinne, “opposite this tomb, the only one which remains yet almost whole: it is not the tomb of a celebrated Roman, it is that of Cecilia Metella, a young maiden to whom her father has raised this monument.” “Happy!” said Oswald, “happy are the children who die in the arms of their father and receive death in the bosom of him who gave them life; death itself then loses its sting.” “Yes,” said Corinne; “happy are those not doomed to the wretched



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lot of orphans. See, arms have been sculptured on this tomb, though it belongs to a woman: but the daughters of heroes may have their monuments adorned with the trophies of their fathers; what a beautiful union is that of innocence and valour! There is an elegy of Propertius which paints better than any other writing of antiquity, this dignity of woman among the Romans, more imposing, more pure than the worship paid to them during the age of chivalry. Cornelia, dying in her youth, addresses to her husband the most affecting consolations and adieus, in which we feel at every word, all that is respectable and sacred in family ties. The noble pride of an unspotted life is painted in this majestic poetry of the Latins, this poetry, noble and severe as the masters of the world[17]. 'Yes,' says Cornelia, *'no stain has sullied my life from the nuptial bed to the funeral pyre; I have lived pure between the two torches.'* What an admirable expression" cried Corinne; "What a sublime image! How worthy of envy is the lot of that woman who has been able to preserve the most perfect unity in her destiny and carries but one recollection to the grave: it is enough for a life!"

In finishing these words, the eyes of Corinne were filled with tears; a cruel sentiment, a painful suspicion seized upon the heart of Oswald.—"Corinne," cried he, "Corinne, has your delicate soul nothing to reproach itself with? If I were able to dispose of myself, if I could offer myself to you, should I have no rival in the past? Should I have reason to be proud of my choice? Would no cruel jealousy disturb my happiness?"—"I am free, and I love you as I never loved man before!" answered Corinne—"What would you have more?—Must I be condemned to an avowal, that before I have known you I have been deceived by my imagination as to the interest which another excited in me? Is there not in the heart of man a divine pity for the errors which sentiment, or rather the illusion of sentiment, may have led us to commit?" In finishing these words a modest blush covered her face. Oswald was startled; but remained silent. There was in Corinne's look an expression of repentance and timidity which did not permit him to judge with rigour—a ray from heaven seemed to descend upon, and absolve her! He took her hand, pressed it against his heart, and knelt before her, without uttering anything, without promising anything; but contemplated her with a look of love which gave the utmost latitude to hope.

"Believe me," said Corinne, to Lord Nelville—"let us form no plan for the years to come. The most happy moments are those which a bountiful chance gives us. Is it here then, is it in the midst of the tombs that we should think of future days?"—"No," cried Lord Nelville, "I can think of no future day that would be likely to part us! these four days of absence have taught me too well that I now no longer exist but in you!"—Corinne made no reply to these sweet expressions; but she treasured



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them religiously in her heart; she was always fearful that in prolonging the conversation upon that subject most interesting to her, she might draw from Oswald a declaration of his future intentions, before a longer acquaintance might render separation impossible. She often, even designedly, turned his attention towards external objects—like that Sultana in the Arabian Tales, who sought by a thousand different recitals to awaken the interest of him she loved, in order to postpone the decision of her fate till her charms and her wit had completed their conquest.

FOOTNOTE:

[17]

“Viximus insignes inter utramque facem.”

PROPERTIUS.

Chapter ii.

Not far from the Appian way, Oswald and Corinne visited the *Columbarium*, where slaves are united with their masters; where are seen in the same tomb, all who lived under the protection of one man or one woman. The women of Livia, for example, they who, appointed to the care of her beauty, struggled for its preservation against the power of time and disputed with the years some one of her charms, are placed by her side in little urns. We fancy that we see an assemblage of the obscure dead round one of the illustrious departed, not less silent than his train. At a little distance from here, is perceived the field where vestals, unfaithful to their vows, were buried alive; a singular instance of fanaticism in a religion naturally tolerant.

“I will not conduct you to the catacombs,” said Corinne to Lord Nelville, “though, by a singular chance, they are under this Appian way; tombs thus having their abode beneath tombs; but this asylum of the persecuted Christians has something so gloomy, and so terrible in it, that I cannot find resolution to return thither. It does not inspire the same affecting melancholy as more open situations; it is like a dungeon adjoining a sepulchre; the torment of life accompanied with the horrors of death. Undoubtedly, we feel penetrated with admiration of men who, by the power of enthusiasm alone, have been able to support this subterraneous existence; separating themselves from the sun and from nature; but the mind is so ill at ease in this abode that it is incapable of receiving any improvement. Man is a part of the creation; he must find his moral harmony in the whole system of the universe, in the usual order of destiny, and certain violent and formidable exceptions may astonish the mind; but they are so terrifying to the imagination that the habitual disposition of the soul cannot benefit by them. Let us rather,” continued Corinne, “go and see the pyramid of Cestius: the Protestants who die here are all buried around this pyramid, which affords them a mild, tolerant, and liberal



asylum.” “Yes,” answered Oswald, “it is there that several of my fellow-countrymen have found their last retreat. Let us go thither; and thus, at least, it may happen that I shall never quit you.”—Corinne shuddered at these words, and her hand trembled as she supported herself upon the arm of Lord Nelville—“I am better, much better,” said he, “since I have known you.”—The countenance of Corinne was lighted up anew with that sweet and tender joy which it was accustomed to express.



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Cestius presided over the Roman games. His name is not to be found in history; but it is rendered illustrious by his tomb. The massive pyramid which encloses his ashes, defends his death from that oblivion which has entirely effaced his life. Aurelian, fearing that this pyramid might be employed as a fortress to attack Rome, has caused it to be enclosed within the walls which are yet standing, not as useless ruins, but as the actual enclosure of the modern city. It is said that the form of the pyramid is in imitation of the flame which ascends from a funeral pyre. It is certain that this mysterious form attracts the eye and gives a picturesque aspect to every perspective of which it forms a part. Opposite this pyramid is Mount Testaceo, under which there are extremely cool grottos where feasts are given in summer. The festivals of Rome are not disturbed at the sight of tombs. The pines and the cypresses which are perceived at various distances in the smiling country of Italy, are also pregnant with solemn remembrances; and this contrast produces the same effect as the verses of Horace,

—moriture Delli

Linquenda tellus, et domus, et placens
Uxor,[18]

in the midst of poetry consecrated to every enjoyment upon earth. The ancients have always felt that the idea of death has its pleasures: it is recalled by love and by festivals, and the most lively emotion of joy seems to increase even from the idea of the shortness of life.

Corinne and Nelville returned from the walk among the tombs, along the banks of the Tiber.—Once it was covered with vessels and bordered with palaces; once even its inundations were regarded as presages; it was the prophetic river, the tutelary Deity of Rome[19]. At present, one would say that it rolled its tide through a land of shadows; so solitary does it seem, so livid do its waters appear. The finest monuments of the arts, the most admirable statues have been thrown into the Tiber, and are concealed beneath its waves. Who knows whether, in order to find them, the river will not one day be turned from its bed? But when we think that the masterpieces of human genius are perhaps there before us, and that a more piercing eye would behold them through the waves—we feel that indescribable emotion which incessantly arises at Rome, under various forms, and creates a society for the mind in physical objects which every where else are dumb.

FOOTNOTES:

[18]



Dellius thou must die-----

Thou must quit thy land, thy home, and thy beloved wife.

[19] PLIN. *Hist. Natur.* L. iii. Tiberis ... quamlibet magnorum navium ex Italo mari capax, rerum in toto orbe nascentium mercator placidissimus, pluribus probe solus quam ceteri in omnibus terris amnes accolitur aspiciturque villis. Nullique fluviorum minus licet, inclusis utrinque lateribus: nec tamen ipse pugnat, quamquam creber ac subitis incrementis, et nusquam magis aquis quam in ipsa urbe stagnantibus. Quin imo vates intelligitur potius ac monitor auctu semper religiosus verius quam saevus.



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Chapter iii.

Raphael has said that modern Rome was almost entirely built with the ruins of the ancient city, and it is certain that we cannot take a step here without being struck by some relics of antiquity. We perceive the *eternal walls*, to use the expression of Pliny, through the work of the later centuries; the Roman edifices almost all bear a historical stamp; in them may be remarked, if we may so express it, the physiognomy of ages. From the Etruscans to our days, from that people, more ancient than the Romans themselves, and who resembled the Egyptians by the solidity of their works and the fantastical nature of their designs, from that people to Chevalier Bernini, an artist whose style resembles that of the Italian poets of the seventeenth century, we may observe the human mind at Rome, in the different characters of the arts, the edifices and the ruins. The middle ages, and the brilliant century of the Medici, re-appear before our eyes in their works, and this study of the past in objects present to our sight, penetrates us with the genius of the times. It was believed that Rome had formerly a mysterious name which was only known to a few adepts; it seems that it is yet necessary to be initiated into the secret of this city. It is not simply an assemblage of habitations, it is the history of the world, figured by divers emblems and represented under various forms.

Corinne agreed with Lord Nelville that they should go and visit together, the edifices of modern Rome, and reserve for another opportunity the admirable collections of pictures and statues which it contains. Perhaps, without accounting for it to herself, she desired to put off till the most distant day possible, those objects which people cannot dispense with seeing at Rome; for who has ever quitted it without having contemplated the Apollo Belvedere and the pictures of Raphael? This guarantee, weak as it was, that Oswald should not leave her, pleased her imagination. Is there not an element of pride some one will ask, in endeavouring to retain the object of our love by any other means than the real sentiment itself? I really do not know; but the more we love, the less we trust to the sentiment we inspire; and whatever may be the cause which secures the presence of the object who is dear to us, we always embrace it joyfully. There is often much vanity in a certain species of boldness, and if charms, generally admired, like those of Corinne, possess a real advantage, it is because they permit us to place our pride to the account of the sentiment we feel rather than to that which we inspire.

Corinne and Nelville began their observations by the most remarkable of the numerous churches of Rome—they are all decorated with ancient magnificence; but something gloomy and fantastical is mingled with that beautiful marble and those festival ornaments which have been taken from the Pagan temples. Pillars of porphyry and granite were so numerous in Rome that they have lavishly distributed them, scarcely considering them of any value. At St John Lateran, that church so famous for the councils that have been held in it, are found such a quantity of marble pillars that many of them have been covered with a cement of plaster to make pilasters, so indifferent have they become to these riches from their multitude.



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Some of these pillars were in the tomb of Adrian, others at the Capitol; these latter still bear on their capitals the figures of the geese which saved the Roman people. Some of these pillars support Gothic, and others Arabian ornaments. The urn of Agrippa conceals the ashes of a Pope; for even the dead have yielded place to other dead, and the tombs have almost as often changed their masters as the abodes of the living.

Near St John Lateran is the holy stair-case, transported, it is said, from Jerusalem to Rome. It may only be ascended kneeling. Caesar himself, and Claudius also, mounted on their knees the stair-case which conducted to the Temple of the Capitoline Jove. On one side of St John Lateran is the font where it is said that Constantine was baptised. —In the middle of the square is seen an obelisk, which is perhaps the most ancient monument in the world—an obelisk cotemporary with the Trojan war!—an obelisk which the barbarous Cambyses respected so much that in honour of it he put a stop to the conflagration of a city!—an obelisk for which a king pledged the life of his only son!—The Romans have, miraculously, brought this pillar to Italy from the lowest part of Egypt. —They turned the Nile from its course in order that it might seek it, and transport it to the sea. This obelisk is still covered with hieroglyphics which have preserved their secret during so many ages, and which to this day defy the most learned researches. The Indians, the Egyptians, the antiquity of antiquity, might perhaps be revealed to us by these signs.—The wonderful charm of Rome is not only the real beauty of its monuments; but the interest which it inspires by exciting thought; and this kind of interest increases every day with each new study.

One of the most singular churches of Rome, is that of St Paul: its exterior is like a badly built barn, and the interior is ornamented with eighty pillars of so fine a marble and so exquisite a make, that one would believe they belonged to an Athenian temple described by Pausanias. Cicero said—*We are surrounded by the vestiges of history,*—if he said so then, what shall we say now?

The pillars, the statues, the bas-reliefs of ancient Rome, are so lavished in the churches of the modern city, that there is one (St Agnes) where bas-reliefs, turned, serve for the steps of a stair-case, without any one having taken the trouble to examine what they represented. What an astonishing aspect would ancient Rome offer now, if the marble pillars and the statues had been left in the same place where they were found! The ancient city would still have remained standing almost entire—but would the men of our day dare to walk in it?



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The palaces of the great lords are extremely vast, of an architecture often very fine, and always imposing: but the interior ornaments are rarely tasteful; we do not find in them even an idea of those elegant apartments which the finished enjoyments of social life have given rise to elsewhere. These vast abodes of the Roman princes are empty and silent; the lazy inhabitants of these superb palaces retire into a few small chambers unperceived, and leave strangers to survey their magnificent galleries where the finest pictures of the age of Leo X. are collected together. The great Roman lords of the present day, are as unacquainted with the pompous luxury of their ancestors, as these ancestors themselves were with the austere virtues of the Roman republic. The country houses convey still more the idea of this solitude, of this indifference of the possessors in the midst of the most admirable abodes in the world. People may walk in these immense gardens without suspecting that they have a master. The grass grows in the middle of the walks, and in these very walks are trees fantastically cut according to the ancient taste that prevailed in France.—What a singular whimsicality is this neglect of the necessary, and affectation of the useless!—But one is often surprised at Rome, and in the greater part of the other cities of Italy, at the taste of the Italians for extravagant ornaments,—they who have incessantly before their eyes the noble simplicity of the antique. They love what is brilliant, much better than what is elegant and commodious. They have in every instance, the advantages and the inconveniences of not living habitually in society. Their luxury is rather that of the imagination, than the luxury of actual enjoyment;—isolated as they are among themselves, they cannot dread the spirit of ridicule, which seldom penetrates at Rome into domestic secrecy; and often, in contrasting the interior with the exterior of their palaces, one would say, that the greater part of the Italian nobility arrange their dwellings more to dazzle the passers-by than to receive their friends.

After having surveyed the churches and the palaces, Corinne conducted Oswald to the villa Mellini, a solitary garden, without any other ornament than its magnificent trees. From here is seen, at a distance, the chain of the Appenines; the transparency of the air colours these mountains and throws them forward in the perspective, giving them a most picturesque appearance. Oswald and Corinne remained in this spot to enjoy the charms of the sky and the tranquillity of nature. It is impossible to form an idea of this singular tranquillity without having lived in Southern countries. On a hot day there is not felt the lightest breath of wind. The feeblest blade of grass is perfectly still, and the animals themselves partake of the indolence which the fine weather inspires: in the middle of the day, you neither hear the hum of flies, the chirping of grasshoppers, nor the song of birds; no object fatigues itself with useless and trifling agitation; all sleep till storm or the passions awaken the vehemence of nature, who then rushes with impetuosity from her profound repose.



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There are in the gardens of Rome, a great number of trees clad in perennial green, which heighten the illusion produced by the mildness of the climate during winter. Pines, of a particular elegance, large, tufted towards the top, and interwoven with one another, form a kind of plain in the air, whose effect is charming when we mount sufficiently high to perceive it. The lower trees are placed beneath the shelter of this verdant vault. Two palm trees only are found in Rome which are both planted in the gardens of the monks; one of them, placed upon an eminence, serves as a landmark, and a particular pleasure must always be felt in perceiving and retracing in the various perspectives of Rome, this deputy of Africa, this type of a Southern climate more burning still than that of Italy, and which awakens so many new ideas and sensations.

“Do you not find,” said Corinne, contemplating with Oswald the country surrounding them; “that nature in Italy disposes us more to reverie than any where else?—It might be said, that she is here more in affinity with man, and that the Creator uses her as a medium of interpretation between his creature and himself.” “Undoubtedly,” replied Oswald, “I think so; but who knows whether it may not be the deep feelings of tenderness which you excite in my heart, that render me sensible to all I see?—You reveal to me the emotions and thoughts, which external objects can give birth to. I existed but in my heart; you have awakened my imagination. But this magic of the universe, which you teach me to know, will never present me with any thing more lovely than your look, more moving than your voice.” “May the sentiment I now inspire you with, last as long as my life,” said Corinne, “or at least, may my life never survive the power of inspiring it!”

Oswald and Corinne terminated their tour of Rome by the Borghese villa. Of all the Roman gardens and palaces, here the splendours of nature and the arts, are assembled with the greatest taste and brilliancy. Here are seen trees of every kind, and magnificent fountains; an incredible number of statues, vases, and antique sarcophagi, mingled with the freshness of the youthful nature of the South. The ancient mythology here seems revived; the naiades are placed on the borders of rivers, the nymphs in woods worthy of them, the tombs beneath Elysian shades, and the statue of Esculapius in the middle of an isle, while that of Venus appears to rise out of the waters: Ovid and Virgil might walk in this enchanting spot, and still believe themselves in the Augustan age. The masterpieces of sculpture which the palace contains, give it a magnificence ever new. At a distance, through the trees, is perceived the city of Rome and St Peter’s, the Campagna, and those long arches, the wrecks of aqueducts, which conveyed the springs from the mountains into ancient Rome. Everything is there that can excite thought, delight the imagination, and foster reverie. The most pure sensations are confounded with the pleasures of the soul, and give an idea of perfect happiness; but when we ask why this charming abode is not inhabited? they answer you that the malaria (*la cattiva aria*) will not permit any one to live here during summer.



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This malaria, in a manner, lays siege to Rome; it advances every year some steps farther, and they are obliged to abandon the most charming habitations to its empire: undoubtedly, the absence of trees in the country about the city, is one of the causes of it; and it is perhaps, on that account, that the ancient Romans consecrated the woods to goddesses, in order to make them respected by the people. At present, forests without number have been cut down;—can there indeed exist, in our days, any place so sanctified, that the avidity of man will spare it from the work of devastation? The malaria is the scourge of the inhabitants of Rome, and threatens the city with an entire depopulation; but perhaps it increases the effect produced by the superb gardens which are seen within the walls of Rome. The malign influence is not felt by any external sign; you breathe an air which seems pure, and is very agreeable; the earth is smiling and fertile; a delicious coolness refreshes you in the evening after the burning heat of the day; and all this is death!

“I love,” said Oswald to Corinne, “this mysterious, invisible danger, this danger under the form of the sweetest impressions. If death be only, what I believe it to be, a summons to a happier existence, why should not the perfume of flowers, the umbrage of fine trees, and the refreshing breath of the evening breeze, be the bearers of that summons? Undoubtedly, governments ought to watch in every way over the preservation of human life; but there are secrets in nature which the imagination alone can penetrate; and I easily conceive that neither the inhabitants nor the strangers who visit it, are disgusted with Rome, by the species of peril to which they are exposed there during the most beautiful seasons of the year.”

Book vi.

THE MANNERS AND CHARACTER OF THE ITALIANS.

[Illustration]

Chapter i.

The indecision of Oswald's character, increased by his misfortunes, led him to dread forming any irrevocable resolve. He had not even dared, in his state of irresolution, to ask of Corinne the secret of her name and destiny; nevertheless, his love acquired every day new strength; he never beheld her without emotion; in company he could hardly quit, even for an instant, the place where she was seated; she did not speak a word that he felt not; nor did she experience one moment's sadness or gaiety, that was not reflected in his countenance. But in the midst of his admiration and of his love for Corinne, he recollected how little such a woman agreed with the English manner of living; how much she differed from the idea which his father had formed of her whom it



would be proper for him to espouse; and all that he said to Corinne partook of the trouble and constraint which these reflections caused him.

Corinne perceived this too well; but it would have cost her so much to break off with Lord Nelville, that she herself endeavoured to avoid, as much as he, a decisive explanation; and as she was not possessed of much foresight she was happy with the present, such as it was, although it was impossible for her to know what would be the issue of it.



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She had become entirely divided from the world, in order to devote herself entirely to her passion for Oswald. But at length, so much affected was she at his silence with regard to the future, that she resolved to accept an invitation for a ball to which she had been pressingly solicited. Nothing is more common at Rome than to leave society and to appear in it again, alternately, just as the parties feel it agreeable to themselves: it is the country where people trouble their minds the least with what is elsewhere called *gossip*; each one does as he pleases, without any person enquiring about it, or at least, without finding in others any obstacle either to his love or his ambition. The Romans are as inattentive to the conduct of their fellow-countrymen, as to that of strangers, who pass and repass through their city, the rendezvous of Europeans. When Lord Nelville knew that Corinne was going to the ball, he was vexed at it. He thought he had perceived in her for some time a melancholy disposition in sympathy with his own: all on a sudden she appeared to him to be taken up with dancing, an art in which she excelled; and her imagination seemed fired at the approach of a *fete*. Corinne was not frivolous by character; but she felt herself every day more and more enslaved by her love for Oswald, and she would fain endeavour to weaken its force. She knew by experience, that reflection and sacrifices have less effect upon passionate characters than dissipation, and she thought that reason did not consist in conquering ourselves according to rules, but by doing so how we can.

“I must,” said she to Lord Nelville, who reproached her with her intention of going to the ball, “I must know, however, if there be only you in the world who can fill the void of my life; if that which pleased me formerly may not still have the power to amuse me; and if the sentiment you have inspired me with must absorb every other interest, every other idea.”—“You would then cease to love me?” replied Oswald.—“No;” answered Corinne, “but it is only in domestic life that it could be pleasing to me to feel thus governed by a single affection. To me who need my talents, my mind, and my imagination, to support the lustre of that kind of life which I have adopted, it must be painful—extremely painful to love as I love you.”—“You would not sacrifice to me then,” said Oswald to her, “this homage and this glory.”—“Of what importance can it be to you,” said Corinne, “to know whether or not I would sacrifice them to you? Since we are not absolutely destined for one another, it would not be prudent to let that happiness with which I must be satisfied, wither for ever.”—Lord Nelville made no answer, because it was necessary, in expressing his sentiments, to avow also the purpose they inspired, and of this his own heart was still in ignorance. He was silent therefore, and sighing, followed Corinne to the ball, whither he went with much reluctance.



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It was the first time since his calamity that he had seen a large assembly; and the tumult of a *fete* caused him such an impression of sadness that he remained a long time in a room contiguous to that appropriated for the ball, his head supported on his hand, not even curious to behold Corinne dance. He listened to the festive music, which like every other music, produces reverie, though only intended to inspire joy. The Count d'Erfeuil arrived, quite enchanted at the sight of a ball, which produced in him some recollections of France.—“I have tried all I could,” said he to Lord Nelville, “to discover something interesting in these ruins of which they talk so much, and I can really find no charm in them. It must be the effect of a very great prejudice to admire those heaps of rubbish covered with thorns. I shall speak my mind of them when I return to Paris, for it is time that this Italian delusion should cease. There is not a monument now standing whole in any part of Europe, that I would not sooner see than those old stumps of pillars, those bas-reliefs, all black with time, which can only be admired by dint of erudition. A pleasure which must be bought with so much study, does not appear to me very lively in itself—to be charmed with the sights of Paris, nobody need grow pale over books.” Lord Nelville made no reply.—The Count interrogated him afresh, as to the impression that Rome produced on him. “In the midst of a ball,” said Oswald, “is not the most proper time for serious conversation on this subject; and you know that I am incapable of any other.”—“Well and good:” replied the Count d'Erfeuil, “I am more gay than you I admit; but who knows whether I am not also the more wise of the two? Believe me, there is much philosophy in my apparent levity: it is the way we should take life.”—“You are perhaps in the right,” answered Oswald, “but it is from nature, and not from reflection, that you acquire that way of thinking; and that is why your manner of taking life may only suit yourself.”

The Count d'Erfeuil heard the name of Corinne mentioned in the ball room, and entered it to know what was going forward. Lord Nelville advanced as far as the door, and beheld the Prince Amalfi, a Neapolitan of the most handsome figure, who besought Corinne to dance with him the *Tarantula*, a Neapolitan dance full of grace and originality. The friends of Corinne besought her also to comply with his request. She yielded to their desire without waiting to be asked frequently, which astonished the Count d'Erfeuil, accustomed as he was to the refusals with which it is customary to precede consenting to a request of this nature. But in Italy, these kind of graces are unknown, and all believe they please most in society by showing an eagerness to do what is asked of them. Corinne would have invented this natural behaviour if she were not already accustomed to it. The dress she had chosen for the ball was elegant and light; her hair was gathered



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up in a fillet of silk, after the Italian fashion; and her eyes expressed a lively pleasure, which rendered her more seductive than ever. Oswald was disturbed at this; he warred against himself; he was indignant at being captivated with charms which he ought to lament, since, far from thinking to please him, it was to escape his empire that Corinne appeared so attractive.—But who could resist the seductions of a grace like hers? Were she even disdainful, she would be still more omnipotent; and that certainly was not the disposition of Corinne. She perceived Lord Nelville, and blushed, while there was in her eyes as she looked upon him, a most enchanting softness.

The Prince d'Amalfi accompanied himself, in dancing, with castanets. Corinne before she began saluted the assembly most gracefully with both her hands, then turning round upon her heel took the tambourine which the Prince Amalfi presented her with. She then began to dance, striking the air upon the tambourine, and there was in all her motions, an agility, a grace, a mixture of modesty and voluptuousness, which might give an idea of that power which the Bayadores exercise over the imagination of the Indians, when, if we may use the expression, they are almost poets in their dance; when they express so many different sentiments by the characteristic steps and the enchanting pictures which they offer to the sight. Corinne was so well acquainted with all the attitudes which the ancient painters and sculptors have represented, that by a light movement of her arms, sometimes in placing the tambourine over her head, sometimes forward, with one of her hands, whilst the other ran over the little bells with an incredible dexterity, she recalled to mind the dancers of Herculaneam[20], and gave birth successively to a crowd of new ideas for painting and design.

It was not the French style, characterised by the elegance and difficulty of the step; it was a talent more connected with imagination and sentiment. The character of the music was alternately expressed by the exactitude and softness of the movements. Corinne, in dancing, conveyed to the souls of her spectators what was passing in her own. The same as in her improvisation, her performance on the lyre, or the efforts of her pencil,—she reduced everything to language. The musicians, in beholding her, exerted themselves to make the genius of their art felt more exquisitely; a kind of passionate joy, a sensibility of the imagination, electrified all the spectators of the magic dance, and transported them to that state of ideal existence in which we dream of happiness that does not exist in this world.



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There is a part of this Neapolitan dance when the lady kneels, whilst the gentleman moves round her, not as a master, but as a conqueror.—What at this moment were the charms and dignity of Corinne. How regal, even in kneeling, did she appear! And when she arose, striking her aerial cymbal, she seemed animated with that lively enthusiasm of youth and beauty, which would create a belief that nothing was wanting to complete her happiness. Alas! it was far otherwise; but Oswald feared it, and sighed in the midst of his admiration of Corinne, as if each triumph of her genius was a degree of separation from him: at the conclusion of the dance, the gentleman kneels in his turn, and the lady dances round him. Corinne in this part, if it were possible, surpassed herself; her step was so light, as she tripped two or three times round the same circle, that her buskined feet seemed to fly over the floor with the velocity of lightning; and when she lifted up one of her hands, shaking the tambourine, while with the other she motioned the Prince Amalfi to rise, all the male part of the company were tempted to throw themselves on their knees too, except Oswald, who retired a few paces backward, and the Count d'Erfeuil, who advanced a few paces forward to compliment Corinne. This enthusiasm of the Italians was by no means assumed, but was the spontaneous effect of their feelings. They are not sufficiently practised in society and in self-esteem to pay much regard to the effect which their actions will produce; they never let themselves be thwarted in their pleasures by vanity, nor turned aside from the object of their pursuit by applause.

Corinne was charmed at her success, and thanked all her admirers with the most simple grace.—The satisfaction she felt at having succeeded so well, appeared beneath a veil of modesty; but her chief anxiety was to make her way through the crowd, in order to reach the door against which the pensive Oswald was leaning. When she had reached the spot, she paused to hear what he would say to her:—“Corinne,” said he, endeavouring to conceal his captivation as well as the pain that he felt: “Corinne, I hope you have met with sufficient homage and sufficient applause; but in the midst of these enthusiastic admirers, have you found one certain and courageous friend—one protector for life? Can this vain tumult of applause satisfy a heart like thine?”

FOOTNOTE:

[20] It is the dance of Mm. Recamier that gave me the idea of what I have attempted to describe. This woman, so celebrated for her grace and beauty, offers in the midst of her misfortunes the example of so touching a resignation, and of such a total oblivion of her personal interests, that her moral qualities seem to everyone as remarkable as her accomplishments.

Chapter ii.



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Corrine was prevented by the crowd from making any answer to Lord Nelville. They were going to the supper room, and each *cavaliere servente* was hastening to seat himself by the side of his partner. A strange lady entered when all the seats were occupied, and no gentleman, except Lord Nelville and Count d'Erfeuil, made her an offer of his. This was not the effect of impoliteness or of egotism; but the idea which the great Roman lords entertain of honour and duty, is not to stir one step, nor be absent one moment from their ladies. Some who were unable to find seats, stood behind the chairs of their mistresses, ready to wait upon them at the least signal. The ladies only conversed with their gallants; strangers wandered unnoticed about the circle; for the ladies in Italy are unacquainted with coquetry, nor does any vain triumph of self-love ever introduce itself into their tender attachments. They have no desire to please any other than him who possesses their affection; you can never engage their minds before you have interested their hearts or pleased their eyes, and frequently the most sudden beginnings of passion are followed by a sincere devotion, and even a very long constancy. In Italy, infidelity is more severely condemned in man than in woman. Three or four gentlemen, under different titles, are followers of the same lady, who leads them about with her, often without even concerning herself to mention their names to the master of the house who receives them. One is the favoured suitor—the other he who aspires to be so—a third is called the sufferer (*il patito*); this latter is absolutely disdained, but nevertheless, permitted to continue his adoration; and all these rivals live peaceably together. The use of the poignard now only survives among the common people. There is in this country a whimsical mixture of simplicity and depravity, dissimulation and truth, sincerity and revenge, weakness and resolution, which can only be explained by constant observation; the reason being that their good qualities proceed from the fact that nothing is done from vanity, and their bad ones from the fact that they will do a great deal for interest, whether that interest be allied to love, to ambition, or to fortune.

Distinctions of rank have in general little effect in Italy; this is not from philosophy, but their facility of character and familiarity of manners. This accounts for the little influence of aristocratic prejudices amongst them; for as society does not pretend to judge of anything, it embraces the opinions of all.

After supper the company betook themselves to play. Some ladies preferred the game of hazard, whilst others chose the silent one of whist; and not a word was heard pronounced in that room which so lately was filled with noise. The inhabitants of the south often pass from the greatest agitation to the most profound repose: another contrasted part of their character is indolence united to the most unwearied

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activity. In any individual instance among these people, we must beware of judging upon a first observation, since we find in them the most opposite qualities: if at one moment they are prudent, perhaps in the next they show themselves the boldest of men; if they appear indolent, it is only because they are reposing after some exertion, or preparing for another: their soul loses none of its force in society, but is most probably concentrating all its energies for decisive circumstances.

In this Roman assembly of which Oswald and Corinne formed a part, there were men who lost enormous sums at play, without betraying in their countenances the slightest emotion. Had these men been relating some facts of trifling importance, they would have exhibited the most lively expression and the most animated gestures; but when their passions arrive at a certain pitch of violence, they dread the eye of observation, and nearly always conceal them beneath a veil of silence and apparent apathy.

The scene of the ball was impressed upon Lord Nelville's memory, associated with bitter resentment; for he feared that the enthusiasm of the Italians had, at least for a moment, robbed him of the affection of Corinne. This rendered him very unhappy; but pride whispered him to conceal it, or discover it only by expressing contempt for the suffrages of those who had flattered the dazzling accomplishments of his mistress. He was invited by the company to make one at play, but he refused. Corinne did the same, and motioned him to come and sit down by her. Oswald expressed himself uneasy, lest he should expose Corinne to observation by thus passing the whole evening with her in company. "Make yourself easy on that score," said she, "nobody will trouble their heads with us: it is the custom here for people to do as they please in company; we have no established, ceremonious forms to lay one another under an unpleasant restraint, nor do we exact any formal attention; a general polite disposition is all that is expected. This is not, certainly, a country where liberty exists such as you understand the term in England; but we enjoy here a perfect independence in society." "That is to say," replied Oswald, "you show a complete disregard for manners." "At least," interrupted Corinne, "we show no hypocrisy. M. de la Rochefoucault has said, '*coquetry is the least of a woman's defects*': in truth, whatever may be the faults of women in Italy, they do not seek to hide them by dissimulation. And if the sacredness of marriage be not here sufficiently respected, it is at least with the consent of both parties."



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“It is not from sincerity that this kind of frankness proceeds,” replied Oswald, “but from indifference to public opinion. When I arrived here, I had a letter of recommendation to a princess, which I gave to my Italian servant to deliver; he said to me, ‘*Sir, it will be of no use to deliver this letter now, for the princess sees nobody; she is INAMORATA;*’ and this state of being *in love*, is announced with as much indifference as any other situation incidental to our existence. This publicity cannot be palliated by the plea of extraordinary vehemence of passion; several attachments of this sort succeed each other, and are of equal notoriety. So little are women given to mystery in this respect, that they avow their connections with less embarrassment than those of our country would feel in speaking of their husbands. It is easy to believe that no profound or delicate sentiment is mixed with this sensibility of passion, divested of modesty. Hence it happens that in this nation, where nothing is thought of but love, there is not a single romance; because love is here so rapid and so public that it affords no interesting developments; and to give a true picture of general manners in this respect, it would be necessary to begin and terminate it in the first page. Pardon me, Corinne,” cried Lord Nelville, observing the pain that he gave her; “you are an Italian, and that thought ought to disarm me; but one of the causes of that incomparable grace which distinguishes you, is the union of all the characteristic charms of different nations. I know not in what country you have been brought up; but it appears to me certain, that you have not passed your whole life in Italy—perhaps in England itself—Ah, Corinne! if that were so, how could you have quitted that sanctuary of modesty and delicacy, for these regions, where not only virtue, but love itself, is so badly understood? It is breathed in the air; but does it penetrate the heart? Your poetry, in which love performs so principal a part, possesses considerable grace, and much imagination; it is ornamented with brilliant pictures, whose colours are lively and voluptuous. But where will you find that tender, melancholy sentiment, which animates our poetry? What have you that can be put in comparison with the scene between Belvidera and her husband, in OTWAY; or with that in SHAKESPEARE, between Romeo and Juliet? But above all, what have you to compare with those admirable lines of THOMSON, in his ‘Spring,’ where he paints in such noble and affecting traits, the happiness of love, when sanctioned by marriage? Have you any such marriage in Italy? And can love exist where there is no domestic felicity? Is it not this happiness which the heart seeks, as possession is the object of sensual passion? Do not all young and beautiful women resemble each other, unless the qualities of the mind and soul determine a preference? And what desire is excited by all these qualities? Marriage. That is to say, the association of every thought, and of every sentiment. Illicit love, when unfortunately it exists amongst us, is, if it may be so expressed, only a reflection of marriage. In such connections, that happiness is sought for, which the wanderer cannot find at home; and infidelity itself is more moral in England than marriage in Italy.”



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These words were hard: they deeply wounded the sensibility of Corinne; who, rising immediately, her eyes filled with tears, quitted the room and returned directly home. Oswald was distracted at having offended her; but it was the irritation of his mind, occasioned by the impression she made in the ball, which had betrayed itself in the remarks that had just escaped him. He followed her to her abode; but she refused to see him. He called again the next morning, but in vain: her door was closed against him. This protracted refusal to receive Lord Nelville, was not agreeable to the disposition of Corinne; but she was painfully afflicted at the opinion he had expressed of the Italian women; and this very opinion induced her to form a determination of concealing, for the future, if possible, the sentiment that preyed on her heart.

Oswald, on his side, found, in this instance, that the behaviour of Corinne was not consistent with her natural simplicity, and he became confirmed more and more in the discontent with which the ball had inspired him; and a disposition of mind was excited from these circumstances, capable of struggling against the passion whose empire he dreaded. His principles were rigid, and the mystery which enveloped the past life of her whom he loved, afflicted him intensely. The manners of Corinne appeared to him most fascinating, but sometimes too much animated by the universal desire of pleasing. He discovered much nobleness and reserve in her conversation and deportment; but she seemed to indulge in too much latitude of opinion. In fact, Oswald was a captivated man, hurried away by the passion he felt for his accomplished mistress, but cherishing in his breast an opponent which combated his feelings. Such a situation of mind is frequently attended with much bitterness. We are dissatisfied with ourselves, and with others. We suffer, and feel at the same time that our suffering ought to increase, or at least terminate in a violent explanation, by which one of those two sentiments that lacerate the heart must obtain a complete triumph.

It was in such a state of mind as this that Lord Nelville wrote to Corinne. His letter was harsh and ungentlemanly. He felt this; but various confused emotions impelled him to send it: he was rendered so wretched by these internal conflicts, that he wished, at all hazards, for some circumstance or other to terminate them.

A report, which had just been communicated to him by the Count d'Erfeuil, though he did not give credence to it, contributed perhaps to give more asperity to his expressions. It was noised about Rome, that Corinne was about to marry the Prince Amalfi. Oswald knew very well that she did not love him, and of course concluded that the events of the ball afforded the only foundation for such a report; but he was convinced that she had been at home to the Prince on the morning when he himself was refused admission; and too proud to discover the slightest sentiment of jealousy, he satisfied his discontent by denigrating the nation, for which he beheld with so much pain, Corinne's predilection.



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Chapter iii.

Oswald's Letter to Corinne.

January 24, 1795.

“You refuse to see me; you are offended at our conversation of the night before last; and you have doubtless formed an intention to open your doors in future only to your own countrymen, meaning probably by this means, to expiate the fault you have committed in admitting to your society a man of another nation. However, far from repenting my sincerity with respect to the Italians, far from regretting the observations which I made to you, whom, deluded by phantoms, I wished to consider as an Englishwoman, I will venture to predict more strongly still, that you will find neither happiness nor dignity should you make choice of a husband from that society by which you are surrounded. I know not the Italian worthy of you; there is not one by whose alliance you could be honoured, let him be invested with whatever title he may. Men in Italy are much less estimable than women; for they possess the defects of the women, in addition to their own. Will you persuade me, that these inhabitants of the South, who so pusillanimously shrink from pain, and pursue the phantom of pleasure with so much avidity, can be susceptible of love? Have you not seen (I have the fact from you) the very last month, an Italian husband at the play, who but eight days before had lost his wife, and a wife whom he pretended to love? They are here not more eager to remove the dead from their sight than to efface the remembrance of them from their mind. The funeral ceremonies are attended to by the priests, as the rites of love are performed by the attendant Cavaliers: ceremonial and custom supply the place of regret and enthusiasm. Lastly, and it is this that principally destroys love, the men of Italy are incapable of inspiring the women with any kind of respect: the latter do not feel obliged by the submission of the former, because their character is not dignified with firmness, nor their life with serious occupation. In order that nature and social order may appear in all their beauty, man must be the protector, and woman the protected; but the protector must adore that weakness which he defends, and reverence the helpless deity, who, like the household gods of the ancients, brings happiness to his home. So it might almost be said, that every woman is a Sultan, having at her command a seraglio of men.

The men are here distinguished by that softness and pliability of character, which properly belongs to women. An Italian proverb says: *‘who knows not how to feign, knows not how to live.’* Is not that a woman’s proverb? In truth, how can the manly character be formed upon true principles of dignity and strength, in a country which affords no military career of glory, which contains no free institutions? Hence it is, that they direct their minds to all the little arts of cunning; they treat life like a game of chess, in which success is everything.



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All that remains to them from antiquity, is something gigantic in their expressions and in their external magnificence; but this baseless grandeur is frequently accompanied by all that is vulgar in taste, and miserably negligent in domestic life. Is this, Corinne, the nation which you would be expected to prefer to every other? Is this the nation whose roaring applauses are so necessary to you, that every other destiny would appear dull and congenial compared with their noisy '*bravos*'? Who could flatter himself with being able to render you happy away from these dear scenes of tumult? What an inconceivable character is that of Corinne! profound in sentiment, but frivolous in taste; independent from innate pride, yet servile from the need of distraction! She is a sorceress whose spells alternately alarm and then allay the fears which they have created; who dazzles our view in native sublimity, and then, all of a sudden disappears from that region where she is without her like, to lose herself in an indiscriminate crowd. Corinne, Corinne, he who is your adorer cannot help feeling his love disturbed by fear!

"OSWALD."

Corinne, on reading this letter, was much incensed at the inveterate prejudices which Oswald appeared to entertain of her country. But she was happy enough in her conjectures, to discover that she owed this to the dissatisfaction he experienced at the *fete*, and to her refusing to see him ever since after his final conversation on that evening; and this reflection softened a little the painful impression which the letter produced upon her. She hesitated for some time, or at least, fancied she hesitated, as to the conduct which she should observe towards him. The tenderness she cherished for this eccentric lover, induced a wish to see him; but it was extremely painful to her that he should imagine her to be desirous of marrying him, although their fortunes were at least equal, and although in revealing her name, it would be easy to show that it was by no means inferior to that of Lord Nelville. Nevertheless, the independence and singularity of that mode of life which she had adopted, ought to have inspired her with a disinclination for marriage; and most assuredly she would have repulsed the idea, had not her passion blinded her to the sufferings she would have to undergo in espousing an Englishman and renouncing Italy.

We willingly make an offering of pride upon the altar of the heart; but when social prosperity and worldly interests oppose obstacles in any shape, when we can suppose that the object of our love makes any sort of sacrifice in uniting himself to us, it is no longer possible to show him any alteration of sentiment. Corinne not being equal to a determination to break off with Oswald, wished to persuade herself of the possibility of seeing him in future, and yet concealing the passion which she felt for him. It was in this intention that she came to a determination to confine herself, in the answer she should send to his letter, merely to his unjust accusations against the Italian nation, and to reason with him upon this subject as if it were the only one that interested her.

Perhaps the best way in which a woman of intellect can resume her coldness and dignity, is by seeking an asylum in her own mind.



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Corinne to Lord Nelville.

Jan. 15, 1795.

“Did your letter, my lord, concern only me, I should not have attempted the task of self-justification: my character is so easy to know, that he who might not be able to comprehend it by himself, would derive little aid in his scrutiny by any explanation that I could give him on the subject. The virtuous reserve of the English women, and the graceful art of the French, take my word for it, often serve to conceal one half of what is passing in their souls: that which you are pleased to distinguish in me by the name of magic, is nothing but a sort of transparency of mind, which allows its different sentiments and opposing thoughts to be seen without labouring to harmonize them; for that harmony, when it exists, is almost always assumed—most genuine characters being by nature inconsequent—but it is not of myself I wish to speak, it is of that unfortunate nation you so cruelly attack. Can it be my affection for my friends which has inspired you with this bitter malevolence? You know me too well to be jealous of me; indeed I have not the vanity to believe that a sentiment of this description could have sufficient power to transport you to such a degree of injustice. You repeat the opinion of every other foreigner upon the Italian character, when drawn from first impressions; but it requires deeper penetration, and a more patient scrutiny, to be able to form a correct judgment upon this country, which at different epochs has been so great. Whence comes it that this nation, under the Romans, has attained the highest military character in the world? that it has been the most jealous of its liberties, in the republics of the middle ages, and in the sixteenth century, the most illustrious in literature, and the arts and sciences? Has she not pursued glory under every form? And if now, alas! she can boast of none, why do you not rather accuse her political situation, since in other circumstances she has shown herself different?”

“I know not whether I deceive myself; but the wrongs of the Italians inspire me with no other sentiment than pity for their lot. Foreigners have in every age conquered and torn asunder this beautiful country, the perpetual object of their ambition; and yet foreigners bitterly reproach this nation, with the wrongs of a conquered and dismembered country? Europe is indebted to the Italians for the arts and sciences, and shall Europe, turning their own benefits against them, dispute with her benefactors the only species of renown which can distinguish a nation without either military strength or political liberty?”



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“It is so true that nations derive their character from the nature of their government, that in this same Italy, we behold a remarkable difference of manners in the different states that compose it. The Piedmontese, who formed a little national body, have a more martial spirit than all the rest of Italy; the Florentines, who have had the good fortune either to enjoy their liberty, or to be governed by liberal princes, are mild and enlightened; the Venetians and the Genoese, discover a genius for politics, because their government is a republican Aristocracy; the Milanese are remarkable for their sincerity, which character they have long since derived from the nations of the north; the Neapolitans might easily become a warlike people, because during several centuries they have been united under a government, very imperfect it is true, but yet a government of their own. The Roman nobility being totally unoccupied with either military or political pursuits, must in consequence become indolent and uninformed; but the ecclesiastics, having a career of emulation open before them, are much more enlightened and cultivated than the nobles, and as the papal government admits of no distinction of birth, and is purely elective in the clerical body, it begets a sort of liberality, not in ideas, but in habits, which renders Rome a most agreeable abode for those who have neither the prospect, nor the ambition of worldly eminence.

“The nations of the south more easily receive the impression of their political establishment than those of the north; they possess an indolence which soon softens into resignation, and nature offers them so many enjoyments, that they are easily consoled for the loss of those which society refuses them. There is certainly much depravity in Italy, and nevertheless civilisation is here in a much lower stage of development than that of other countries. There is something almost savage in the character of the Italians, notwithstanding their intellectual acuteness, which too much resembles that of the hunter in the art of surprising his prey. And indolent people easily acquire a cunning character; they possess a habit of gentleness which serves them, upon occasion, to dissimulate even their wrath: it is always by our usual manners that we succeed in concealing an unexpected situation.

“The Italians are sincere and faithful in the private intercourse of life. Interest and ambition exercise considerable sway among them; but pride and vanity none: the distinctions of rank produce little impression. They have no society, no salons, no fashions, no little daily methods of giving effect to minute circumstances. These habitual sources of dissimulation and envy exist not among them. When they deceive their enemies and their rivals, it is because they consider themselves in a state of warfare with them; but in other circumstances they are frank and ingenuous. It is this ingenuousness alone that has scandalised you respecting our women,



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who, hearing love constantly spoken of, and surrounded by its seductions and examples, conceal not their sentiments, and if it may be so expressed, give even, to gallantry a character of innocence; besides, they have no ridicule to dread from that society in which they live. Some of them are so ignorant that they cannot write; this they publicly avow, and answer a billet by means of their agent (*il paglietto*) in a formal style on official paper. But to make amends for this, among those who are well educated, you will find academy professors who give public lessons in a black scarf; and should this excite a smile, you would be answered, 'Is there any harm in knowing Greek? Is there any harm in earning one's living by one's own exertions? Why should so simple a matter provoke your mirth?'

"But now my lord, allow me to touch upon a more delicate subject; allow me to enquire the cause why our men display so little military ardour. They expose their lives freely when impelled by love and hatred; and a stab from a stiletto given or received in such a cause, excites neither astonishment nor dread. They fear not death when natural passions bid them brave its terrors; but often, it must be owned, they prefer life to political interests, which seldom affect them because they possess no national independence. Often too, that notion of honour which descends to us from the age of chivalry, has little power in a nation where opinion, and society by which opinion is formed, do not exist; it is a natural consequence of this disorganisation of every public authority, that women should attain that ascendancy which they here possess over the men, perhaps in too high a degree to respect and admire them. Nevertheless, the conduct of men towards women is full of delicacy and attention. The domestic virtues in England constitute female glory and happiness; but if there are countries where love exists outside the sacred ties of marriage; that one among these countries where female happiness excites the greatest attention and care, is Italy. Here men have invented moral duties for relations outside the bounds of morality itself; but at least in the division of these duties, they have been both just and generous: they considered themselves more guilty than women, when they broke the ties of love; because the latter had made the greater sacrifice and lost more. They conceive that before the tribunal of the heart, he is the most guilty who does the most injury. Men do wrong for want of feeling; but women through weakness of character. Society, which is at once rigorous and depraved—that is to say, without pity for errors when they entail misfortunes,—must be very severe upon women; but in a country which has no society, natural goodness of heart has freer exercise.



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“Ideas of consideration and dignity are, I agree, less powerful and even less known in Italy than any where else: the want of society and of public opinion is the cause of it: but notwithstanding all that may be said of the perfidy of the Italians, I maintain that there is not a country in the world where more sincerity is to be found. So far is this sincerity from being checked by vanity, that although that country be one of which foreigners speak most ill, there is no country where they meet with a more kindly reception. The Italians are reproached with being too much inclined to flattery; but it must be allowed in their favour, that generally, they lavish their soft expressions, not from design, but a real desire to please; nor can it be alleged that these expressions are ever falsified by their conduct. But it may be asked, would they be faithful to their friends in extraordinary circumstances, in which it might be necessary to brave for them the perils of adversity? A very small number, I must own, would be capable of such friendship; but this observation will not apply to Italy alone.

“The Italians are remarkable for that lassitude which distinguishes the eastern nations; but there are no men more active and persevering when once their passions are excited. These very women, too, whom you behold as indolent as the odalisks of a seraglio, upon some occasions give most striking proofs of attachment. There is something mysterious in the character and the imagination of the Italians, in whom you will find by turns, either unexpected traits of generosity and friendship, or gloomy and formidable proofs of hatred and revenge. They have no emulation, because life to them is only a pleasant summer’s dream; but give those men a purpose, and you will see them in six months, develop an unrivalled power of will and intelligence. It is the same with women: what ambition can they feel, to excel in education when the ignorance of the men renders them insensible to its value? By cultivating their minds their hearts would become isolated; but these very women would soon become worthy a man of superior mind, if such a man were the object of their tender affection[21].

“Everything here sleeps: but in a country where great interests are dead, repose and carelessness are more noble than a busy anxiety about trifling concerns.

“Even literature languishes in a country where thought is not renewed by the strong and varied action of life.—But what nation has testified more admiration for literature and the fine arts than Italy? We are informed by history, that the popes, the princes, and the people, have at all times paid to painters, poets, and distinguished writers, the most public homage. This enthusiastic veneration of talent is I confess, my lord, one of the first motives of my attachment to this country.—We do not find here that *blasee* imagination, that discouraging temper of mind, that despotic mediocrity,



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which in other countries so effectually torment and stifle natural genius.—A happy idea, sentiment, or expression, sets an audience on fire, if I may say so. By the same rule that talent holds the first rank amongst us, it excites considerable envy; Pergolese was assassinated for his *Stabat Mater*; Giorgione armed himself with a cuirass when he was obliged to paint in public; but the violent jealousy which talent inspires amongst us, is that which, in other nations, gives birth to power. This jealousy does not degrade its object; it may hate, proscribe, and kill, but it is nevertheless mingled with the fanaticism of admiration, and encourages genius, even in persecuting it. To conclude; when we see so much life in so confined a circle, in the midst of so many obstacles and so much subjection of every kind, we cannot avoid in my opinion taking the deepest interest in a people who inhale, with so much avidity, the little air which the loopholes of imagination allow to enter through the walls that confine them.

“That this confinement is such, I will not deny: nor that men rarely acquire in Italy that dignity, that boldness, which distinguishes free and military nations.—I will even admit my lord, if you choose, that the character of such nations is capable of inspiring women with more love and enthusiasm. But might it not also be possible, that a noble and interested man, cherishing the most rigid virtues, might unite in his character every quality that can excite love, without possessing those which promise happiness.

“CORINNE.”

FOOTNOTE:

[21] Mr Roscoe, author of the History of the Medici, has recently published an History of Leo X., which is truly a masterpiece in its kind, in which he relates all those marks of esteem and admiration, which the princes and the people of Italy have conferred on distinguished men of letters; he also shows, with impartiality, that the conduct of many of the Popes has been, in this respect, very liberal.

Chapter iv.

Corinne's letter made Oswald a second time repent the idea he had formed of detaching himself from her. The intellectual dignity, the attractive tenderness with which she repelled the harsh allegations he had made against her country, affected him deeply, and penetrated him with admiration. A superiority, so grand, so simple, and so true, appeared to him above all ordinary rules. He felt that Corinne was not the weak, timid woman, without an opinion on any subject beyond the sphere of her private duties and sentiments, which he had chosen in his imagination as a partner for life. The remembrance of Lucilia, such as he had beheld her at the age of twelve years, agreed much better with this idea;—but could any woman be compared with Corinne? Could

ordinary laws and rules be applied to one, who united in herself so many different qualities, cemented by genius and sensibility? Corinne was a miracle



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of nature, and was it not a miracle worked in favour of Oswald, when he could flatter himself with interesting such a woman? But her real name and condition were unknown to him. What would be her future projects were he to avow his intention of uniting himself to her? All was yet in obscurity; and although the enthusiasm with which Corinne had inspired Oswald made him desirous of espousing her, yet the idea that her life had not been wholly irreproachable, and that such an union would certainly have been condemned by his father, threw his soul into confusion, and racked him with the most painful anxiety.

He was not now so sunk in grief, as before his acquaintance with Corinne; but he no longer felt that sort of calm, which may even accompany repentance, when our whole life is devoted to the expiation of a crime. Formerly, he was not afraid to abandon himself to his recollections, bitter as they were; but now he dreaded those long and profound reveries, which would have revealed to him what was passing at the bottom of his soul. In the meantime he prepared to visit Corinne, in order to thank her for her letter, and obtain pardon for what he had written to her, when Mr Edgermond, a relation of young Lucilia, entered the room.

He was a worthy English gentleman, who had almost constantly resided in Wales, where he possessed an estate. He cherished those principles and prejudices which, in every country, serve to maintain things as they are, and which have a most beneficial tendency, when things are as well as human reason will permit. When that is the case, such men as Mr Edgermond, that is to say, the partizans of established order, though strongly and even obstinately attached to their customs and to their manner of thinking, ought to be considered as men of rational and enlightened minds.

Lord Nelville was startled when he heard Mr Edgermond announced; every recollection of the past rushed upon him at once; but as it immediately occurred to his mind that Lady Edgermond, the mother of Lucilia, had sent her relation to reproach him, and thus restrain his independence, this thought restored his firmness, and he received Mr Edgermond with great coldness. However, he wronged his visitor by his suspicions, for he had not the least design in his head that regarded Nelville. He visited Italy for the sake of his health alone; and ever since he had been in the country, he was constantly employed in hunting, and drinking to King George and Old England. He was the most open-hearted of men, and possessed a much better informed mind than his habits would induce many to believe. He was a downright Englishman, not only as he ought to be, but also as one might wish he were not: following in every country the customs of his own, living only with Englishmen, and never discoursing with foreigners; not out of contempt to them, but from a sort of repugnance to foreign languages, and a timidity, which even at the age of fifty, rendered him very diffident in forming new acquaintances.



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"I am happy to see you," said he to Nelville, "I am going to Naples in a fortnight and should be glad to see you there, for I have not long to stay in Italy; my regiment will soon embark." "Your regiment!" repeated Lord Nelville, and blushed as if he had forgotten that he had a year's leave of absence because his regiment was not to be employed before the expiration of that period. He blushed at the thought that Corinne could make him forget even his duty. "Your regiment," continued Mr Edgermond, "will not go upon service so soon; so stay here quietly, and regain your health. I saw my young cousin before I set out—she is more charming than ever. I am sure by the time you return she will be the finest woman in England." Lord Nelville said nothing—and Mr Edgermond was also silent. Some other words passed between them, very laconic, though extremely friendly, and Mr Edgermond was going, when suddenly turning back, he said, "Apropos, my lord, you can do me a kindness—they tell me you are acquainted with the celebrated Corinne: I don't much like forming new acquaintances, but I am quite curious to see this lady." "Since you desire it, I will ask Corinne's permission to introduce you," replied Oswald. "Do so, I beseech you," said Mr Edgermond; "and contrive to let me see her some day when she improvises, or dances and sings to the company." "Corinne does not thus display her talents to strangers," said Nelville; "she is your equal and mine in every respect." "Pardon my mistake," said Mr Edgermond, "as she is not known by another name than that of Corinne, and lives by herself at the age of twenty-six years unaccompanied by any part of her family, I thought she derived support from her talents." "Her fortune is entirely independent," answered his lordship warmly, "and her mind is still more so." Mr Edgermond immediately dropped this subject, and repented at having introduced it, seeing that it interested Oswald. No men in the world have so much discretion and delicate precaution in what concerns the affections, as the English.

Mr Edgermond went away. Lord Nelville, when alone, could not help exclaiming with emotion, "I must espouse Corinne. I must become her protector, in order to preserve her from obloquy. She shall have the little it is in my power to bestow—a rank and a name; whilst she on her part will confer on me every earthly felicity." It was in this disposition that he hastened to visit Corinne, and never did he enter her doors with sweeter sentiments of hope and love; but, swayed by his natural timidity, and in order to recover confidence, he began the conversation with insignificant topics, and of this number was his request for permission to introduce Mr Edgermond. At this name Corinne was visibly agitated, and with a faltering voice refused what Oswald solicited. All astonishment, he said to her, "I thought that in this house, to which so many are allowed access, the title of my friend would not afford a motive of



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exclusion.” “Do not be offended, my lord,” replied Corinne: “Believe that I must have very powerful reasons not to consent to your desire.” “Ands will you acquaint me with those reasons?” replied Oswald. “Impossible!” cried Corinne; “Impossible!” “So then—” said Neville, and his emotion rendered him unable to proceed. He was about to depart, when Corinne, all in tears, exclaimed in English, “For God’s sake do not leave me unless you wish to break my heart!”

These words, and the tone of voice in which they were uttered, deeply affected the soul of Oswald. He sat down again at some distance from Corinne, supporting his head against a vase of alabaster which embellished her apartment; then, suddenly, he said to her, “Cruel woman! you see that I love you—you see that, twenty times a day, I am ready to offer you my hand and my heart; yet you will not inform me who you are! Tell me, Corinne, tell me the story of your past life,” repeated he, stretching his hand to her with the most moving expression of sensibility. “Oswald!” cried Corinne; “Oswald! you do not know the pain you give me. If I were mad enough to tell you all you would no longer love me.” “Great God!” replied he; “what have you then to reveal?” “Nothing that renders me unworthy of you,” said she; “but fortuitous circumstances, and differences between our tastes and opinions, which existed formerly and which no longer exist. Do not oblige me to confess who I am. Some day, perhaps—some day, should you love me sufficiently—Ah! I know not what I say,” continued Corinne; “you shall know all; but do not forsake me before you have heard it. Promise me that you will not, in the name of your father who is now in heaven!” “Pronounce not that name,” cried Lord Neville; “can you fathom his will respecting us? Think you that he would consent to our union? If you do, declare it, and I shall no longer be racked with doubts and fears. Some time or other, I will unfold to you my sad story; but behold the condition you have now reduced me to.” In truth, his forehead was covered with a cold sweat, his face was pale, and his trembling lips with difficulty articulated these last words. Corinne, seated by the side of Neville, holding his hands in hers, gently recalled him to himself. “My dear Oswald,” said she to him; “ask Mr Edgermond if he has ever been in Northumberland; or at least if he has only been there within these past five years. Should he answer in the affirmative he may then accompany you hither.” At these words Oswald looked steadfastly at Corinne, who cast down her eyes and was silent. “I shall do as you desire me,” said Lord Neville, and went away.



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On his return home, he exhausted conjecture upon the secrets of Corinne. It appeared evident that she had passed a considerable time in England, and that her name and family must be known there. But what could be her motive for concealing them; and if she had been settled in England, why had she left it? These questions greatly disturbed the heart of Oswald. He was convinced that no stain would be found in her life; but he feared a combination of circumstances might have rendered her guilty in the eyes of others. What he most dreaded, was her being an object of English disapprobation. He felt sufficiently fortified against that of every other country; but the memory of his father was so intimately connected with the love of his native country, that these two sentiments strengthened each other.

Oswald, having learnt of Mr Edgermond that he had been in Northumberland for the first time the preceding year, promised to introduce him to Corinne that evening. Oswald arrived at her house before him, and made her acquainted with the ideas that Mr Edgermond had conceived respecting her, suggesting the propriety of convincing him how much he was in error, by assuming the most cold and reserved manners.

“If you permit me,” replied Corinne, “I will be the same to him as to everybody else; if he desire to hear me, I will improvise before him; in fact, I will appear to him as I am, not doubting that he will perceive as much dignity of soul in this simple and natural behaviour, as if I were to put on an air of restraint which would only be affected.” “Yes, Corinne,” replied Oswald, “you are right. Ah! how much in the wrong is he, who would in the least alter your admirable disposition.”

At this moment Mr Edgermond arrived with the rest of the company. At the commencement of the evening, Lord Nelville placed himself by the side of Corinne, and with an interest which at once became the lover and the protector, he said every thing that could enhance her worth. The respect he testified for her seemed to have for its object rather to win the attention of others, than to satisfy himself; but it was with the most lively joy that he soon felt the folly of all his anxiety. Corinne entirely captivated Mr Edgermond—she not only captivated him by her genius and her charms, but by inspiring him with that sentiment of esteem which true characters always obtain of honest ones; and when he presumed to express a wish to hear her upon a subject of his choice, he aspired to this favour with as much respect as eagerness. She consented without for a moment waiting to be pressed, and thus manifested that this favour had a value independent of the difficulty of obtaining it. But she felt so lively a desire to please a countryman of Oswald’s, a man who by the consideration which he merited might influence his opinion in speaking of her, that this sentiment suddenly filled her with a timidity which was quite new to her: she wished to begin, but her tongue



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was suspended by the emotion she felt. Oswald was pained that she did not dazzle his English friend with all her superiority; his eyes were cast down, and his embarrassment was so visible, that Corinne, solely engrossed by the effect that she produced upon him, lost more and more the presence of mind necessary for improvisation. At length, sensible of her hesitation, feeling that her words were the offspring of memory and not of sentiment, and that thus she was neither able to paint what she thought nor what she really felt, she suddenly stopped and said to Mr Edgermond, "Pardon me Sir, if upon this occasion timidity has deprived me of my usual facility; it is the first time, as my friends can testify, that I have been below myself; but perhaps," added she, sighing, "it will not be the last."

Oswald was deeply affected by the touching failure of Corinne. Till then he had always been accustomed to see imagination and genius triumph over her affections and reanimate her soul at the moment when she was most cast down; but at this time her mind was entirely fettered by feeling, yet Oswald had so identified himself with her fame on this occasion, that he partook of the mortification of her failure, instead of rejoicing at it. But as it appeared certain, that she would one day shine with her natural lustre, he yielded to the tender reflections that arose in his mind, and the image of his mistress was enthroned more than ever in his heart.

Book vii.

ITALIAN LITERATURE.

[Illustration]

Chapter i.

Lord Nelville felt a lively desire that Mr Edgermond should enjoy the conversation of Corinne, which was more than equivalent to her improvised verses. The following day the same company assembled at her house; and to elicit her sentiments, he turned the conversation upon Italian literature, and provoked her natural vivacity, by affirming that the English poets were much superior in energy and sensibility to those of which Italy could boast.

"In the first place," said Corinne, "strangers are for the most part acquainted only with our poets of the first rank—Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, Guarini, Tasso, and Metastasio; whilst we have several others, such as Chiabrera, Guidi, Filicaja, Parini, without reckoning Sannazarius, Politian, &c., who have written in Latin, with as much taste as genius; and all unite in their verses the utmost beauty of colouring and harmony; all,



with more or less talent, adorn the wonders of nature and art with the imagery of speech. Without doubt our poets cannot pretend to that profound melancholy, that knowledge of the human heart which characterise yours; but does not this kind of superiority belong more properly to philosophical writers than to poets? The brilliant melody of Italian is more suitable to the splendour of external objects than to meditation; our language is better



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adapted to paint fury than sadness, because sentiments which arise from deep reflection demand more metaphysical expressions, whilst the desire of vengeance animates the imagination to the exclusion of grief. Cesarotti has produced the best and most elegant translation of Ossian extant; but it seems in reading it that the words possess in themselves an air of festivity that forms a contrast with the sombre ideas of the poem. We cannot help being charmed with our sweet expressions,—*the limpid stream, the smiling plain, the cooling shade*, the same as with the murmur of the waves, and variety of colours. What more do you expect from poetry? Why would you ask of the nightingale, the meaning of her song? She can only answer you by resuming the strain, and you cannot comprehend it without yielding to the impression which it produces. The measure of verse, harmonious rhymes, and those rapid terminations composed of two short syllables whose sounds glide in the manner that their name (*Sdruciolli*) indicates, sometimes imitate the light steps of a dance; at others, more sombre tones recall the fury of the tempest and the clangour of arms. In fact, our poetry is a wonder of the imagination—we must only seek it in the various pleasures which it affords.”

“It must be allowed,” replied Lord Nelville, “that you explain very clearly the beauties and defects of your poetry; but how will you defend your prose, in which those defects are to be found unaccompanied by the beauties? That which is only loose and indefinite in poetry will become emptiness in prose; and the crowd of common ideas which your poets embellish with their melody and their images, are in prose, cold and dry, while their vivacity of style renders them more fatiguing. The language of the greater part of the prose-writers of the present day is so declamatory, so diffuse, and so abundant in superlatives, that their work seems written to order, in hackneyed phraseology, and for conventional natures; it does not once enter into their heads that to write well is to express one’s thoughts and character. Their style is an artificial web, a kind of literary mosaic, every thing in fact that is foreign to their soul, and is made with the pen as any other mechanical work is with the fingers. They possess in the highest degree the secret of developing, commenting, inflating an idea, and, if I may use the expression, of working a sentiment into a ferment. So much do they excel in this, that one would be tempted to ask these writers, what the African woman asked a French lady, who wore a large pannier under a long dress:—‘*Madam, is all that a part of yourself?*’ In short, what real existence is there in all this pomp of words which one true expression would dissipate like a vain prestige.”



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“You forget,” interrupted Corinne sharply; “first, Macchiavelli and Boccacio; next Gravina, Filangieri, and in our days, Cesarotti, Verri, Bettinelli, and so many others, in short, who know how to write and to think[22]. But I agree with you that in the latter ages, unfortunate circumstances having deprived Italy of its independence, its people have lost all interest in truth and often even the possibility of speaking it: from this has resulted the habit of sporting with words without daring to approach a single idea. As they were certain of not being able to obtain any influence over things by their writings, they were only employed to display their wit, which is a sure way to end in having no wit at all; for it is only in directing the mind towards some noble object that ideas are acquired. When prose writers can no longer in any way influence the happiness of a nation—when they only write to dazzle—when, in fact, the road itself is the object of their journey, they indulge in a thousand windings without advancing a step. The Italians, it is true, fear new thoughts; but that is an effect of indolence, and not of literary baseness. In their character, their gaiety, and their imagination, there is much originality; and nevertheless, as they take no pains to reflect, their general ideas do not soar above mediocrity; their eloquence even, so animated when they speak, has no character when they write; one would say that labour of any kind freezes their faculties; it may also be added, that the nations of the South are fettered by prose, and that poetry alone can express their real sentiments. It is not thus in French literature,” said Corinne, addressing herself to the Count d’Erfeuil—“your prose writers are often more eloquent, and even more poetic, than your poets.”—“It is true,” answered the Count, “your assertion can be verified by truly classical authorities:—Bossuet, La Bruyere, Montesquieu, and Buffon, cannot be excelled; more particularly the first two, who are of the age of Louis the Fourteenth, in whose praise too much cannot be said, for they are perfect models for imitation. They are models that foreigners ought to be as eager to imitate as the French themselves.”—“I can hardly think it desirable,” answered Corinne, “for the whole world entirely to lose their national colouring, as well as all originality of sentiment and genius; and I am bold enough to tell you Count, that even in your country, this literary orthodoxy, if I may so express myself, which is opposed to every innovation, will in time render your literature extremely barren. Genius is essentially creative; it bears the character of the individual that possesses it. Nature, who has not formed two leaves alike, has infused a still greater variety into the human soul; imitation is therefore a species of death, since it robs each one of his natural existence.”



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“You would not wish, fair stranger,” replied the Count, “that we should admit Teutonic barbarism amongst us—that we should copy Young’s Night Thoughts, and the *Concetti* of the Italians and Spaniards. What would become of the taste and elegance of our French style after such a mixture?” Prince Castel-Forte, who had not yet spoken, said —“It seems to me that we all stand in need of each other: the literature of every country discovers to him who is acquainted with it a new sphere of ideas. It was Charles the Fifth himself who said—that *a man who knows four languages, is worth four men*. If that great political genius judged thus, in regard to the conduct of affairs, how much more true is it with respect to literature? Foreigners all study French; thus they command a more extended horizon than you, who do not study foreign languages. Why do you not more often take the trouble of learning them?—You would thus preserve your own peculiar excellence, and sometimes discover your deficiencies.”

FOOTNOTE:

[22] Cesarotti, Verri, and Bettinelli, are three living authors who have introduced thought into Italian prose; it must be confessed, that this was not the case for a long time before.

Chapter ii.

“You will at least confess,” replied the Count d’Erfeuil, “that there is one part of literature in which we have nothing to learn of any country.—Our drama is decidedly the first in Europe; for I cannot believe that the English would presume to oppose their Shakespeare to us.”—“I beg your pardon,” interrupted Mr Edgermond, “they have that presumption.”—And after this observation he was silent.—“In that case I have nothing to say,” continued the Count, with a smile which expressed a kind of civil contempt: “Each one may think as he pleases, but for my part I persist in believing that we may affirm without presumption that we are the very first in dramatic art. As to the Italians, if I may speak my mind freely, they do not appear even to suspect that there is a dramatic art in the world.—With them the music is every thing, and the play itself nothing. Should the music of the second act of a piece be better than the first, they begin with the second act. Or, should a similar preference attach to the first acts of two different pieces, they will perform these two acts in the same evening, introducing between, perhaps, an act of some comedy in prose that contains irreproachable morality, but a moral teaching entirely composed of aphorisms, that even our ancestors have already cast off to the foreigner as too old to be of any service to them. Your poets are entirely at the disposal of your famous musicians; one declares that he cannot sing without there is in his air the word *felicità*; the tenor must have *tomba*; while a third singer can only quaver upon the word *catene*. The poor bard must make these different whims agree with dramatic situation



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as well as he can. This is not all; there are actors who will not appear immediately treading the boards of the stage; they must first be seen in a cloud, or they must descend the lofty stairs of a palace, in order to give more effect to their *entree*. When the air is finished, whatever may be the violent or affecting situation of his character, the singer must bow to the audience in acknowledgment of their applause. The other day, in *Semiramis*, after the spectre of Ninus had sung his air, the representative of this shadowy personage made in his ghostly costume a low reverence to the pit, which greatly diminished the terror of the apparition.

“They are accustomed in Italy to consider the theatre merely as a large assembly room, where there is nothing to hear but the airs, and the ballet! I am justified in saying *that they listen to nothing but the ballet*; for it is only when the ballet is about to begin, that silence is called for in the pit: and what is this ballet but a masterpiece of bad taste? There is nothing amusing in the dancing save the comic part of it; the grotesque figures alone afford entertainment, being indeed a good specimen of caricature. I have seen Gengis-Kan in a ballet, all covered with ermine, and full of fine sentiments; for he ceded his crown to the child of a king whom he had conquered, and lifted him up in the air upon one foot; a new mode of establishing a monarch upon his throne. I have also seen the sacrifice of Curtius formed into a ballet of three acts, with divertisements. Curtius, in the dress of an Arcadian shepherd, danced for a considerable time with his mistress; then mounting a real horse in the middle of the stage, he plunged into the gulf of fire, made of yellow satin and gilt paper, which looked more like a fancy riding habit than an abyss. In fact, I have seen the whole of Roman history from Romulus to Caesar, compressed into a ballet.”

“What you say is true,” replied Prince Castel-Forte, mildly; “but you have only spoken of music and dancing, which do not comprise what we understand by the drama of any country.” “It is much worse,” interrupted the Count d’Erfeuil, “when tragedies are represented, or dramas that are not termed *dramas that end happily*: they unite more horrors in the course of five acts, than the imagination could form a picture of. In one piece of this kind, the lover kills the brother of his mistress in the second act; in the third he blows out the brains of his mistress herself upon the stage; her funeral occupies the fourth; in the interval, between the fourth and fifth acts, the actor who performs the lover comes forward, and announces to the audience with the greatest tranquillity in the world, the harlequinades which are to be performed on the following evening; he then reappears in the fifth act, to shoot himself with a pistol. The tragic actors are quite in harmony with the coldness and extravagance of these pieces: they commit



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all these horrors with the utmost calm. When a performer uses much action, they say he conducts himself like a preacher; for in truth, there is more acting in the pulpit than on the stage. It is very fortunate that these actors are so moderate in their pathos; for as there is nothing interesting, either in the piece or its situations, the more noise they made about it, the more ridiculous they would appear: it might still be endurable, were there any thing gay in this nonsense; but it is most stupidly dull and monotonous. There is in Italy no more comedy than tragedy; and here again we stand foremost. The only species of comedy peculiar to Italy is harlequinade. A valet, at once a knave, a glutton, and a coward; an old griping, amorous dupe of a guardian, compose the whole strength of these pieces. I hope you will allow that *Tartuffe*, and the *Misanthrope*, require a little more genius than such compositions.”

This attack of the Count d' Erfeuil was sufficiently displeasing to the Italians who were his auditors; nevertheless they laughed at it. The Count was more desirous of showing his wit than his natural goodness of disposition; for though this latter quality influenced his actions, self-love guided his speech. Prince Castel-Forte and the rest of his countrymen present, were extremely impatient to refute the Count d'Erfeuil; but as they were little ambitious of shining in conversation and believed their cause would be more ably defended by Corinne, they besought her to reply, contenting themselves with barely citing the celebrated names of Maffei, Metastasio, Goldoni, Alfieri, and Monti. Corinne began by granting that the Italians had no drama; but she undertook to prove that circumstances and not want of talent, were the cause of it. Comedy, which depends upon the observation of manners, can only exist in a country where we live in the midst of a numerous and brilliant society. In Italy we meet with nothing but violent passions or idle enjoyments which produce crimes of so black a hue that no shades of character can be distinguished. But ideal comedy, if it may be so termed, that which depends upon the imagination, and may agree with all times and all countries, owes its invention to Italy. Harlequin, punchinello, pantaloon, &c., have the same character in every different piece. In all cases they exhibit masks, and not faces: that is to say, their physiognomy is that of some particular species of character, and not that of any individual. Undoubtedly, the modern authors of harlequinades, finding every part ready carved out for them like the men of a chess-board, have not the merit of inventing them; but their first invention is due to Italy; therefore these fantastic personages, which from one end of Europe to the other afford amusement to every child, and to every grown-up person whom imagination has made childlike, must certainly be considered as the creation of Italians: this I should conceive ought to give them some claim to the art of comedy.



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The observation of the human heart is an inexhaustible source of literature; but nations more disposed to poetry than to reflection, more easily surrender themselves to the intoxication of joy than to philosophic irony. That pleasantry which is founded upon the knowledge of mankind has something sad at bottom. It is only the gaiety of the imagination which is truly inoffensive. It is not that the Italians do not study deeply the men whom they have to do with; for none discover more subtly their secret thoughts; but they employ this talent as a guide of conduct, and have no idea of converting it to any literary purpose. Perhaps even they have no wish to generalise their discoveries, and publish their perceptions. There is a prudent dissimulation in their character, which teaches them not to expose in comedies that which affords rules for private intercourse; not to reveal by the fictions of the mind what may be useful in circumstances of real life.

Macchiavelli however, far from concealing anything, has exposed all the secrets of a criminal polity; and through him we may learn of what a terrible knowledge of the human heart the Italians are capable. But profound observation is not the province of comedy: the leisure of society, properly speaking, can alone furnish matter for the comic scene. Goldoni, who lived at Venice, where there is more society than in any other Italian city, has introduced more refinement of observation into his pieces than is generally to be found in other authors. Nevertheless his comedies are monotonous, and we meet with the same situations in them, because they contain so little variety of character. His numerous pieces seem formed upon the general model of dramatic works, and not copied from real life. The true character of Italian gaiety is not satire, but imagination; not delineation of manners, but poetical exaggeration. It is Ariosto, and not Moliere, who can amuse Italy.

Gozzi, the rival of Goldoni, has more originality in his compositions; they bear less resemblance to regular comedy. His determination was liberally to indulge the Italian genius; to represent fairy tales, and mingle buffoonery and harlequinade with the marvels of poetry; to imitate nothing in nature, but to give free scope to the gay illusions of fancy, to the chimeras of fairy magic, and to transport the mind by every means beyond the boundaries of human action. He was crowned with prodigious success in his time, and perhaps there never existed an author more congenial to an Italian imagination; but to know with certainty what degree of perfection Tragedy and Comedy can reach in Italy, it should possess a theatrical establishment. The multitude of little cities who all wish to have a theatre, lose, by dispersing them, its dramatic resources: that division in states, in general so favourable to liberty and happiness, is hurtful to Italy. She must needs concentrate her light and power to resist the prejudices which are devouring her. The authority of governments often represses individual energy. In Italy this authority would be a benefit if it struggled against the ignorance of separate states and of men isolated among them; if it combated by emulation that indolence so natural to the climate; and if, in a word, it gave life to the whole of this nation which now is satisfied with a dream.



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These ideas, and several others besides, were ingeniously developed by Corinne. She well understood the rapid art of light conversation, which does not dogmatically insist upon any thing, and also that pleasing address which gives a consideration to each of the company in turn, though she often indulged in that kind of talent which rendered her a celebrated improvisatrice. Several times she intreated Prince Castel-Forte to assist her with his opinion on the same subject; but she spoke so well herself, that all the audience were delighted in listening to her, and would not suffer her to be interrupted. Mr Edgermond, in particular, could scarcely satisfy himself with seeing and hearing Corinne; hardly did he dare to express the admiration she inspired him with, and he pronounced some words of panegyric in a low tone of voice hoping she would comprehend them without obliging him to address her personally. He however possessed such a lively desire to know her sentiments on Tragedy, that in spite of his timidity he ventured a few words on that subject.

“Madam,” said he to Corinne, “where the Italian literature appears to me most defective is in Tragedy; methinks the distance is not so great between infancy and manhood, as between your Tragedies and ours; for in the changeableness of children may be discovered true if not deep sentiments, but there is something affected and extravagant in Italian Tragedy, which destroys for me all emotion whatever. Is this not so? Lord Nelville,” continued Mr Edgermond, turning to his lordship and inviting his support by a glance, quite astonished at having found courage to speak in such a numerous assembly.

“I am entirely of your opinion,” answered Oswald; “Metastasio, who is vauntingly called the poet of love, gives the same colouring to this passion in every country and under every circumstance. His admirable airs are entitled to our applause as much from their grace and harmony as the lyrical beauties which they contain, especially when detached from the drama in which they are placed; but it is impossible for us who possess Shakespeare, who has most deeply fathomed History and the passions of man, to suffer those amorous couples, that divide between them almost all the pieces of Metastasio alike, under the names of Achilles, of Tircis, of Brutus, and of Corilas, singing, in a manner that hardly touches the surface of the soul, the grief and sufferings of love, so as almost to reduce to imbecility the noblest passion that animates the human heart. It is with the most profound respect for the character of Alfieri that I shall indulge in a few reflections upon his pieces. Their aim is so noble, the sentiments which the author expresses are so much in unison with his personal conduct, that his tragedies must always deserve praise as actions, even when they are criticised as literary performances. But I find in the vigour of some of his tragedies as much monotony as in the tenderness of Metastasio. There is, in the plays



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of Alfieri, such a profusion of energy and magnanimity, or rather such an exaggeration of violence and crime, that it is impossible to discover in them the true characters of men. They are never so wicked nor so generous as painted by this author. The aim of most of his scenes is to place virtue and vice in contrast with each other; but these oppositions are not according to the gradations of truth. If, during their life, tyrants bore with what the oppressed are made to say to their face in the tragedies of Alfieri, one would be almost tempted to pity them. His play of Octavia is one of those where the want of probability is most striking. In this piece, Seneca moralises incessantly with Nero, as if the latter were the most patient of men, and Seneca the most courageous. The master of the world permits himself to be insulted, and his anger to be excited in every scene, for the amusement of the spectators, as if it were not in his power to end it all with a word. Certainly these continual dialogues give rise to some very fine replies on the part of Seneca, and one would be glad to find in an harangue or in a moral work the noble thoughts which he expresses; but is this the way to give us an idea of tyranny? It is not painting it in its formidable colours, but merely making it a subject for verbal fencing. If Shakespeare had represented Nero surrounded by trembling slaves, who hardly dared reply to the most indifferent question, himself concealing his internal agitation and endeavouring to appear calm, with Seneca near him writing the apology for the murder of Agrippina, would not the terror have been a thousand times greater? And for one reflection spoken by the author, would not a thousand be generated in the soul of the spectators by the very silence of rhetoric and the truth of the picture?"

Oswald might have spoken much longer without receiving any interruption from Corinne; so much pleasure did she receive from the sound of his voice and the noble elegance of his language, that she could have wished to prolong this impression for hours together. Hardly could she remove her eyes, which were earnestly fixed upon him, even after he had ceased to speak. She turned them reluctantly to the rest of the company, who were impatient to hear her thoughts upon Italian tragedy, and turning to Lord Nelville:—"My Lord," said she, "it is not to combat your sentiments that I reply, for they meet mine in almost every point: my only intention is to offer some exceptions to your rather too general observations. It is true that Metastasio is rather a lyrical than a dramatic poet, and that he describes love like one of the fine arts that adorn life, not as the most important secret of our happiness and our pain. I will venture to say, notwithstanding our language has been consecrated to the cause of love, that we have more profoundness and sensibility in describing any other passion than this. The practice of making amorous verses has created a kind of commonplace



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language amongst us for that subject; so that not what he has felt, but what he has read, inspires the poet. Love, such as it exists in Italy, by no means resembles that love which is described by our writers. It is only in Boccaccio's romance of *Fiametta*, that according to the best of my recollection, there is to be found an idea of that passion, painted in truly national colours. Our poets subtilise and exaggerate the sentiment, whilst agreeably to the real Italian character, it is a rapid and profound impression, which rather expresses itself by silent and passionate actions than by ingenious language. In general our literature is not characteristic of our national manners[23]. We are much too modest, I had almost said too humble a nation to aspire to tragedies taken from our own history, and bearing the stamp of our own sentiments.

“Alfieri, by a singular chance, was transplanted, if I may use the expression, from ancient to modern times; he was born for action, and his destiny only permitted him to write; this constraint appears in the style of his tragedies. He wished to make literature subservient to a political purpose; undoubtedly his object was noble, but nothing perverts the labours of the imagination so much as having a purpose. In this nation, where certainly, some erudite scholars and very enlightened men are to be met with, Alfieri was indignant at seeing literature consecrated to no serious end, but merely engrossed with tales, novels, and madrigals. Alfieri wished to give a more austere character to his tragedy. He has stript it of all the borrowed appendages of theatrical effect, preserving nothing but the interest of the dialogue. It appears to have been his wish to place the natural vivacity and imagination of the Italians in a state of penitence; he has however been very much admired for his character and the energies of his soul, which were truly great. The inhabitants of modern Rome are particularly given to applaud the actions and sentiments of their ancient country; as if those actions and sentiments had any relation to them in their present state.

They are amateurs of energy and independence, in the same manner as they are of the fine pictures which adorn their galleries. But it is not less true that Alfieri has by no means created what may be called an Italian theatre; that is to say, tragedies of a merit peculiar to Italy. He has not even characterised the manners of those countries and those centuries which he has painted. His conspiracy of the Pazzi, his Virginia, and his Philip II., are to be admired for elevation and strength of thought; but it is always the character of Alfieri, and not that of peculiar nations and peculiar times, which are to be discovered in them. Although there be no analogy between the French genius and that of Alfieri, they resemble each other in this, that both of them give their own colouring to every subject of which they treat.”

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The Count d' Erfeuil, hearing the French genius called in question, was induced to speak. "It would be impossible for us," said he, "to tolerate upon the stage either the incongruities of the Greeks or the monstrosities of Shakespeare; the French have too pure a taste for that. Our theatre is the model of delicacy and elegance: those are its distinguishing characteristics, and we should plunge ourselves into barbarism by introducing anything foreign amongst us."

"That would be like encompassing yourselves with the great wall of China," said Corinne, smiling. "There are certainly many rare beauties in your tragic authors; and perhaps they would admit of new ones, could you bring yourselves to tolerate anything not exactly French on your stage. But as for us Italians, our dramatic genius would be greatly diminished in submitting to the fetters of those laws which we had not the honour of inventing, and from which, consequently, we could derive nothing but their restraint. A theatre ought to be formed upon the imagination, the character, and the custom of a nation. The Italians are passionately fond of the fine arts, of music, painting, and even pantomime: of every thing, in short, that strikes the senses. How then could they be satisfied with the austerity of an eloquent dialogue, as their only theatrical pleasure?[24] Vainly has Alfieri, with all his genius, endeavoured to reduce them to it; he felt himself that his system was too rigorous.

"The Merope of Maffei, the Saul of Alfieri, the Aristodemus of Monti, and particularly the poem of Dante, although this last author never composed a tragedy, seem calculated to convey an idea of what the dramatic art might be brought to in Italy. There is in the Merope of Maffei, a great simplicity of action, but the most brilliant poetry, adorned with the happiest images: and why should this poetry be forbidden in dramatic works? The language of poetry is so magnificent in Italy that we should be more censurable than any other nation in renouncing its beauties. Alfieri, wishing to excel in every department of poetry, has, in his Saul, made a most beautiful use of the lyric; and one might with excellent effect introduce music itself into the piece, not so much to harmonise the words, as to calm the frenzy of Saul by the harp of David. So delicious is our music that it may even render us indolent as to intellectual enjoyments. Far therefore from wishing to separate music from the drama, it should be our earnest endeavour to unite them; not in making heroes sing, which destroys all dramatic effect, but in introducing choruses, as the ancients did, or such other musical aid, as may naturally blend with the situations of the piece, as so often happens in real life. So far from retrenching the pleasures of the imagination on the Italian stage, it is my opinion, that we should on the contrary augment and multiply them in every possible manner. The exquisite taste of the Italians



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for music, and for splendid ballets, is an indication of the power of their imagination, and manifests the necessity of rendering even the most serious subjects interesting to them, instead of heightening their severity as Alfieri has done. The nation conceive it their duty to applaud what is grave and austere; but they soon return to their natural taste; however, tragedy might become highly pleasing to them if it were embellished by the charm and the variety of different kinds of poetry, and with all the divers theatrical attractions which the English and the Spaniards enjoy.

“The Aristodemus of Monti has in it something of the terrible pathos of Dante; and surely this tragedy is very justly one of the most admired. Dante, that great master of various powers, possessed that kind of tragic genius which would have produced the most effect in Italy, if it could in any way be adapted to the stage; for that poet knew how to represent to the eye, what was passing at the bottom of the soul, and his imagination could make grief seen and felt. If Dante had written tragedies, they would have been as striking to children as to men, to the illiterate crowd as to the polished few. Dramatic literature ought to be popular; like some public event, the whole nation ought to judge of it.”

“When Dante was living,” said Oswald, “the Italians performed a distinguished part in the political drama of Europe. Perhaps it would now be impossible for you to have a national tragic theatre: it would be necessary for the existence of such a theatre, that great events should develop in life those sentiments which are expressed upon the stage. Of all the masterpieces of literature, there is not one which depends so much upon the whole people as tragedy; the spectators contribute to it as much as the author. Dramatic genius is composed of the public mind, of History, of government, of national customs, of everything, in fact, which each day blends itself with thought, and forms the moral being, as the air which we breathe nourishes physical existence. The Spaniards, with whom you have some affinity as to climate and religion, are much superior to you in dramatic genius; their pieces are filled with their history, their chivalry, and their religious faith, and these pieces possess life and originality; but their success, in this respect, dates back to the epoch of their historical glory. How then could it be possible now to establish in Italy, that which it never could boast of—a genuine tragic drama!”

“It is unfortunately possible that you may be in the right,” replied Corinne; “however, I hope for greater things from the natural impulse of mind in Italy, and from the individual emulation of my countrymen, even when not favoured by external circumstances; but what we most want in tragedy is actors. Affected words necessarily lead to false declamation; but there is no language in which an actor can display so much talent as in ours; for the



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melody of sound gives a new charm to truth of accent: it is a continual music which mingles with the expression of feeling without diminishing its vigour." "If you wish," interrupted Prince Castel-Forte, "to convince the company of what you assert, it only remains for you to prove it: yes, allow us to enjoy the inexpressible pleasure of seeing you perform tragedy; you must grant these foreign gentlemen the rare enjoyment of being made acquainted with a talent which you alone in Italy possess; or rather that you alone in the world possess, since the whole of your genius is impressed upon it."

Corinne felt a secret desire to play tragedy before Lord Nelville, and by this means show herself to very great advantage; but she dared not accede to the proposal of Prince Castel-Forte, without that approbation of Oswald, which the looks she cast upon him earnestly entreated. He understood them; and as he was at the same time concerned at that timidity which had the day before prevented the exertion of her talent for improvisation, and ambitious that she should obtain the applause of Mr Edgermond, he joined in the solicitations of her friends. Corinne therefore no longer hesitated. "Well, then," said she, turning to Prince Castel-Forte, "we will accomplish the project which I have so long formed, of playing my own translation of Romeo and Juliet," "Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet?" cried Mr Edgermond; "you understand English, then?" "Yes," answered Corinne. "And you are fond of Shakespeare!" added Mr Edgermond. "As a friend," replied she; "he was so well acquainted with all the secrets of grief." "And you will perform in Italian," cried Mr Edgermond; "and I shall hear you! And you too, my dear Nelville. Ah, how happy you will be!" Then, repenting immediately this indiscreet word, he blushed: and a blush inspired by delicacy and goodness may be interesting at all periods of life. "How happy we shall be," resumed he, a little embarrassed, "to be present at such a representation!"

FOOTNOTES:

[23] Giovanni Pindemonte, has recently published a collection of Dramas, the subjects of which are taken from Italian history, and this is a very interesting and praiseworthy enterprize. The name of Pindemonte is also rendered illustrious by Hippolito Pindemonte, one of the sweetest and most charming of the present Italian poets.

[24] The posthumous works of Alfieri are just published, in which are to be found many exquisite pieces; but we may conclude from a rather singular Dramatic Essay, which he has written on the Death of Abel, that he himself was conscious that his pieces were too austere, and that on the stage more must be allowed to the pleasures of the imagination.

Chapter iii.



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Every thing was arranged in a few days, the parts distributed, and the evening chosen for the performance in a palace belonging to a female relation of Prince Castel-Forte, and a friend of Corinne. Oswald felt a mixture of uneasiness and pleasure, at the approach of this new scene of triumph for the talents of Corinne. He enjoyed the by anticipation; but he was also jealous in the same manner, not of any man in particular, but of that whole audience in general who were to witness the talents of her whom he loved. He wished to be the only witness of her mental charms;—he wished that Corinne, timid and reserved, like an English woman, should possess eloquence and genius for none but him. However distinguished a man may be, perhaps he never enjoys, without alloy, the superiority of a woman: if he feel an affection for her, his heart is disturbed;—if not, his self-love is wounded. Oswald, in the presence of Corinne, was more intoxicated than happy; and the admiration which she inspired him with, increased his love without giving more stability to his projects. He contemplated her as an admirable phenomenon, which appeared to him anew every day; but even the transport and astonishment which she made him feel, seemed to render the hope of a peaceful and tranquil life more distant. Corinne, however, was of the tenderest and most easy disposition in private life; her ordinary qualities would have made her beloved independently of her brilliant ones; but yet again, she united in herself too much talent, and was too dazzling in every respect. Lord Nelville, with all his accomplishments, did not believe himself equal to her, and this idea inspired him with fears as to the duration of their mutual affection. Vainly did Corinne by force of love become his slave; the master, often uneasy about his captive queen, did not enjoy his empire undisturbed.

Some hours before the representation, Lord Nelville conducted Corinne to the palace of Princess Castel-Forte, where the theatre was fitted up. The sun shone most brilliantly, and from one of the windows of the stair-case, Rome and the *Campagna* were discovered. Oswald stopped Corinne a moment and said, “Behold this beautiful day, it is for your sake; it is to heighten the splendour of your fame.” “Ah, if that were so,” answered she, “it is you who would bring me happiness; it is to you that I should owe the protection of heaven.” “Would the pure and gentle sentiments which the beauty of nature inspires, be sufficient to make you happy?” replied Oswald: “there is a great distance between the air that we breathe, the reverie which the country inspires, and that noisy theatre which is about to resound with your name.” “Oswald,” said Corinne, “if the applause which I am about to receive, have the power to affect me, will it not be because it is witnessed by you? And should I display any talent, will it not owe its success to you, who have animated and inspired it? Love, poetry, and religion, all that



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is born of enthusiasm, is in harmony with nature; and in beholding the azure sky, in yielding to the impression which it causes, I have a juster comprehension of the sentiments of Juliet, I am more worthy of Romeo." "Yes, thou art worthy of him, celestial creature!" cried Lord Nelville; "'tis only a weakness of the soul, this jealousy of thy talents, this desire to live alone with thee in the universe. Go, receive the meed of public homage, go; but let that look of love, still more divine than thy genius, be directed to me alone!" They then parted, and Lord Nelville went and took his seat in theatre, awaiting the pleasure of beholding the appearance of Corinne.

Romeo and Juliet is an Italian subject; the scene is placed in Verona, where is still to be seen the tomb of those two lovers. Shakespeare has written this piece with that Southern imagination at once impassioned and pleasing; that imagination which triumphs in happiness, but which, nevertheless, passes so easily from happiness to despair, and from despair to death. The impressions are rapid; but one easily feels that these rapid impressions will be ineffaceable. It is the force of nature, and not the frivolity of the heart, which beneath an energetic climate hastens the development of the passions. The soil is not light, though vegetation is prompt; and Shakespeare has seized, more happily than any other foreign writer, the national character of Italy and that fecundity of the mind which invents a thousand ways of varying the expression of the same sentiments—the oriental eloquence which makes use of all the images of nature to paint what is passing in the heart. It is not as in Ossian, one same tint, one uniform sound which responds constantly to the most sensitive chords of the heart; the multiplied colours that Shakespeare employs in Romeo and Juliet, do not give a cold affectation to his style; it is the ray divided, reflected, and varied, which produces these colours, in which we ever feel that fire they proceed from. There is a life and a brilliancy in this composition which characterise the country and the inhabitants. The play of Romeo and Juliet translated into Italian would only seem to return to its mother tongue.

The first appearance of Juliet is at a ball, where Romeo Montague has introduced himself into the house of the Capulets, the mortal enemies of his family. Corinne was dressed in a charming festive habit, conformable to the costume of the times. Her hair was tastefully adorned with precious stones and artificial flowers. Her friends did not know her on her first appearance, till her voice discovered her: her figure then became familiar to them; but it was in a manner deified, and preserved only a poetical expression. The theatre resounded with unanimous applause upon her appearance. Her first looks discovered Oswald, and rested upon him—a spark of joy, a lively and gentle hope, was painted in her countenance: on beholding her, every heart beat with pleasure and fear: it was felt that so much felicity could not last upon earth; was it for Juliet, or Corinne, that this presentiment was to be verified?



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When Romeo approached to address to her in a low voice, the lines, so brilliant in English, so magnificent in the Italian translation, upon her grace and beauty, the spectators, charmed to hear their own sentiments so finely interpreted, joined in the transport of Romeo; and the sudden passion which the first look of Juliet kindled in his soul, appeared like reality to every eye. Oswald from this moment felt disturbed; it appeared to him that all was near to being revealed, that Corinne was about to be proclaimed an angel among women, that he should be forced to reveal his sentiments, that his claim would be disputed and the prize ravished from him—a kind of dazzling cloud seemed to pass before his eyes—he feared his sight might fail him—he was ready to faint, and retired for some moments behind a pillar. Corinne, uneasy, sought him with anxiety, and pronounced this line,

“Too early seen unknown, and known too late!”

with such a tone of voice, that Oswald started as he heard it, for it seemed to him to be applied to their personal situation.

He could never feel tired of admiring the grace of her actions, the dignity of her motions, and the expression of her countenance, in which was painted what language could not reveal, all those mysteries of the heart which cannot be reduced to words; but which, nevertheless, dispose of our life. The accent, the look, the least gesture of an actor, truly inspired and influenced by genuine emotion, are a continual revelation of the human heart; and the ideal of the fine arts is always mingled with these revelations of nature. The harmony of the verse and the charm of the attitudes, lend to passion that grace and dignity which it often wants in reality. Thus every sentiment of the heart, and every emotion of the soul, pass before the imagination without losing anything of their truth.

In the second act, Juliet appears in the balcony to converse with Romeo. Corinne had preserved, of her former ornaments, only the flowers, and those were soon to disappear: the theatre half-lighted to represent night, cast a milder reflection upon the countenance of Corinne. There was now something more melodious in her voice, than when surrounded with the splendour of a *fete*. Her hand lifted towards the stars, seemed to invoke the only witnesses worthy of hearing her, and when she repeated, “*Romeo! Romeo!*” although Oswald was certain that she thought of him, he felt jealous that these delicious accents should make the air resound with any other name than his. Oswald was seated opposite the balcony, and he who performed Romeo being a little concealed by the darkness of the scene, Corinne was enabled to fix her eyes upon Oswald when pronouncing these lines:



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“In truth, fair Montague, I am too fond;
 And therefore thou may’st think my ’haviour light;
 But trust me, gentleman, I’ll prove more true
 Than those that have more cunning to be strange.

* * * * *
 * * * * *
 * * * * * therefore pardon me.”

At these words—“Pardon me! Pardon me for loving; pardon me for having let you know it!”—There was in Corinne’s look, so tender a prayer and so much respect for her lover, so much exultation in her choice, when she said, “Noble Romeo! Fair Montague!” that Oswald felt as proud as he was happy. He raised his head, which tenderness had bowed down, and fancied himself the king of the world, since he reigned over a heart which contained all the treasures of life.

Corinne, perceiving the effect which she produced upon Oswald, became more and more animated by that emotion of the heart which alone produces miracles; and when at the approach of day, Juliet thought she heard the song of the lark—a signal for the departure of Romeo, the accents of Corinne possessed a supernatural charm: they described love, and nevertheless one might perceive that there was something of religious mystery in them, some recollections of heaven, with a presage that she was shortly to return thither; a kind of celestial melancholy, as of a soul exiled upon earth, but which was soon to be called to its divine home. Ah! how happy was Corinne the day that she represented the part of a noble character in a beautiful tragedy before the lover of her choice; how many years, how many lives would appear dull, compared to such a day!

If Lord Nelville could have performed, with Corinne, the part of Romeo, the pleasure which she would have tasted would not have been so complete. She would have desired to put aside the verses of the greatest poet in order to speak the dictates of her own heart; perhaps even her genius would have been confined by insurmountable timidity; she would not have dared to look at Oswald for fear of betraying herself, and truth would have destroyed the charm of art; but how sweet it was to know that he whom she loved was present when she experienced those exalted sentiments which poetry alone can inspire; when she felt all the charm of tender emotions, without their real pain; when the affection she expressed was neither personal nor abstract; and when she seemed to say to Lord Nelville, “See how I am able to love.”

It is impossible when the situation is our own to be satisfied with ourselves: passion and timidity alternately transport and check us—inspire us either with too much bitterness or too much submission; but to appear perfect without affectation; to unite calm to sensibility, which too frequently destroys it; in a word, to exist for a moment in



the sweetest reveries of the heart; such was the pure enjoyment of Corinne in performing tragedy. She united to this pleasure that of all the plaudits she received; and her look seemed to place them at the feet of Oswald, at the feet of him whose simple approval she valued more than all her fame. Corinne was happy, at least for a moment! for a moment, at least, she experienced at the price of her repose, those delights of the soul which till then she had vainly wished for, and which she would ever have to regret!



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Juliet in the third act becomes privately, the wife of Romeo. In the fourth, her parents wishing to force her to marry another, she determines to take the opiate which she receives from the hand of a friar, and which is to give her the appearance of death. All the motions of Corinne, her disturbed gait, her altered accent, her looks, sometimes animated and sometimes dejected, painted the cruel conflict of fear and love, the terrible images which pursued her at the idea of being transported alive to the tomb of her ancestors, and the enthusiasm of passion, which enabled a soul, so young, to triumph over so natural a terror. Oswald felt an almost irresistible impulse to fly to her aid. At one time she lifted her eyes towards heaven, with an ardour which deeply expressed that need of divine protection, from which no human being was ever free. At another time, Lord Nelville thought he saw her stretch her arms towards him to ask his assistance—he rose up in a transport of delirium, and then sat down immediately, brought to his senses by the astonished looks of those about him; but his emotion became so strong that it could no longer be concealed.

In the fifth act, Romeo, who believes Juliet dead, lifts her from the tomb before she awakes and presses her to his heart. Corinne was clad in white, her black hair dishevelled, and her head inclined upon Romeo with a grace, and nevertheless an appearance of death, so affecting and so gloomy, that Oswald felt himself shaken with the most opposite impressions. He could not bear to see Corinne in the arms of another, and he shuddered at beholding the image of her whom he loved, apparently deprived of life; so that in fact he felt, like Romeo, that cruel combination of despair and love, of death and pleasure, which makes this scene the most agonising that ever was represented on a stage. At length, when Juliet awakes in this tomb, at the foot of which her lover has just immolated himself, when her first words in her coffin, beneath these funeral vaults, are not inspired by the terror which they ought to cause, when she exclaims:

“Where is my lord? Where is my Romeo?”

Lord Nelville replied by deep groans, and did not return to himself till Mr Edgermond conducted him out of the theatre.

The piece being finished, Corinne felt indisposed from emotion and fatigue. Oswald entered first into her apartment, where he saw her alone with her women, still in the costume of Juliet, and, like Juliet, almost swooning in their arms. In the excess of his trouble he could not distinguish whether it was truth or fiction, and throwing himself at the feet of Corinne, exclaimed, in English:

“Eyes look your last! Arms take your last embrace.”

Corinne, still wandering, cried: “Good God! what do you say? are you going to leave me?”—“No;” interrupted Oswald, “I swear—” At that instant the crowd of Corinne’s friends and admirers forced the door in order to see her. Her eyes were fixed upon

Oswald, listening with anxiety for what he was about to answer; but there was no opportunity for further conversation between them during the whole evening, for they were not left alone a single instant.



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Never had the performance of a tragedy produced such an effect in Italy. The Romans extolled with transport the talents of Corinne, both as the representative of Juliet, and the translator of the piece. They said that this was truly the species of tragedy which suited the Italians, which painted their manners, moved the soul by captivating the imagination, and gave effect to their beautiful language, in a style alternately eloquent and lyrical, inspired and natural. Corinne received all these praises with the sweetest air imaginable; but her soul remained suspended on the words "*I swear*,"—which Oswald had pronounced when he was prevented by the entrance of the company from concluding his sentence: this word might in truth contain the secret of her destiny.

Book viii.

THE STATUES AND THE PICTURES.

[Illustration]

Chapter i.

After the day which had passed, Oswald could not close his eyes during the night. He had never been so near sacrificing every thing to Corinne. He did not even desire to know her secret; or rather, before he was acquainted with it, he wished to contract a solemn engagement, to consecrate his life to her. For some hours uncertainty seemed banished from his mind; and he took pleasure in composing, in his thoughts, the letter which he should write to her on the morrow, and which would decide his fate. But this confidence in happiness, this reliance upon resolution, was of no long duration. His thoughts soon reverted to the past, he remembered that he had loved, much less, it is true, than he loved Corinne; and the object of his first choice could not be compared to her; but nevertheless it was this sentiment which had hurried him away to thoughtless actions, to actions which had torn the heart of his father.—“Ah! who knows,” cried he, “whether he would not fear equally to-day, lest his son should forget his native country and the duties which he owes it?”

“Oh thou!” said he, addressing the portrait of his father, “thou, the best friend I shall ever have upon earth, I can no longer hear thy voice, but teach me by that silent look which yet retains such power over my soul, inform me what I am to do, that now at least in thy celestial abode, thou mayest be satisfied with the conduct of thy son! Forget not, however, that need of happiness which consumes mortal man—be indulgent in heaven, as thou wert upon earth! I shall become better if I am allowed to taste of happiness; if I am permitted to live with this angelic creature, to have the honour of protecting, of saving such a woman.—Of saving her?” continued he suddenly; “and from what? From a life of homage, of fame, and of independence!”—This reflection, which originated in himself, terrified him like an inspiration of his father.



In conflicts of sentiment, who has not felt that kind of secret superstition which makes us take our own thoughts for presages, and our sufferings for a warning from heaven? Ah! how bitter is the struggle between passion and conscience, in susceptible minds!



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Oswald paced his chamber under the most cruel agitation, sometimes stopping to look at the moon, which in Italy is so mild and so beautiful. The aspect of nature inspires resignation; but it is without effect upon a mind racked with uncertainty. The next day arrived without bringing any relief to his distracted thoughts, and when the Count d'Erfeuil and Mr Edgermond came to visit him, they were uneasy as to the state of his health, so much was he altered by the anxieties of the night. The Count d'Erfeuil was the first who spoke.—“It must be allowed,” said he, “that yesterday’s entertainment was charming. Corinne is a most admirable woman. I lost half her words, but I understood everything from her voice and her countenance. What a pity it is, that a rich lady should be possessed of this talent! For if she were in humbler circumstances, and unrestrained as she is, she might embrace the stage as a profession; and to have an actress like her, would be the glory of Italy.”

Oswald received a painful impression from this speech, and yet could not tell how to make it known. For there was that about the Count, that one could not be angry at what he said, even though it were disagreeable to one’s feelings. None but sensitive minds understand those delicate precautions which they owe each other: self-love, so alive to every thing that affects itself, hardly ever thinks of the susceptibility of others.

Mr Edgermond praised Corinne in the most becoming and flattering terms. Oswald answered him in English, in order to relieve the conversation about Corinne from the disagreeable eulogiums of the Count. “I see I am one too many here,” said the Count; “well I will pay a visit to Corinne: she will not be sorry I dare say to hear my observations upon her acting yesterday evening. I have some advice to give her, too, upon details; but these details are very essential to the effect of the whole: she is really so astonishing a woman that one should neglect nothing to assist her in attaining perfection.—And besides,” said he, inclining towards Nelville’s ear, “I wish to encourage her to play tragedy more often: ’tis a certain way to get married by some foreigner of distinction who may pass through this city. As to you and me, my dear Oswald, that idea does not concern us, we are too much accustomed to charming women to commit foolish things; but who knows? a German prince, or a Spanish grandee—” At these words Oswald rose up almost beside himself, and it is impossible to conceive what would have been the issue, if the Count d'Erfeuil had perceived his emotion; but he was so satisfied with his last reflection, that he tripped away lightly, not in the least suspecting that he had offended Lord Nelville: had he known it, though he loved him as much as man could love another, he would certainly have remained. The brilliant valour of the Count, contributed still more than his self-love to render him blind to his defects. As he was extremely delicate in everything that regarded honour, he did not imagine that he could be wanting with respect to sensibility; and believing himself, not without reason, amiable and brave, he was pleased with his lot, and did not suspect there was any more profound way of regarding life than his own.



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None of the sentiments which agitated Oswald had escaped Mr Edgermond, and when the Count d'Erfeuil was gone, he said to him—"My dear Oswald, I take my leave,—I am going to Naples."—"Why so soon?" answered Nelville. "Because it is not good for me to stay here," continued Edgermond; "I am fifty years of age, and nevertheless I am not sure that Corinne would not make a fool of me."—"And even in that case," interrupted Oswald, "what would be the consequence?"—"Such a woman is not formed to live in Wales," replied Mr Edgermond; "believe me, my dear Oswald, only Englishwomen are fit for England: it does not become me to give you advice, I need not assure you that I shall not mention a word of what I have seen; but with all Corinne's accomplishments, I should say, with Thomas Walpole, *of what use is all that at home?* And, you know the *home* is all with us, all for our women at least. Imagine to yourself your beautiful Italian alone, while you are hunting or attending your duty in Parliament; imagine her leaving you at dessert to get tea ready against you shall leave table! Dear Oswald, depend upon it our women possess those domestic virtues which are to be found nowhere else. The men in Italy have nothing to do but to please the women; therefore the more attractive they are the better. But with us, where men have active pursuits, women must be satisfied with the shade. That it would be a great pity to condemn Corinne to such a destiny, I freely acknowledge. I should be glad to see her upon the throne of England; but not beneath my humble roof. My lord, I knew your mother, whose loss was so much lamented by your worthy father: she was a lady in every respect like my young cousin. Such is the wife, which, were I at a proper time of life, I should choose. Adieu, my dear friend, do not be offended at what I have said, for nobody can be a greater admirer of Corinne than I am, and I own to you that after all were I at your time of life, I doubt whether I could have sufficient fortitude to renounce the hope of becoming agreeable to her."—In finishing, these words, he took the hand of Oswald, squeezed it cordially, and departed without receiving a word in reply. But Mr Edgermond comprehended the cause of his silence, and satisfied with a pressure of the hand from Oswald in answer to his own, he went away, impatient himself to finish a conversation which was painful to him.

Of all that he had said, only one word had penetrated the heart of Oswald, and that was the recollection of his mother, and his father's profound attachment to her. He had lost her when he was only fourteen years of age, but he recollected her virtues with the most heart-felt reverence, as well as that timidity and reserve which characterised them.—"Fool that I am," cried he, when alone, "I wish to know what kind of wife my father destined for me, and do I not know it, since I can call to mind the image of my mother whom he so tenderly loved?"



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What do I want more? Why deceive myself in feigning ignorance of what would be his sentiments now, were it in my power to consult his will?" It was, however, a terrible task for Oswald to return to Corinne, after what had passed the evening before, without saying something in confirmation of the sentiments which he had expressed. His agitation and his trouble became so violent, that they affected a ruptured blood-vessel which he thought had completely healed up, but which now re-opened and began to bleed afresh. Whilst his servants, in affright, called everywhere for assistance, he secretly wished that the end of life might terminate his sufferings.—"If I could die," said he, "after having seen Corinne once more, after having heard her again call me her Romeo!"—Tears rolled down his cheeks; they were the first tears he had shed for the sake of another since the death of his father.

He wrote to Corinne informing her of his accident, and some melancholy words terminated his letter. Corinne had begun this day under the most deceitful auspices: happy in the impression she conceived she had made upon Oswald, believing herself beloved, she was happy; nor did busy thought conjure up any reflection not in unison with what she so much desired. A thousand circumstances ought to have mingled considerable fear with the idea of espousing Lord Nelville; but as there was more passion than foresight in her character, governed by the present, and not diving into the future, this day, which was to cost her so many pangs, dawned upon her as the most pure and serene of her life.

On receiving Oswald's note, her soul was a prey to the most cruel feelings: she believed him in imminent danger, and set out immediately on foot, traversing the Corso at the hour when all the city were walking there, and entered the house of Oswald in face of all the first society of Rome. She had not taken time to reflect, and had walked so fast, that when she reached the chamber, she could not breathe, or utter a single word. Lord Nelville conceived all that she had risked to come and see him, and exaggerating the consequences of this action, which in England would have entirely ruined the reputation of an unmarried woman, he felt penetrated with generosity, love, and gratitude, and rising up, feeble as he was, he pressed Corinne to his heart, and cried:—"My dearest love! No, I never will abandon you! After having exposed yourself on my account! When I ought to repair—" Corinne comprehended what he would say, and as she gently disengaged herself from his arms, interrupted him thus, having first enquired how he was:—"You are deceived, my lord; in coming to see you I do nothing that most of my countrywomen would not do in my place. I knew you were ill—you are a stranger here—you know nobody but me; it is therefore my duty to take care of you. Were it otherwise, ought not established forms to yield to those real and profound sentiments, which the danger or the grief of a friend give birth



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to? What would be the fate of a woman if the rules of social propriety, permitting her to love, forbade that irresistible emotion which makes us fly to succour the object of our affection? But I repeat to you, my lord, you need not be afraid that I have compromised myself by coming hither. My age and my talents allow me, at Rome, the same liberty as a married woman. I do not conceal from my friends that I am come to see you. I know not whether they blame me for loving you; but that fact admitted, I am certain that they do not think me culpable in devoting myself entirely to you.”

On hearing these words, so natural and so sincere, Oswald experienced a confused medley of different feelings. He was moved with the delicacy of Corinne’s answer; but he was almost vexed that his first impression was not just. He could have wished that she had committed some great fault in the eyes of the world, in order that this very fault, imposing upon him the duty of marrying her, might terminate his indecision. He was offended at this liberty of manners in Italy, which prolonged his anxiety by allowing him so much happiness, without annexing to it any condition. He could have wished that honour had commanded what he desired, and these painful thoughts produced new and dangerous effects. Corinne, notwithstanding the dreadful alarm she was in, lavished upon him the most soothing attentions.

Towards the evening, Oswald appeared more oppressed; and Corinne, on her knees by the side of his bed, supported his head in her arms, though she was herself racked with more internal pain than he. This tender and affecting care made a gleam of pleasure visible through his sufferings.—“Corinne,” said he to her, in a low voice, “read in this volume, which contains the thoughts of my father, his reflections on death. Do not think,” he continued, seeing the terror of Corinne; “that I feel myself menaced with it. But I am never ill without reading over these consoling reflections. I then fancy that I hear them from his own mouth; besides, my love, I wish you to know what kind of man my father was; you will the better comprehend the cause of my grief, and of his empire over me, as well as all that I shall one day confide to you.”—Corinne took this manuscript, which Oswald never parted from, and in a trembling voice read the following pages.

“Oh ye just, beloved of the Lord! you can speak of death without fear; for you it is only a change of habitation, and that which you quit is perhaps the least of all! Oh numberless worlds, which in our sight fill the boundless region of space! unknown communities of God’s creatures; communities of His children, scattered throughout the firmament and ranged beneath its vaults, let our praises be joined to yours! We are ignorant of your condition, whether you possess the first, second, or last share of the generosity of the Supreme Being; but in speaking of death or of life, of time past or of time to come,



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we assimilate our interests with those of all intelligent and sensible beings, no matter where placed, or by what distance separated from us. Families of peoples! Families of nations! Assemblage of worlds! you say with us, Glory to the Master of the Heavens, to the King of Nature, to the God of the Universe! Glory and homage to Him, who by his will can convert sterility into abundance, shadow into reality, and death itself into eternal life.

“Undoubtedly the end of the just is a desirable death; but few amongst us, few amongst our forefathers have witnessed it. Where is the man who could approach without fear the presence of the Eternal? Where is the man who has loved God unremittingly, who has served Him from his youth, and who, attaining an advanced age, finds in his recollections no subject of uneasiness? Where is the man, moral in all his actions, without ever thinking of the praise and the reward of public opinion? Where is that man, so rare among the human species, who is worthy to serve as a model to all? Where is he? Where is he? Ah! if he exist amongst us, let our reverence and respect surround him; and ask, you will do wisely to ask, to be present at his death, as at the sublimest of earthly spectacles: only arm yourself with courage to follow him to that bed, so repulsive to our feelings, from which he will never rise. He foresees it; he is certain of it; serenity reigns in his countenance, and his forehead seems encircled with a celestial aureole: he says, with the apostle, *I know in whom I have believed*; and this confidence animates his countenance, even when his strength is exhausted. He already contemplates his new country, but without forgetting that which he is about to quit: he gives himself up to his Creator and to his God, without forgetting those sentiments which have charmed him during his life.

“Is it a faithful spouse, who according to the laws of nature must be the first of all his connections to follow him: he consoles her, he dries her tears, he appoints a meeting with her in that abode of felicity of which he can form no idea without her. He recalls to her mind those happy days which they have spent together; not to rend the heart of a tender friend, but to increase their mutual confidence in the goodness of heaven. He also reminds the companion of his fortunes, of that tender love which he has ever felt for her; not to give additional poignancy to that grief which he wishes to assuage, but to inspire her with the sweet idea that two lives have grown upon the same stalk; and that by their union they will become an additional defence to each other in that dark futurity where the pity of the Supreme God is the last refuge of our thoughts. Alas! is it possible to form a just conception of all the emotions which penetrate a loving soul at the moment when a vast solitude presents itself to our eyes, at the moment when the sentiments, the interests upon which we have subsisted during so many smiling years, are about



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to vanish for ever? Ah! you who are to survive this being like unto yourself whom heaven had given you for your support; that being who was every thing to you, and whose looks bid you an agonizing adieu, you will not refuse to place your hand upon an expiring heart, in order that its last palpitation may still speak to you when all other language has failed! And shall we blame you, faithful pair, if you had desired that your mortal remains should be deposited in the same resting place? Gracious God, awaken them together; or if one of them only has merited that favour, if only one of them must join the small number of the elect, let the other be informed of it; let the other perceive the light of angels at the moment when the fate of the happy shall be proclaimed, in order that he may possess one moment of joy before he sinks into eternal night.

“Ah! perhaps we wander when we endeavour to describe the last days of the man of sensibility, of the man who beholds death advance with hasty strides, who sees it ready to separate him from all the objects of his affection.

“He revives, and regains a momentary strength in order that his last words may serve for the instruction of his children. He says to them—‘Do not be afraid to witness the approaching end of your father, of your old friend.—It is in obedience to a law of nature that he quits before you, this earth which he entered first. He teaches you courage, and nevertheless he leaves you with grief. He would certainly have wished to assist you a little longer with his experience—to walk a little longer side by side with you through all those perils with which your youth is surrounded; *but life has no defence in the hour allotted for our descent to the tomb.* You will now live alone in the midst of a world from which I am about to disappear; may you reap in abundance the gifts which Providence has sown in it; but do not forget that this world itself is only a transient abode, and that you are destined for another more permanent one. We shall perhaps see one another again; and in some other region, in the presence of my God, I shall offer for you as a sacrifice, my prayers and my tears! Love then religion, which is so rich in promise! love religion, the last bond of union between fathers and their children, between death and life!—Approach, that I may behold you once more! May the benediction of a servant of God light on you!’—He dies!—O, heavenly angels, receive his soul, and leave us upon earth the remembrance of his actions, of his thoughts, and of his hopes!”[25]

The emotion of Oswald and Corinne had frequently interrupted this reading. At length they were obliged to give it up. Corinne feared for the effects of Oswald’s grief, which vented itself in torrents of tears, and suffered the bitterest pangs at beholding him in this condition, not perceiving that she herself was as much afflicted as he. “Yes,” said he, stretching his hand to her, “dear friend



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of my heart, thy tears are mingled with mine. Thou lamentest with me that guardian angel, whose last embrace I yet feel, whose noble look I yet behold; perhaps it is thou whom he has chosen for my comforter—perhaps—” “No, no,” cried Corinne; “he has not thought me worthy of it.” “What is it you say?” interrupted Oswald. Corinne was alarmed at having revealed what she so much wished to conceal, and repeated what had escaped her, in another form, saying—“He would not think me worthy of it!”—This phrase, so altered, dissipated the disquietude which the first had excited in the heart of Oswald, and he continued, undisturbed by any fears, to discourse with Corinne concerning his father.

The physicians arrived and dissipated somewhat the alarm of Corinne; but they absolutely forbade Lord Nelville to speak till the ruptured blood-vessel was perfectly closed. For a period of six whole days Corinne never quitted Oswald, and prevented him from uttering a word, gently imposing silence upon him whenever he wished to speak. She found the art of varying the hours by reading, music, and sometimes by a conversation of which the burden was supported by herself alone; now serious, now playful, her animation of spirits kept up a continual interest. All this charming and amiable attention concealed that disquietude which internally preyed upon her, and which it was so necessary to conceal from Lord Nelville; though she herself did not cease one instant to be a martyr to it. She perceived almost before Oswald himself what he suffered, nor was she deceived by the courage he exerted to conceal it; she always anticipated everything that would be likely to relieve him; only endeavouring to fix his attention as little as possible upon her assiduous cares for him. However, when Oswald turned pale, the colour would also abandon the lips of Corinne; and her hands trembled when stretched to his assistance; but she struggled immediately to appear composed, and often smiled when her eyes were suffused with tears. Sometimes she pressed the hand of Oswald against her heart, as if she would willingly impart to him her own life. At length her cares succeeded, and Oswald recovered.

“Corinne,” said he to her, as soon as he was permitted to speak: “why has not Mr Edgermond, my friend, witnessed the days which you have spent by my bedside? He would have seen that you are not less good than admirable; he would have seen that domestic life with you is a scene of continual enchantment, and that you only differ from every other woman, by adding to every virtue the witchery of every charm. No, it is too much—this internal conflict which rends my heart, and that has just brought me to the brink of the grave, must cease. Corinne, thou shalt know my secrets though thou concealest from me thine—and thou shalt decide upon our fate.”—“Our fate,” answered Corinne, “if you feel as I do, is never to part. But will you believe me that, till now, I have not dared even entertain a wish to be your



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wife. What I feel is very new to me: my ideas of life, my projects for the future, are all upset by this sentiment, which every day disturbs and enslaves me more and more. But I know not whether we can, whether we ought to be united!"— "Corinne," replied Oswald, "would you despise me for having hesitated? Would you attribute that hesitation to trifling considerations? Have you not divined that the deep and sad remorse which for two years has preyed upon me, could alone cause my indecision?"

"I have comprehended it," replied Corinne; "had I suspected you of a motive foreign to the affections of the heart, you would not have been he whom I loved. But life, I know, does not entirely belong to love. Habits, recollections, and circumstances, create around us a sort of entanglement that passion itself cannot destroy. Broken for a moment, it will join again, and encircle our heart as the ivy twines round the oak. My dear Oswald, let us not appropriate to any epoch of our existence more than that epoch demands. Nothing is now so absolutely necessary to my happiness as that you should not leave me. The terror of your sudden departure pursues me incessantly. You are a stranger in this country, and bound to it by no tie. Should you go, all my prospects would fade,—you would leave your poor Corinne nothing but her grief. This beautiful climate, these fine arts, that poetical inspiration which I feel with you, and now, alas! with you alone, would for me become mute. I never awake but trembling; when I behold the god of day, I know not whether it deceives me by its resplendent beams, ignorant as I am whether this city still contains you within its walls—you, the star of my life! Oswald, remove this terror from my soul, and I will desire to know nothing beyond the delightful security you will give me."—"You know," replied Oswald, "that an Englishman can never abandon his native country, that war may recall me, that—" "Oh, God!" cried Corinne, "are you going to prepare me for the dreadful moment?" and she trembled in every limb, as at the approach of some terrible danger.—"Well, if it be so, take me with you as your wife—as your slave—" But, suddenly recovering herself, she said—"Oswald, you will not go without giving me previous notice of your departure, will you? Hear me: in no country whatever, is a criminal conducted to execution without some hours being allotted for him to collect his thoughts. It will not be by letter that you will announce this to me—but you will come yourself in person—you will hear me before you go far away! And shall I be able then—What, you hesitate to grant my request?" cried Corinne. "No," replied he, "I do not hesitate; since it is thy wish, I swear that should circumstances require my departure, I will apprise thee of it beforehand, and that moment will decide the fate of our future lives."—She then left the room.

FOOTNOTE:



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[25] I have taken the liberty here to borrow some passages of the Discourse on Death, which is to be found in the *Cours de Morale Religieuse*, by M. Necker. This work, which appeared in times when the attention was engrossed by political events, is sometimes confounded with another by the same author, called *l'Importance des Opinions Religieuses*, which has had the most brilliant success. But I dare affirm, that the former is my father's most eloquent work. No minister of state, I believe, before him, ever composed works for the Christian pulpit; and that which ought to characterise this kind of writing from a man who has had so much dealings with his race, is a knowledge of the human heart, and the indulgence which this knowledge inspires: it appears then, that considered in these two points of view, the *Cours de Morale*, is perfectly original. Religious men in general do not mix in the world, and men of the world for the most part, are not religious: where then would it be possible to find to such a degree, knowledge of life united to the elevation which detaches us from it? I will assert without being afraid that my opinion will be attributed to my feelings, that this book ranks among the first of those which console the sensible being, and interest minds which reflect on the great questions that the soul incessantly agitates within us.

Chapter ii.

During those days which immediately followed the illness of Oswald, Corinne carefully avoided any thing that might lead to an explanation between them. She wished to render life as calm as possible; but she would not yet confide her history to him. All her remarks upon their different conversations, had only served to convince her too well of the impression he would receive in learning who she was, and what she had sacrificed; and nothing appeared more dreadful to her than this impression, which might detach him from her.

Returning then to the amiable artifice with which she had before prevented Oswald from abandoning himself to passionate disquietudes, she desired to interest his mind and his imagination anew, by the wonders of the fine arts which he had not yet seen, and by this means retard the moment when their fate should be cleared up and decided. Such a situation would be insupportable, governed by any other sentiment than that of love; but so much is it in the power of love to sweeten every hour, to give a charm to every minute, that although it need an indefinite future, it becomes, intoxicated with the present, and is filled every day with such a multitude of emotions and ideas that it becomes an age of happiness or pain!

Undoubtedly it is love alone that can give an idea of eternity; it confounds every notion of time; it effaces every idea of beginning and end; we believe that we have always loved the object of our affection; so difficult is it to conceive that we have ever been able to live without him. The more dreadful separation appears, the less it seems probable; it becomes, like death, a fear which is more spoken of than believed—a future event which seems impossible, even at the very moment we know it to be inevitable.



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Corinne, among her innocent stratagems to vary the amusements of Oswald, had still in reserve the statues and the paintings. One day therefore, when Oswald was perfectly restored, she proposed that they should go together to see the most beautiful specimens of painting and sculpture that Rome contains. "It is a reproach," said she to him, smiling, "not to be acquainted with our statues and our pictures; so to-morrow we will commence our tour of the museums and the galleries."—"It is your wish," answered Nelville, "and I agree. But in truth, Corinne, you have no need of these foreign resources to retain me; on the contrary, it is a sacrifice that I make whenever I turn my eyes from you to any object whatever."

They went first to the Museum of the Vatican, that palace of statues where the human figure is deified by Paganism, in the same manner as the sentiments of the soul are now by Christianity. Corinne directed the observation of Lord Nelville to those silent halls, where the images of the gods and the heroes are assembled, and where the most perfect beauty seems to enjoy itself in eternal repose. In contemplating these admirable features and forms, the intentions of the Deity towards man, seems, I know not how, to be revealed by the noble figure which He has been pleased to give him. The soul is uplifted by this contemplation to hopes full of enthusiasm and virtue; for beauty is one and the same throughout the universe, and under whatever form it presents itself, it always excites a religious emotion in the heart of man. What poetic language, there is in those countenances where the most sublime expression is for ever imprinted,—where the grandest thoughts are clad with an image so worthy of them!

In some instances, an ancient sculptor only produced one statue during his life—it was his whole history.—He perfected it every day: if he loved, if he was beloved, if he received from nature or the fine arts any new impression, he adorned the features of his hero with his memories and affections: he could thus express to outward eyes all the sentiments of his soul. The grief of our modern times, in the midst of our cold and oppressive social conditions, contains all that is most noble in man; and in our days, he who has not suffered, can never have thought or felt. But there was in antiquity, something more noble than grief—an heroic calm—the sense of conscious strength, which was cherished by free and liberal institutions. The finest Grecian statues have hardly ever indicated anything but repose. The Laocoon and Niobe are the only ones which paint violent grief and pain; but it is the vengeance of heaven which they represent, and not any passion born in the human heart; the moral being was of so sound an organization among the ancients, the air circulated so freely in their deep bosoms, and the order politic was so much in harmony with their faculties, that troubled minds hardly ever existed then, as at the present day.



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This state causes the discovery of many fine ideas, but does not furnish the arts, particularly sculpture, with those simple affections, those primitive elements of sentiment, which can alone be expressed by eternal marble. Hardly do we find any traces of melancholy; a head of Apollo, at the Justinian palace, another of the dying Alexander, are the only ones in which the thoughtful and suffering dispositions of the soul are indicated; but according to all appearances they both belong to the time when Greece was enslaved. Since that epoch, we no longer see that boldness, nor that tranquillity of soul, which among the ancients, has produced masterpieces of sculpture, and poetry composed in the same spirit.

That thought which has nothing to nourish it from without, turns upon itself, analyses, labours, and dives into every inward sentiment; but it has no longer that creative power which supposes happiness, and that plenitude of strength which happiness alone can give. Even the sarcophagi, among the ancients, only recall warlike or pleasing ideas: in the multitude of those which are to be found at the museum of the Vatican, are seen battles and games represented in bas-relief on the tombs. The remembrance of living activity was thought to be the finest homage that could be rendered to the dead; nothing relaxed, nothing diminished strength. Encouragement and emulation were the principles of the fine arts as well as of politics; they afforded scope for every virtue, and for every talent. The vulgar gloried in knowing how to admire, and the worship of genius was served even by those who could not aspire to its rewards.

The religion of Greece was not, like Christianity, the consolation of misfortune, the riches of poverty, the future hope of the dying—it sought glory and triumph;—in a manner it deified man: in this perishable religion, beauty itself was a religious dogma. If the artists were called to paint the base and ferocious passions, they rescued the human form from shame, by joining to it, as in Fauns and Centaurs, some traits of the animal figure; and in order to give to beauty its most sublime character, they alternately blended in their statues (as in the warlike Minerva and in the Apollo Musagetus), the charms of both sexes—strength and softness, softness and strength; a happy mixture of two opposite qualities, without which neither of the two would be perfect.

Corinne, continuing her observations, retained Oswald some time before those sleeping statues which are placed on the tombs, and which display the art of sculpture in the most agreeable point of view. She pointed out to him, that whenever statues are supposed to represent an action, the arrested movement produces a sort of astonishment which is sometimes painful. But statues asleep, or merely in the attitude of complete repose, offer an image of eternal tranquillity which wonderfully accords with the general effect of a southern climate upon man. The fine arts appear there to be peaceful spectators of nature, and genius, which in the north agitates the soul of man, seems beneath a beautiful sky, only an added harmony.



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Oswald and Corinne passed on to the hall where are collected together the sculptured images of animals and reptiles; and the statue of Tiberius is found, by chance, in the midst of this court. This assemblage is without design. Those statues appear to have ranged themselves of their own accord about their master. Another hall enclosed the dull and rigid monuments of the Egyptians; of that people whose statues resembled mummies more than men, and who by their silent, stiff, and servile institutions, seem to have assimilated as much as possible, life to death. The Egyptians excelled much more in the art of imitating animals than in representing men: the dominion of the soul seems to have been inaccessible to them.

After these come the porticos of the museum, where at each step is seen a new masterpiece. Vases, altars, ornaments of every kind, encircle the Apollo, the Laocoon, and the Muses. It is there that we learn to feel Homer and Sophocles: it is there that a knowledge of antiquity is awakened in the soul, which cannot be acquired elsewhere. It is in vain that we trust to the reading of history to comprehend the spirit of nations; what we see inspires us with more ideas than what we read, and external objects cause in us a strong emotion, which gives that living interest to the study of the past which we find in the observation of contemporary facts and events.

In the midst of these magnificent porticos, which afford an asylum to so many wonders of art, there are fountains, which, flowing incessantly, seem to tell us how sweetly the hours glided away two thousand years ago, when the artists who executed these masterpieces were yet alive. But the most melancholy impression which we experience at the Vatican, is in contemplating the remains of statues which are collected there: the torso of Hercules, heads separated from the trunks, and a foot of Jupiter, which indicates a greater and more perfect statue than any that we know. We fancy a field of battle before us, where time has fought with genius; and these mutilated limbs attest its victory, and our losses.

After leaving the Vatican, Corinne conducted him to the Colossi of Mount Cavallo; these two statues represent, as it is said, Castor and Pollux. Each of the two heroes is taming with one hand a fiery steed. These colossal figures, this struggle between man and the animal creation, gives, like all the works of the ancients, an admirable idea of the physical power of human nature. But this power has something noble in it, which is no longer found in modern society, where all bodily exercises are for the most part left to the common people. It is not merely the animal force of human nature, if I may use the expression, which is observable in these masterpieces. There seems to have been a more intimate union between the physical and moral qualities among the ancients, who lived incessantly in the midst of war, and a war almost of man to man. Strength of body and generosity



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of soul, dignity of features and boldness of character, loftiness of stature and commanding authority, were ideas almost inseparable, before a religion, entirely intellectual, had placed the power of man in his mind. The human figure, which was also the figure of the gods, appeared symbolical; and the nervous colossus of Hercules, as well as every other ancient statue of this sort, do not convey vulgar ideas of common life; but an omnipotent and divine will, which shews itself under the emblem of a supernatural physical force.

Corinne and Lord Nelville finished the day with a visit to the studio of Canova, the greatest modern sculptor. As it was late when they got there, they were shewn it by torch light; and statues improve much in their effect by being seen in this manner. The ancients appear to have been of this opinion, since they often placed them in their Thermae, where day could not enter. By the light of the flambeaux, the shadows being more full, the uniform lustre of the marble was softened, and the statues appeared as so many pale figures, possessing a more touching character of grace and life. There was, in the studio of Canova, an admirable statue destined for a tomb, which represented the genius of grief leaning upon a lion, the emblem of strength. Corinne, in contemplating the figure of grief, thought she discovered in it some resemblance to Oswald, and the artist himself was struck with it; Lord Nelville turned about to avoid this kind of notice; but he said in a low voice to his fair companion, "Corinne, I was condemned to a fate like that which is here represented, when I met with you; but you have changed my existence, and sometimes hope, and always an anxiety mixed with charm, fills that heart which was to suffer nothing but regret."

Chapter iii.

The masterpieces of painting were then all collected together at Rome, whose riches in this respect surpassed that of all the rest of the world. There could exist only one disputable point as to the effect produced by this collection, namely, whether the nature of the subjects chosen by the Italian artists, afford a scope for all the variety and all the originality of passion and character which painting can express? Oswald and Corinne were of contrary opinions in this respect; but this, like every other opposition of sentiment that existed between them, was owing to the difference of nation, climate, and religion. Corinne affirmed that the most favourable subjects for painting were religious ones[26]. She said that sculpture was a Pagan art, and painting a Christian one; and that in these arts were to be found, as in poetry, the distinguishing qualities of ancient and modern literature. The pictures of Michael Angelo, the painter of the Bible, and of Raphael, the painter of the Gospel, suppose as much profound thought, as much sensibility as are to be found in Shakespeare and Racine: sculpture can only present a simple, energetic existence,



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whilst painting indicates the mysteries of reflection and resignation, and makes the immortal soul speak through transient colours. Corinne maintained also that historical or poetical facts were rarely picturesque. In order to comprehend such subjects, it would often be necessary to preserve the practice of painters of old, and write the speech of each personage in a ribbon proceeding out of the mouth. But religious subjects are instantly understood by everybody, and attention is not removed from the picture to guess what it represents.

Corinne was of opinion that the expression of modern painters was often theatrical, and that it bore the stamp of their age, in which was no longer found, as in Andrea Mantegna, Perugino, and Leonardo da Vinci, the unity and simplicity which characterised the repose of the ancients; a repose to which is joined that profundity of sentiment which is the characteristic of Christianity. She admired the artless composition of Raphael's pictures, especially those in his first manner. All the figures are directed towards one principal object, without any contrivance on the part of the artist to group them in various attitudes in order to produce a laboured effect. Corinne said that this sincerity in the arts of the imagination, as well as in every other, is the true character of genius; and that studied efforts for fame are almost always destructive of enthusiasm. She maintained that there was rhetoric in painting as well as in poetry, and that all those who could not embody character called every accessory ornament to their aid, uniting rich costumes and remarkable attitudes to the attraction of a brilliant subject, whilst a single Virgin holding a child in her arms, an attentive old man in the Mass of Bolsena, a man leaning on his stick in the School of Athens, or Saint Cecilia with her eyes lifted up to heaven, produced the deepest effect by the expression of the countenance alone. These natural beauties increase every day more and more in our estimation; but on the contrary, in pictures done for effect, the first glance is always the most striking.

Corinne added to these reflections an observation which strengthened them: which was, that the religious sentiments of the Greeks and Romans, and the disposition of their minds, being in every respect absolutely foreign from ours, it is impossible for us to create according to their conceptions, or to build upon their ground. They may be imitated by dint of study; but how can genius employ all its energies in a work where memory and erudition are so necessary? It is not the same with subjects that belong to our own history and our own religion. Here the painter himself may be inspired; he may feel what he paints, and paint what he has seen. Life assists him to imagine life; but in transporting himself to the regions of antiquity, his invention must be guided by books and statues. To conclude, Corinne found that pictures from pious subjects, impart a comfort to the soul that nothing could replace; and that they suppose a sacred enthusiasm in the artist which blends with genius, renovates, revives, and can alone support him against the injustice of man and the bitterness of life.



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Oswald received, in some respects, a different impression. In the first place, he was scandalized to see the Deity represented as he is by Michael Angelo, in human form and feature. It was his opinion that thought dare not give Him shape and figure, and that hardly at the very bottom of the soul could be found an idea sufficiently intellectual, sufficiently ethereal to elevate it to the Supreme Being; as to subjects taken from the Holy Scripture, it seemed to him that the expression and the images left much to be desired. He thought, with Corinne, that religious meditation is the most intimate sentiment that man can experience; and in this respect, it is that which furnishes the painter with the deepest mysteries of physiognomy and expression; but as religion represses every emotion which does not proceed immediately from the heart, the figures of the saints and martyrs cannot admit of much variety. The sentiment of humility, so noble in the face of heaven, weakens the energy of terrestrial passions and necessarily gives monotony to most religious subjects. When Michael Angelo applied his terrible genius to those subjects, he almost changed their essence by giving to his prophets a formidable expression of power more becoming a Jupiter than a Saint. He, like Dante, often avails himself of the images of Paganism and blends the heathen mythology with the Christian religion. One of the most admirable circumstances attending the establishment of Christianity, is the lowly estate of the apostles who have preached it, and the misery and debasement of the Jewish people, so long the depositaries of the promises that announced the coming of Christ. This contrast between the littleness of the means and the greatness of the result, is in a moral point of view, extremely fine; but in painting, which exhibits the means alone, Christian subjects must be less dazzling than those taken from the heroic and fabulous ages. Among the arts, music alone can be purely religious. Painting cannot be confined to so abstract and vague an expression as that of sound. It is true that the happy combination of colour, and of *chiaro-oscuro* produces, if it may be so expressed, a musical effect in painting; but as the latter represents life, it should express the passions in all their energy and diversity. Undoubtedly it is necessary to choose among historical facts, those which are sufficiently known not to require study in order to comprehend them; for the effect produced by painting ought to be immediate and rapid, like every other pleasure derived from the fine arts; but when historical facts are as popular as religious subjects, they have the advantage over them of the variety of situations and sentiments which they recall.



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Lord Nelville thought also, that scenes of tragedy and the most moving poetical fictions, ought to claim a preference in painting, in order that all the pleasures of the imagination and of the soul might be united. Corinne combated this opinion, fascinating as it was. She was convinced that the encroachment of one art upon another was mutually injurious. Sculpture loses the advantages which are peculiar to it when it aspires to represent a group of figures as in painting; painting when it wishes to attain dramatic expression. The arts are limited in their means, though boundless in their effects. Genius seeks not to combat that which is in the essence of things; on the contrary, its superiority consists in discovering it.—“As for you, my dear Oswald,” said Corinne, “you do not love the arts in themselves, but only on account of their relation with mind and feeling. You are only sensible to that which represents the sorrows of the heart. Music and poetry agree with this disposition; whilst the arts which speak to the eyes, though their signification be ideal, only please and interest us when the soul is tranquil and the imagination entirely free; nor do we require, in order to relish them, that gaiety which society inspires, but only the serenity which beautiful weather and a fine climate diffuse over the mind. We must be capable of feeling the universal harmony of nature in those arts which represent external objects; this is impossible when the soul is troubled, that harmony having been destroyed in us by calamity.”—“I know not,” replied Oswald, “whether my taste in the fine arts be confined to that alone which can recall the sufferings of the soul; but I know, at least, that I cannot endure the representation of physical pain. My strongest objection,” continued he, “against Christian subjects in painting, is the painful sensations excited in me by the image of blood, wounds, and torture, notwithstanding the victims may have been animated by the noblest enthusiasm. Philoctetus is perhaps the only tragical subject in which bodily ills can be admitted. But with how many poetical circumstances are his cruel pangs surrounded? They have been caused by the arrows of Hercules. They will be healed by the son of AEsculapius. In short, the wound is almost confounded with the moral resentment produced in him who is struck, and cannot excite any impression of disgust. But the figure of the boy possessed with a devil, in Raphael’s superb picture of the Transfiguration, is a disagreeable image, and in no way possesses the dignity of the fine arts. They must discover to us the charm of grief, as well as the melancholy of prosperity; it is the ideal part of human destiny which they should represent in each particular circumstance. Nothing torments the imagination more than bloody wounds and nervous convulsions. It is impossible in such pictures not to seek, and at the same time dread, to find the exactness of the imitation. What pleasure can we receive from that art which only consists in such an imitation; it is more horrible, or less beautiful than nature herself, the moment it only aspires to resemble her.”



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“You are right, my lord,” said Corinne, “to wish that Christian subjects were divested of painful images; they do not require them. But confess, however, that genius, and the genius of the soul, can triumph over every thing. Behold that picture of the Communion of St Jerome, by Domenichino. The body of the dying saint is livid and gaunt: death has seized upon it; but in that look is eternal life, and every earthly misery seems produced here only to disappear before the pure lustre of a religious sentiment. However, dear Oswald,” continued Corinne, “though I am not of your opinion in everything, I will shew you that even in differing from one another there is some analogy of sentiment between us. I have endeavoured to accomplish what you desire, in the gallery of pictures which has been furnished me by those artists who were of my acquaintance, among which are some designs of my own sketching. You will there see the defects and the advantages of those subjects which you prefer. This gallery is at my country seat at Tivoli. The weather is fine enough to visit it.—Shall we go thither tomorrow?” As she awaited Oswald’s consent, he said to her: “My love, have you any doubt of my answer? Have I in this world, any other pleasure, any other thought, besides you? And is not my life, too free perhaps from any occupation, as from every interest, solely taken up with the happiness of seeing and hearing you?”

FOOTNOTE:

[26] In a journal entitled *Europe*, are to be found observations full of information on subjects relating to painting: from this journal I have extracted many of these reflections, which have just been read; Mr Frederic Schlegel is the author of it, and this writer, as well as the German thinkers in general, is an inexhaustible mine.

Chapter iv.

They set out therefore the next day for Tivoli. Oswald himself drove the four horses that drew them; he took pleasure in their swiftness, which seemed to increase the vivacity of thought and of existence; and such an impression is sweet by the side of the object we love. He performed the office of whip with the most extreme attention, for fear the slightest accident should happen to Corinne. He felt the duties of a protector which is the softest tie that binds man to woman. Corinne was not, like most women, easily terrified by the possible dangers of a journey; but it was so sweet to remark the solicitude of Oswald, that she almost wished to be frightened, to enjoy the pleasure of, hearing him cheer and comfort her.

That which gave Lord Nelville, as will be seen in the sequel, so great an ascendancy over the heart of his mistress, was the unexpected contrasts which gave a peculiar charm to his manners. Everybody admired his intellect and the gracefulness of his figure; but he must have been particularly interesting to one, who uniting in herself by a singular accord, constancy and mobility, took delight in impressions,



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at once various and faithful. Never did he think of anything but Corinne; and this very occupation of his mind incessantly assumed different characters: at one time he was governed by reserve, at another he was open and communicative: one moment he was perfectly calm, and another a prey to the most gloomy and bitter sensations, which proved the depth of his sentiments, but mingled anxiety with confidence and incessantly gave birth to new emotions. Oswald, internally agitated, endeavoured to assume an external appearance of composure, and Corinne, occupied in conjecturing his thoughts, found in this mystery a continual interest. One would have said, that the very defects of Oswald were only made to set off his agreeable qualities. No man, however distinguished, in whose character there was no contradiction, who was subject to no internal conflict, could have captivated the imagination of Corinne. She felt a sort of awe of Oswald, which subjected her to him. He reigned over her soul by a good and by an evil power; by his qualities, and by the disquietude which these qualities, badly combined, could inspire: in short there was no security in the happiness that Lord Nelville conferred, and perhaps the violence of Corinne's passion was owing to this; perhaps she could only love, to such a degree, him whom she feared to lose. A superior mind, a sensibility as ardent as it was delicate, might become weary of everything, except that truly extraordinary man, whose soul, constantly agitated, seemed like the sky—sometimes serene, sometimes covered with clouds. Oswald, always true, always of profound and impassioned feelings, was nevertheless often ready to renounce the object of his tenderness, because a long habit of mental pain made him believe, that only remorse and suffering could be found in the too exquisite affections of the heart.

Lord Nelville and Corinne, in their journey to Tivoli, passed before the ruins of Adrian's palace, and the immense garden which surrounded it. That prince had collected together in this garden, the most rare productions, the most admirable masterpieces of those countries which were conquered by the Romans. To this very day some scattered stones are seen there, which are called *Egypt*, *India*, and *Asia*. Farther on was the retreat, where Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, ended her days. She did not support in adversity, the greatness of her destiny; she was incapable of dying for glory like a man; or like a woman, dying rather than betray her friend.

At length they discovered Tivoli, which was the abode of so many celebrated men, of Brutus, of Augustus, of Mecenas, and of Catullus; but above all, the abode of Horace, for it is his verse which has rendered this retreat illustrious. The house of Corinne was built over the noisy cascade of Teverone; at the top of the mountain, opposite her garden, was the temple of the Sybil. It was a beautiful idea of the ancients, to place their temples on the summits



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of high places. They majestically presided over the surrounding country, as religious ideas over all other thoughts. They inspired more enthusiasm for nature, by announcing the Deity from which she emanates, and the eternal gratitude of successive generations towards her. The landscape, from whatever point of view considered, formed a picture with the temple, which was placed there as the centre and the ornament of the whole. Ruins spread a singular charm over the *campagna* of Italy. They do not recall, like modern edifices, the labour and the presence of man; they are confounded with nature and the trees; they seem in harmony with the solitary torrent; they present the image of time, which has made them what they are. The most beautiful countries in the world, when they bring to mind no recollection, when they bear the stamp of no remarkable event, are stripped of interest when compared with historical countries. What place in Italy could be more suitable for the habitation of Corinne than the retreat consecrated to the sybil, to the memory of a woman, animated by divine inspiration. The house of Corinne was delightful; it was ornamented with the elegance of modern taste, and yet discovered the charm of an imagination enamoured of the beauties of antiquity; happiness, in the most elevated sense of the word, seemed to reign there; a felicity which consisted in all that ennobles the soul, excites thought, and vivifies talent.

In walking with Corinne, Oswald perceived that the wind possessed an harmonious sound, and filled the air with chords, which seemed to proceed from the waving of the flowers, and the rustling of the trees, and to give a voice to nature. Corinne told him that the wind produced this harmony from the aeolian harps, which she had placed in grottoes to fill the air with sound, as well as perfumes. In this delicious abode, Oswald was inspired with the purest sentiment.—“Hear me,” said he to Corinne; “till this moment I felt the happiness I derived from your society blended with remorse; but now I say to myself, that you are sent by my father to terminate my sufferings upon this earth. It is he that I had offended; but it is, nevertheless, he who has obtained by his prayers my pardon in heaven. Corinne!” cried he, throwing himself upon his knees, “I am pardoned; I feel it in this sweet calm of innocence which pervades my soul. Thou canst now, without apprehension, unite thyself to me, nor fear that fate opposes our union.”—“Well,” said Corinne, “let us continue to enjoy this peace of the heart which is granted us. Let us not meddle with destiny: she inspires so much dread when we wish to interfere with her, when we try to obtain from her more than she will give! Since we are now happy, let us not desire a change!”

[Illustration: *Corinne showing Oswald her pictures.*]



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Lord Nelville was hurt at this answer of Corinne. He conceived she ought to comprehend that he was ready to tell her every thing, to promise every thing, if she would only confide to him her history; and this manner of avoiding it gave him as much offence as apprehension; he did not perceive that a sense of delicacy prevented Corinne from taking advantage of his emotion, to bind him by an oath. Perhaps also, it is in the nature of a profound and genuine passion, to dread a solemn moment, however much desired, and to tremble at exchanging hope for happiness itself. Oswald, far from judging in this manner, persuaded himself, that although Corinne loved him, she wished to preserve her independence, and intentionally deferred all that might lead to an indissoluble union. This thought excited in him a painful irritation, and immediately assuming a cold and reserved air, he followed Corinne to her gallery of pictures, without uttering a word. She soon divined the impression she had produced on him, but knowing his pride, she durst not impart to him her observations; however, in showing him her pictures and discussing general topics, she felt a vague hope of softening him, which gave to her voice a more moving charm, even when uttering the most indifferent words.

Her gallery was composed of historical pictures, paintings on poetical and religious subjects, and landscapes. None of them was composed of a very large number of figures. That style of painting undoubtedly presents greater difficulties, but affords less pleasure. Its beauties are too confused, or too minute. That unity of interest, which is the vital principle of the arts, as well as anything else, is necessarily divided and scattered. The first of the historical pictures represented Brutus, in profound meditation, seated at the foot of the statue of Rome. In the back ground, the slaves are carrying the lifeless bodies of his two sons, whom he had condemned to death; and on the other side of the picture, the mother and sisters appear plunged into an agony of grief: women are, happily, divested of that courage, which can triumph over the affections of the heart. The statue of Rome, placed by the side of Brutus, is a beautiful idea; it speaks eloquently. Yet how can any body know without an explanation, that it is the elder Brutus who has just sent his sons to execution? Nevertheless, it is impossible to characterise this event better than it is done in this picture. At a distance the city of Rome is perceived in its ancient simplicity, without edifices or ornaments, but full of patriotic grandeur, since it could inspire such a sacrifice.—“Undoubtedly,” said Corinne, “when I have named Brutus, your whole soul will become fixed to this picture; but still it would be possible to behold it without divining the subject it represented. And does not this uncertainty, which almost always exists in historical pictures, mingle the torment of an enigma with the enjoyment of the fine arts, which ought to be so easy and so clear?”



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“I have chosen this subject because it recalls the most terrible action that love of country has inspired. The companion to this picture is Marius, spared by the Cimbrian, who cannot bring himself to kill this great man; the figure of Marius is imposing; the costume of the Cimbrian and the expression of his physiognomy, are very picturesque. It is the second epoch of Rome, when laws no longer existed, but when genius still exercised considerable influence upon circumstances. Then comes that era when talents and fame were only objects of misfortune and insult. The third picture which you see here, represents Belisarius, carrying on his shoulders the body of his young guide, who died while asking alms for him. Belisarius, blind and mendicant, is thus recompensed by his master; and in the universe which he has conquered, he is employed in bearing to the grave the remains of the poor boy who alone had not abandoned him. This figure of Belisarius is admirable; another so fine is not to be found in the modern school. The painter, with a truly poetical imagination, has united here every species of misfortune, and perhaps the picture is too dreadful even to awaken pity: but who tells us it is Belisarius? to indicate him it should be faithful to history: but that fidelity would deprive the subject of all its picturesque beauty. Following these pictures which represent in Brutus, virtues approaching to crime; in Marius, glory, the cause of calamity; in Belisarius, services paid by the blackest persecutions; in short, every misery of human destiny, which is recorded in the events of history, I have placed two pictures of the old school, which a little relieve the oppressed soul by recalling that religion which has consoled the enslaved and distracted universe, that religion which stirred the depths of the heart when all without was but oppression and silence. The first is by Albano; he has painted the infant Jesus sleeping on a cross. Behold the sweetness and calm of that countenance! What pure ideas it recalls; how it convinces the soul that celestial love has nothing to fear, either from affliction or death. The second picture is by Titian; the subject is Christ sinking beneath the weight of the cross. His mother comes to meet Him, and throws herself upon her knees on perceiving Him. Admirable reverence in a mother for the misfortunes and divine virtues of her son! What a look is that of our Redeemer, what a divine resignation in the midst of suffering, and in this suffering what sympathy with the heart of man! That is, doubtless, the finest of my pictures. It is that towards which I incessantly turn my eyes, without ever being able to exhaust the emotion which it inspires. Next come the dramatic pieces,” continued Corinne, “taken from four great poets. Judge with me, my lord, of the effect which they produce. The first represents Aeneas in the Elysian fields, when he wishes to approach Dido. The indignant shade retires, rejoiced that she no longer carries



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in her bosom that heart which would still beat with love at the aspect of her guilty paramour. The vapoury colour of the shades and the paleness of the surrounding scene, form a contrast with the life-like appearance of Aeneas and of the sybil who conducts him. But this kind of effect is an amusement of the artist, and the description of the poet is necessarily superior to anything that painting can produce. I will say as much of this picture of Clorinda dying, and Tancred. The utmost pathos which it can excite, is to call to our minds the beautiful lines of Tasso, when Clorinda pardons her adoring enemy who has just pierced her breast. Painting necessarily becomes subordinate to poetry, when devoted to subjects which have been treated by great poets; for their words leave an impression which effaces every other; the situations which they have chosen almost ever derive their chief strength from the development of the passions and their eloquence, whilst the greater part of picturesque effects arises from a calm beauty, a simple expression, a noble attitude, a moment of repose, worthy of being indefinitely prolonged without ever wearying the eye.

“Your terrible Shakespeare, my lord,” continued Corinne, “has furnished the subject of the third dramatic picture—it is Macbeth,—the invincible Macbeth—who, ready to fight Macduff, whose wife and children he has put to death, learns that the oracle of the witches is accomplished, that Birnam Wood is advancing to Dunsinane, and that he is fighting a man who was born after the death of his mother. Macbeth is conquered by fate, but not by his adversary.—He grasps the sword with a desperate hand;—he knows that he is about to die;—but wishes to try whether human strength cannot triumph over destiny. There is certainly in this head, a fine expression of wildness and fury—of trouble and of energy; but how many poetical beauties do we miss? Is it possible to paint Macbeth plunged in guilt by the spells of ambition, which offer themselves to him under the shape of witchcraft? How can painting express the terror which he feels? That terror, however, which is not inconsistent with intrepid bravery? Is it possible to characterise that peculiar species of superstition which oppresses him? That belief without dignity, that hell-born fatality which weighs him down, his contempt of life, his horror of death? Undoubtedly the human countenance is the greatest of mysteries; but the motionless physiognomy of a painting can never express more than the workings of a single sentiment. Contrasts, conflicts of the mind, events, in short, belong to the dramatic art. Painting can with difficulty render a succession of events: time and movement exist not for it.



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“The Phedre of Racine has furnished the subject of the fourth picture,” said Corinne, showing it to Lord Nelville.—“Hippolitus, in all the beauty of youth and innocence, repels the perfidious accusations of his step-mother; the hero, Theseus, still protects his guilty spouse, whom he encircles with his conquering arm. There is in the countenance of Phedre, a trouble which freezes the soul with horror; and her nurse, without remorse, encourages her in her guilt. Hippolitus in this picture is perhaps more beautiful than even in Racine; he resembles more the ancient Meleager, because no love for Aricia disturbs the impression of his wild and noble virtue; but is it possible to suppose that Phedre, in the presence of Hippolitus, can support her falsehood? Is it possible that she can behold him innocent and persecuted without falling at his feet? An offended woman may wrong the object of her affection in his absence; but when she sees him, her heart is wholly absorbed in love. The poet has never put Phedre and Hippolitus in the same scene after the former has calumniated the latter; the painter has been obliged to do so in order to bring together, as he has done in his picture, all the beauties of the contrast; but is not this a proof that there is such a difference between poetical and picturesque subjects that it would be better for the poets to write from pictures, than for the painters to compose their works from the poets? The history of the human mind proves to us that imagination must always precede thought.”

Whilst Corinne was thus explaining her pictures to Lord Nelville, she had stopped several times, in the hope that he would speak to her; but his wounded soul did not betray itself by a single word; whenever she expressed a feeling idea he only sighed and turned his head, in order that she might not see how easily he was affected in his present state of mind. Corinne, overcome by this silence, sat down and covered her face with her hands—Lord Nelville for some time walked about the room with a hurried step, then approaching Corinne, was about to betray his feelings; but the invincible pride of his nature repressed his emotion, and he returned to the pictures as if he were waiting for Corinne to finish showing them. Corinne expected much from the effect of the last of all; and making an effort in her turn to appear calm, she arose and said, “My lord, I have yet three landscapes to show you—two of them are allied to very interesting ideas. I am not fond of those rustic scenes which are as dull in painting as idylls, when they make no allusion to fable or to history. I am most pleased with the manner of Salvator Rosa, who represents, as you see in this picture, a rock with torrents and trees, without a single living creature, without even a bird recalling an idea of life. The absence of man in the midst of natural scenes, excites deep reflection. What would the earth be in this state of solitude? A work without an aim; and yet a work so beautiful, the mysterious impression of which would be addressed to the Divinity alone!



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"We are come at last to the two pictures in which, according to my opinion, history and poetry are happily blended with landscape[27]. One represents the moment when Cincinnatus is invited by the consuls to leave the plough, in order to take the command of the Roman armies. In this landscape you behold all the luxury of the South, its abundant vegetation, its burning sky, the smiling aspect of all nature, discoverable even in the plants themselves; and that other picture which forms a contrast with this, is the son of Cairbar asleep upon the tomb of his father.—For three days and three nights he has awaited the arrival of the bard who is to honour the memory of the dead. This bard is perceived at a distance descending the mountain; the shade of the father hovers in the clouds; the country is covered with hoar frost; the trees, though naked, are agitated by the wind, and their dead branches and dried leaves, still follow the current of the storm."

Till then, Oswald had been influenced by resentment at what had taken place in the garden; but on beholding this picture, the tomb of his father and the mountains of Scotland appeared to his mind, and his eyes were filled with tears. Corinne took her harp, and before this picture, began to sing one of those Scotch ballads whose simple notes seem to accompany the noise of the wind, mournfully complaining through the valleys. She sang the farewell of a warrior quitting his native land and his mistress; and the word, *no more*, one of the most harmonious and touching in the English language, was pronounced by Corinne with the most moving expression. Oswald sought not to resist his emotion, and both yielded without restraint to their tears.—"Ah!" cried Lord Nelville, "does my native country speak no language to thy heart? Wouldst thou follow me into those retreats, peopled by my recollections? Wouldst thou be the worthy companion of my life, as thou art its sole charm and delight?"—"I believe so," replied Corinne—"I believe so; for I love thee!"—"In the name of love then, no longer conceal anything from me," said Oswald.—"I consent," interrupted Corinne; "since it is thy wish. My promise is given; I only make one condition, which is, that thou wilt not exact it of me before the approaching epoch of our religious ceremonies. Will not the support of heaven be more than ever necessary to me at the moment when my fate is about to be decided?"—"No more," cried Lord Nelville, "if that fate depend upon me, it is no longer doubtful."—"Thou thinkest so," replied she; "I have not the same confidence; but, in a word, I intreat thee show that condescension to my weakness which I request."—Oswald sighed, without either granting or refusing the delay required.—"Let us now return to town," said Corinne. "How can I conceal anything from thee in this solitude? And if what I have to relate must divide us, ought I so soon—Let us go, Oswald—thou wilt return hither again, happen what may: my ashes will find rest here." Oswald, much affected, obeyed Corinne. He returned to the city with her, and scarcely a word passed between them upon the road. From time to time they looked at each other with an affection that said everything; but nevertheless, a sentiment of melancholy reigned in the depths of their souls when they arrived in the midst of Rome.



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FOOTNOTE:

[27] The historical pictures which compose the gallery of Corinne, are either from copies or originals of the Brutus of *David*, the Maurius of *Drouet*, and the Belisarius of *Gerard*; among the other pictures mentioned, that of Dido was done by *M. Rehberg*, a German painter; that of Clorinda, is in the gallery of Florence; that of Macbeth, is in an English collection of pictures from Shakespeare; and that of Phedre, is by *Guerin*; lastly, the two landscapes of Cincinnatus and Ossian, are at Rome, and were done by Mr Wallis, an English painter.

Book ix.

THE POPULAR FESTIVAL, AND MUSIC.

Chapter i.

It was the last day of carnival, which is the most noisy festival of the year, when a fever of joy, a mania of amusement, unparalleled in any other country, seized the Roman people. Everybody is disguised; hardly does there remain at the windows, an unmasked spectator: the scene of gaiety commences at a given hour on a certain day, and scarcely ever does any public or private event of the year hinder any person from joining the sports of the season.

It is then that we can form a judgment of the extent of imagination possessed by the common people. The Italian language, even in their mouths, is full of charm. Alfieri said that he went to the public market at Florence to learn to speak good Italian,—Rome has the same advantages: and perhaps these are the only two cities in the world where the people speak so well that the mind may receive entertainment at every corner of the street.

That kind of humour which shines in the authors of harlequinades and opera-buffa, is very commonly found even among men without education. In these days of carnival, when extravagance and caricature are admitted, the most comic scenes take place between the masks.

Often a burlesque gravity is contrasted with the vivacity of the Italians; and one would say that these fantastic vestments inspired a dignity in the wearers, not natural to them; at other times, they manifest such a singular knowledge of mythology in their disguises, that we would be inclined to believe the ancient fables still popular in Rome; and more frequently they ridicule different gradations of society with a pleasantry full of force and originality. The nation appears a thousand times more distinguished in its sports than in its history. The Italian language yields to every shade of gaiety with a facility which only



requires a light inflection of the voice and a little difference of termination in order to increase or diminish, ennoble or travesty, the sense of words. It is particularly graceful in the mouth of children[28]. The innocence of this age and the natural malice of the language, form an exquisite contrast. In truth, it may be said, that it is a language which explains itself without any aid and always appears more intellectual than he who speaks it.



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There is neither luxury nor good taste in the feast of carnival; a kind of universal petulance makes it resemble the bacchanals of the imagination; but in imagination only is this resemblance, for the Romans are in general very sober, and except the last day of carnival, tolerably serious. We often make sudden discoveries of every sort in the character of the Italians, and this is what contributes to give them the reputation of being subtle and crafty.—There is, undoubtedly, a strong habit of dissimulation in this country, which has supported so many different yokes; but it is not to dissimulation that we must always attribute the rapid transition from one manner of being to another. An inflammable imagination is often the cause of it. The character of a people who are only rational or witty, may be easily understood and will not suddenly surprise us, but all that belongs to the imagination is unexpected. It leaps over intermediate barriers, it is often hurt at nothing, and frequently indifferent to that which ought most to affect it. In fact, it is a law unto itself, and we can never calculate its impressions from their causes.

For example, we cannot comprehend what amusement the Roman nobility find in riding in their carriages from one end of the *corso* to the other for whole hours together, as well during the carnival as on the other days of the year. Nothing ever diverts them from this custom. There are also among the masks, men who saunter about with every appearance of weariness, in the most ridiculous costume imaginable, and who—melancholy harlequins and silent punchinellos,—do not say a word the whole evening, but appear, if it may be so expressed, to have satisfied their carnival conscience by having neglected nothing to be merry.

We find at Rome a certain species of mask which is not seen elsewhere: masks formed after the figures of the ancient statues, and which at a distance imitate the most perfect beauty—the women often lose greatly by removing them. But nevertheless this motionless imitation of life, these stalking wax countenances, however pretty they may be, have something terrifying in them. The great nobles make a tolerably grand display of carriages on the last days of the carnival; but the pleasure of this festival is the crowd and the confusion: it seems like a relic of the *Saturnalia*; every class in Rome is mixed together. The most grave magistrates ride with official dignity in the midst of the masks; every window is decorated. The whole town is in the streets: it is truly a popular festival. The pleasure of the people consists neither in the shows nor the feasts that are given them, nor the magnificence they witness. They commit no excess either in drinking or eating: their recreation is to be set at liberty, and to find themselves among the nobility, who on their side are pleased at being among the people. It is especially the refinement and delicacy of amusements



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as well as the perfection of education, that places a barrier between different classes of people. But in Italy this distinction of rank is not very sensible; the country is more characterised by the natural talent and imagination of all, than by the extraordinary cultivation of the upper classes. There is therefore, pending carnival, a complete confusion of ranks, of manners, and of sentiments: the crowd, the cries, the wit, and the comfits with which they inundate without distinction the carriages as they pass along, confound every mortal together and set the nation pell-mell, as if social order no longer existed.

Corinne and Lord Nelville, both buried in thought, arrived in the midst of this tumult. They were at first almost stunned; for nothing appears more singular than this activity of noisy pleasures, when the soul is entirely absorbed in itself. They stopped at the Piazza del Popolo to ascend the amphitheatre near the obelisk, whence is seen the race course. At the moment they got out of their calash, the Count d'Erfeuil perceived them and took Oswald aside to speak to him.

"It is not right," said he, "to show yourself in this public manner, arriving from the country alone with Corinne; you will compromise her character, then what will you do?" "I do not think," answered Nelville, "that I compromise the character of Corinne by showing the attachment she inspires me with. But even were that true, I should be too happy if the devotion of my life—" "As to your being happy," interrupted the Count, "I do not believe it;" people can only be happy in acting becomingly. Society, think as you may, has much influence "upon our happiness, and we should never do what it disapproves."—"We should then never be guided by our own thoughts and our own feelings, but live entirely for society," replied Oswald. "If it be so, if we are constantly to imitate one another, to what purpose was a soul and an understanding given to each? Providence might have spared this superfluity."—"That is very well said," replied the Count, "very philosophically thought; but people ruin themselves by these kind of maxims, and when love is gone, the censure of opinion remains. I, who appear to possess levity, would never do any thing to draw upon me the disapprobation of the world. We may indulge in trifling liberties, in agreeable pleasantries which announce an independent manner of thinking, provided we do not carry it into action; for when it becomes serious—" "But the serious consequences are love and happiness," answered Lord Nelville.—"No, no;" interrupted the Count d'Erfeuil, "that is not what I wish to say; there are certain established rules of propriety, which one must not brave, on pain of passing for an eccentric man, a man—in fact, you understand me—for a man who is not like others."—Lord Nelville smiled, and without being in the least vexed; for he was by no means pained with these remarks; he rallied the Count upon his frivolous severity; he felt with secret



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satisfaction that for the first time, on a subject which caused him so much emotion, the Count did not possess the least influence over him. Corinne, at a distance, conjectured what was passing; but the smile of Nelville restored tranquillity to her heart, and this conversation of the Count d'Erfeuil, far from embarrassing Oswald or his fair companion, only inspired them with a temper of mind more in harmony with the scene before them.

The horse-racing was about to begin. Lord Nelville expected to see races like those of England; but what was his surprise, when informed that only little Barbary horses without riders were to run against each other. This sight excites the attention of the Romans in a singular manner. The moment it is about to commence, all the crowd arrange themselves on each side of the way. The Piazza del Popolo, which was covered with people, is empty in a moment. Each one ascends the amphitheatres which surround the obelisk, and innumerable multitudes of heads and dark eyes are turned towards the barrier from which the horses are to start.

They arrive without bridle or saddle, with merely a rich cloth thrown over their backs, and led by extremely well-dressed grooms, who take a most passionate interest in their success. The horses are placed behind the barrier and their ardour to clear it is extreme. At every moment they are held back; they prance, they neigh, they clatter with their feet, as if they were impatient of a glory which they are about to obtain themselves without the guidance of man. This impatience of the horses and the shouts of the grooms at the moment when the barrier falls, produce a fine dramatic effect. The horses start, the grooms cry "Stand back! Stand back!" with inexpressible transport. They accompany the horses with their voice and gestures till they are out of sight. The horses seem inspired with the same emulation as men. The pavement sparkles beneath their feet; their manes fly in the air, and their desire, thus left to their own efforts, of winning the prize is such, that there have been some who, on arriving at the goal, have died from the swiftness with which they have run. It is astonishing to see these freed horses thus animated with personal passions; it almost induces a belief that thought exists beneath this animal form. The crowd break their ranks when the horses are gone by, and follow them in disorder. They reach the Venetian palace which serves for the goal. Never was anything like the cries of the grooms whose horses are victors. He who had gained the first prize, threw himself on his knees before his horse[29], and thanked him, recommending him to the protection of St Anthony, the patron of animals, with an enthusiasm as serious as it was comic to the spectators.



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It is generally the close of day when the races finish. Then commences another kind of amusement, much less picturesque, but also very noisy. The windows are illuminated. The guards abandon their post to mix in the general joy[30]. Each one then takes a little torch called a *moccolo*, and they seek mutually to extinguish each other's light, repeating the word *ammazzare* (kill) with a formidable vivacity. *Che la Bella Principessa sia ammazzata! Che il signore abbate sia ammazzata!* (Let the fair princess be killed, let the abbot be killed!) is shouted from one end of the street to the other. The crowd, become emboldened, because at this hour horses and carriages are forbidden, hurl themselves in all directions. At length there is no other pleasure than that of tumult and disorder. In the meantime night advances, the noise ceases by degrees—a profound silence succeeds, and there only remains of this evening the confused idea of a dream, in which the people had forgotten for a moment their labour, the learned their studies, and the nobility their idleness.

FOOTNOTES:

[28] I asked a little Tuscan girl which was the handsomer, she or her sister? “Ah!” answered she, “*Il piu bel viso e il mio;*”—Mine is the most beautiful face.

[29] An Italian postillion, whose horse was dying, prayed for him, saying. “*O Sant’ Antonio, abbiate pieta dell’ anima sua;*”—O Saint Anthony, have mercy on his soul!

[30] Goethe has a description of the carnival at Rome, which gives a faithful and animated picture of that festival.

Chapter ii.

Oswald, since his calamity, had not found spirits to seek the pleasure of music. He dreaded those ravishing strains so soothing to melancholy, but which inflict pain, when we are oppressed by real grief. Music awakens those bitter recollections which we are desirous to appease. When Corinne sang, Oswald listened to the words she uttered; he contemplated the expression of her countenance, it was she alone that occupied him; but if in the streets of an evening, several voices were joined, as it frequently happens in Italy, to sing the fine airs of the great masters, he at first endeavoured to listen, and then retired, because the emotion it excited, at once so exquisite and so indefinite, renewed his pain. However, there was a magnificent concert to be given in the theatre at Rome, which was to combine the talents of all the best singers. Corinne pressed Lord Nelville to accompany her to this concert, and he consented, expecting that his feelings would be softened and refined by the presence of her he loved.



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On entering her box, Corinne was immediately recognised, and the remembrance of the Capitol adding to the interest which she usually inspired, the theatre resounded with applause. From every part of the house they cried, "Long live Corinne!" and the musicians themselves, electrified by this general emotion, began to play victorious strains; for men are led to associate triumph of every sort with war and battle. Corinne was intimately affected with these universal tokens of admiration and respect. The music, the applause, the *bravos*, and that indefinable impression, which a multitude of people expressing one sentiment always produces, awakened those feelings which, in spite of her efforts to conceal them, appeared in her eyes suffused with tears, and the palpitation of her heart equally visible. Oswald, jealous of this emotion, approached her, saying in a low voice,—“It would be a pity madam to snatch you from this brilliant popularity, it is certainly equal to love, since it produces the same effect in your heart.”—Having spoken thus, he retired to the further end of the box without waiting for any reply. These words produced the most cruel agitation in the bosom of Corinne, and in a moment destroyed all the pleasure she received from these expressions of applause, which principally gave her delight because they were witnessed by Oswald.

The concert began—he who has not heard Italian singing can have no idea of music! Italian voices are so soft and sweet, that they recall at once the perfume of flowers, and the purity of the sky. Nature has destined the music for the climate: one is like a reflection of the other. The world is the work of one mind, expressed in a thousand different forms. The Italians, during a series of ages, have been enthusiastically fond of music. Dante, in his poem of purgatory, meets with one of the best singers of his age; being entreated, he sings one of his delicious airs, and the ravished spirits are lulled into oblivion of their sufferings, until recalled by their guardian angel. The Christians, as well as the pagans, have extended the empire of music beyond the grave. Of all the fine arts, it is that which produces the most immediate effect upon the soul. The others are directed to some particular idea; but this appeals to the intimate source of our existence, and entirely changes our inmost soul. What is said of Divine Grace, which suddenly transforms the heart, may humanly speaking be applied to the power of melody; and among the presentiments of the life to come, those which spring from music are not to be despised.



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Even the gaiety which the comic music of Italy is so well calculated to excite, is not of that vulgar description which does not speak to the imagination. At the very bottom of the mirth which it excites, will be found poetical sensations and an agreeable reverie, which mere verbal pleasantry never could inspire. Music is so fleeting a pleasure, that it glides away almost at the same time we feel it, in such a manner, that a melancholy impression is mingled with the gaiety which it excites; but when expressive of grief, it also gives birth to a sweet sentiment. The heart beats more quickly while listening to it, and the satisfaction caused by the regularity of the measure, by reminding us of the brevity of time, points out the necessity of enjoying it. You no longer feel any void, any silence, around you; life is filled; the blood flows quickly; you feel within you that motion which gives activity to life, and you have no fear of the external obstacles with which it is beset.

Music redoubles the ideas which we possess of the faculties of the soul; when listening to it we feel capable of the noblest efforts. Animated by music, we march to the field of death with enthusiasm. This divine art is happily incapable of expressing any base sentiment, any artifice, any falsehood. Calamity itself, in the language of music, is stripped of its bitterness; it neither irritates the mind nor rends the heart. Music gently raises that weight which almost constantly oppresses the heart when we are formed for deep and serious affections; that weight which sometimes becomes confounded with the very sense of our existence, so habitual is the pain which it causes. It seems to us in listening to pure and delectable sounds, that we are about to seize the secret of the Creator, and penetrate the mystery of life. No language can express this impression, for language drags along slowly behind primitive impressions, as prose translators behind the footsteps of poets. It is only a look that can give some idea of it; the look of an object you love, long fixed upon you, and penetrating by degrees so deeply into your heart, that you are at length obliged to cast down your eyes to escape a happiness so intense, that, like the splendour of another life, it would consume the mortal being who should presume stedfastly to contemplate it.

The admirable exactness of two voices perfectly in harmony produces, in the duets of the great Italian masters, a melting delight which cannot be prolonged without pain. It is a state of pleasure too exquisite for human nature; and the soul then vibrates like an instrument which a too perfect harmony would break. Oswald had obstinately kept at a distance from Corinne during the first part of the concert; but when the duet began, with faintly-sounding voices, accompanied by wind instruments, whose sounds were more pure than the voices themselves, Corinne covered her face with her handkerchief, entirely absorbed in emotion; she



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wept, but without suffering—she loved, and was undisturbed by any fear. Undoubtedly the image of Oswald was present to her heart; but this image was mingled with the most noble enthusiasm, and a crowd of confused thoughts wandered over her soul: it would have been necessary to limit these thoughts in order to render them distinct. It is said that a prophet traversed seven different regions of heaven in a minute. He who could thus conceive all that an instant might contain, must surely have felt the sublime power of music by the side of the object he loved. Oswald felt this power, and his resentment became gradually appeased. The feelings of Corinne explained and justified everything; he gently approached her, and Corinne heard him breathing by her side in the most enchanting passage of this celestial music. It was too much—the most pathetic tragedy could not have excited in her heart so much sensation as this intimate sentiment of profound emotion which penetrated them both at the same time, and which each succeeding moment, each new sound, continually exalted. The words of a song have no concern in producing this emotion—they may indeed occasionally excite some passing reflection on love or death; but it is the indefinite charm of music which blends itself with every feeling of the soul; and each one thinks he finds in this melody, as in the pure and tranquil star of night, the image of what he wishes for on earth.

“Let us retire,” said Corinne; “I feel ready to faint.” “What ails you?” said Oswald, with uneasiness; “you grow pale. Come into the open air with me; come.” They went out together. Corinne, leaning on the arm of Oswald, felt her strength revive from the consciousness of his support. They both approached a balcony, and Corinne, with profound emotion, said to her lover, “Dear Oswald, I am about to leave you for eight days.” “What do you tell me?” interrupted he. “Every year,” replied she, “at the approach of Holy Week, I go to pass some time in a convent, to prepare myself for the solemnity of Easter.” Oswald advanced nothing in opposition to this intention; he knew that at this epoch, the greater part of the Roman ladies gave themselves up to the most rigid devotion, without however on that account troubling themselves very seriously about religion during the rest of the year; but he recollected that Corinne professed a different worship to his, and that they could not pray together. “Why are you not,” cried he, “of the same religion as myself?” Having pronounced this wish, he stopped short. “Have not our hearts and minds the same country?” answered Corinne. “It is true,” replied Oswald; “but I do not feel less painfully all that separates us.” They were then joined by Corinne’s friends; but this eight days’ absence so oppressed his heart that he did not utter a word during the whole evening.

Chapter iii.



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Oswald visited Corinne at an early hour, uneasy at what she had said to him. He was received by her maid, who gave him a note from her mistress informing him that she had entered the convent on that same morning, agreeably to the intention of which he had been apprised by her, and that she should not be able to see him until after Good Friday. She owned to him that she could not find courage to make known her intention of retiring so soon, in their conversation the evening before. This was an unexpected stroke to Oswald. That house, which the absence of Corinne now rendered so solitary, made the most painful impression upon his mind; he beheld her harp, her books, her drawings, all that habitually surrounded her; but she herself was no longer there. The recollection of his father's house struck him—he shuddered and, unable to support himself, sunk into a chair.

“In such a way as this,” cried he, “I might learn her death! That mind, so animated, that heart, throbbing with life, that dazzling form, in all the freshness of vernal bloom, might be crushed by the thunderbolt of fate, and the tomb of youth would be silent as that of age. Ah! what an illusion is happiness! What a fleeting moment stolen from inflexible Time, ever watching for his prey! Corinne! Corinne! you must not leave me; it was the charm of your presence which deprived me of reflection; all was confusion in my thoughts, dazzled as I was by the happy moments which I passed with you. Now I am alone—now I am restored to myself, and all my wounds are opened afresh.” He invoked Corinne with a kind of despair which could not be attributed to her short absence, but to the habitual anguish of his heart, which Corinne alone could assuage. Corinne's maid, hearing the groans of Oswald, entered the room and, touched with the manner in which he was affected by the absence of her mistress, said to him, “My lord, let me comfort you; I hope my dear lady will pardon me for betraying her secret. Come into my room, and you shall see your portrait.” “My portrait!” cried he. “Yes; she has painted it from memory,” replied Theresa (that was the name of Corinne's maid); “she has risen at five o'clock in the morning this week past, in order to finish it before she went to the convent.”

Oswald saw this portrait, which was a striking likeness and most elegantly executed: this proof of the impression which he had made on Corinne penetrated him with the sweetest emotion. Opposite this portrait was a charming picture, representing the Blessed Virgin—and before this picture was the oratory of Corinne. This singular mixture of love and religion is common to the greater part of Italian women, attended with circumstances more extraordinary than in the apartment of Corinne; for free and unrestrained as was her life, the remembrance of Oswald was united in her mind with the purest hopes and purest sentiments; but to place thus the resemblance of a lover opposite an emblem



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of divinity, and to prepare for a retreat to a convent by consecrating a week to paint that resemblance, was a trait that characterised Italian women in general rather than Corinne in particular. Their kind of devotion supposes more imagination and sensibility than seriousness of mind and severity of principles;—nothing could be more contrary to Oswald's religious ideas; yet how could he find fault with Corinne, at the very moment when he received so affecting a proof of her love?

He minutely surveyed this chamber, which he now entered for the first time: at the head of Corinne's bed he saw the portrait of an elderly man, whose physiognomy was not Italian; two bracelets were hanging near this portrait, one formed of dark and light hair twisted together; the other was of the most lovely flaxen, and what appeared a most remarkable effect of chance, perfectly resembled that of Lucilia Edgermond, which he had observed very attentively three years ago on account of its extreme beauty. Oswald contemplated these bracelets without uttering a word, for to interrogate Theresa he felt to be unworthy of him. But Theresa, fancying she guessed Oswald's thoughts, and wishing to remove from his mind every jealous suspicion, hastened to inform him that during eleven years that she had waited on Corinne, her mistress had always worn these bracelets, and that she knew they were composed of the hair of her father and mother, and that of her sister. "You have been eleven years with Corinne," said Lord Nelville; "you know then—" blushing, he suddenly checked himself, ashamed of the question he was about to put, and quitted the house immediately, to avoid saying another word.

In going away, he turned about several times to behold the windows of Corinne, and when he had lost sight of her habitation, he felt a sadness now new to him—that which springs from solitude. In the evening, he sought to dissipate his melancholy by joining a distinguished assembly in Rome; for to find a charm in reverie, we must in our happy as well as in our clouded moments, be at peace with ourselves.

The party he visited was soon insupportable to Lord Nelville, inasmuch as it made him feel more sensibly all the charms that Corinne could diffuse through society, by observing the void caused by her absence. He essayed to converse with some ladies, who answered him in that insipid phraseology which is established to avoid the true expression of our sentiments and opinions, if those who use it have anything of this sort to conceal. He approached several groups of gentlemen who seemed by their voice and gesture to be discoursing upon some important subject; he heard them discussing the most trivial topic in the most common manner. He then sat down to contemplate at his ease, that vivacity without motive and without aim which is found in most numerous assemblies; nevertheless, mediocrity in Italy is by no means disagreeable; it has little vanity, little jealousy, and much respect for superiority of mind; and if it fatigues with its dulness, it hardly ever offends by its pretensions.



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It was in these very assemblies, however, that Oswald had found so much to interest him a few days before; the slight obstacle which the company opposed to his conversation with Corinne,—the speedy opportunity which she took to return to him as soon as she had been sufficiently polite to the rest of the circle,—the similarity of sentiment which existed between them in the observations which the company suggested,—the pleasure which Corinne took when discoursing in Oswald's presence, to address indirectly to him some reflection of which he alone comprehended the true meaning, had attached such recollections to every part of this very room, that Oswald had been deluded so far as to believe that there was something amusing in these assemblies themselves. "Ah!" said he, when departing, "it was here as every where else—she was the life of the scene; let me rather seek the most desert spot till she return. I shall feel her absence less bitterly when there is nothing about me bearing the resemblance of pleasure."

Book x.

HOLY WEEK.

[Illustration]

Chapter i.

Oswald passed the following day in the gardens of some monasteries. He went first to that of the Carthusians, and stopped some time before he entered, to contemplate two Egyptian lions which are at a little distance from the gate. Those lions have a remarkable expression of strength and repose; there is something in their physiognomy belonging neither to the animal nor the man: they seem one of the forces of nature and enable us to form a conception how the gods of the Pagan theology might be represented under this emblem.

The Carthusian monastery is built upon the ruins of the Thermae of Diocletian; and the church by the side of the monastery, is decorated with such of its granite columns as remained standing. The monks who inhabit this retreat are very eager to show them, and the interest they take in these ruins seems to be the only one they feel in this world. The mode of life observed by the Carthusians, supposes in them either a very limited mind, or the most noble and continued elevation of religious sentiments; this succession of days without any variety of event, reminds us of that celebrated line:

Sur les mondes detruits le Temple dort immobile.

The Temple sleeps motionless on the ruins of worlds.



The whole employment of their life serves but to contemplate death. Activity of mind, with such an uniformity of existence, would be a most cruel torment. In the midst of the cloister grow four cypresses. This dark and silent tree, which is with difficulty agitated by the wind, introduces no appearance of motion into this abode. Near the cypresses is a fountain, scarcely heard, whose fall is so feeble and slow, that one would be led to call it the clepsydra of this solitude, where time makes so little noise. Sometimes the moon penetrates it with her pale lustre, and her absence and return may be considered as an event in this monotonous scene.



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Those men who exist thus, are nevertheless the same to whom war and all its bustle would scarcely suffice if they had been brought up to it.

The different combinations of human destiny upon earth afford an inexhaustible source of reflection. A thousand accidents pass, and a thousand habits are formed in the interior of the soul, which make every individual a world and the subject of a history. To know another perfectly, would be the task of a whole life; what is it then that we understand by knowing men? To govern them is practicable by human wisdom, but to comprehend them belongs to God alone.

From the Carthusian monastery Oswald repaired to that of St Bonaventure, built upon the ruins of the palace of Nero; there, where so many crimes have been committed without remorse, poor monks, tormented by scruples of conscience, impose upon themselves the most cruel punishment for the slightest fault. "*Our only hope,*" said one of these devotees, "*is that at the hour of death our sins will not have exceeded our penances.*" Lord Nelville, as he entered this monastery struck his foot against a trap, and asking the use of it—"It leads to our place of interment;" said one of the young monks, who was already struck with the malady caused by the malaria. The inhabitants of the south being very much afraid of death, we are astonished to find institutions in Italy which fix the ideas upon this point; but it is natural to be fond of thoughts that inspire us with dread. There is, as it were, an intoxication of sadness, which does good to the soul by occupying it entirely.

An ancient Sarcophagus of a young child serves for the fountain to this convent. The beautiful Palm-tree of which Rome boasts, is the only tree of any sort in the garden of these monks; but they pay no attention to external objects. Their discipline is too rigorous to allow any kind of latitude to the mind. Their looks are cast down, their gait is slow, they make no use of their will. They have abdicated the government of themselves, *so fatiguing is this empire to its sad possessor.* This day, however, did not produce much emotion in the soul of Oswald; the imagination revolts at death, presented under all its various forms in a manner so manifestly intentional. When we unexpectedly meet this *memento mori*, when it is nature and not man that speaks to our soul, the impression we receive is much deeper.

Oswald felt the most calm and gentle sensations when, at sunset, he entered the garden of *San Giovanni e Paolo*. The monks of this monastery are subjected to a much less rigid discipline, and their garden commands a view of all the ruins of ancient Rome. From this spot is seen the Coliseum, the Forum, and all the triumphal arches, the obelisks, and the pillars which remain standing. What a fine situation for such an asylum! The secluded monks are consoled for their own nothingness, in contemplating the monuments raised by those who are no more. Oswald strolled for a long time beneath the umbrageous walks of this garden, whose beautiful trees sometimes interrupt for a moment the view of Rome, only to redouble the emotion which is felt on

beholding it again. It was that hour of the evening, when all the bells in Rome are heard chiming the *Ave Maria*.



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-----squilla di lontano
Che paja il giorno pianger che si muore.
DANTE.

-----*the vesper bell from far,*
That seems to mourn for the expiring day.
CAREY'S TR.

The evening prayer is used to fix the time. In Italy they say: *I will see you an hour before, or an hour after the Ave Maria:* and the different periods of the day and of the night, are thus religiously designated. Oswald enjoyed the admirable spectacle of the sun which towards the evening descends slowly in the midst of the ruins, and appears for a moment submitted to the same destiny as the works of man. Oswald felt all his habitual thoughts revive within him. Corinne herself was too charming, and promised too much happiness to occupy his mind at this moment. He sought the spirit of his father in the clouds, where the force of imagination traced his celestial form, and made him hope to receive from heaven some pure and beneficent breath, as the benediction of his sainted parent.

Chapter ii.

The desire of studying and becoming acquainted with the Roman religion, determined Lord Nelville to seek an opportunity of hearing some of those preachers who make the churches of this city resound with their eloquence during Lent. He reckoned the days that were to divide him from Corinne, and during her absence, he wished to see nothing that appertained to the fine arts; nothing that derived its charm from the imagination. He could not support the emotion of pleasure produced by the masterpieces of art when he was not with Corinne; he was only reconciled to happiness when she was the cause of it. Poetry, painting, music, all that embellishes life by vague hopes, was painful to him out of her presence.

It is in the evening, with lights half extinguished, that the Roman preachers deliver their sermons in Holy Week. All the women are then clad in black, in remembrance of the death of Jesus Christ, and there is something very moving in this anniversary mourning, which has been so often renewed during a lapse of ages. It is therefore impossible to enter without genuine emotion those beautiful churches, where the tombs so fitly dispose the soul for prayer; but this emotion is generally destroyed in a few moments by the preacher.

His pulpit is a fairly long gallery, which he traverses from one end to the other with as much agitation as regularity. He never fails to set out at the beginning of a phrase and



to return at the end, like the motion of a pendulum; nevertheless he uses so much action, and his manner is so vehement, that one would suppose him capable of forgetting everything. But it is, to use the expression, a kind of systematic fury that animates the orator, such as is frequently to be met with in Italy, where the vivacity of external action often indicates no more than a superficial emotion. A crucifix is suspended at the extremity



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of the pulpit; the preacher unties it, kisses it, presses it against his heart, and then restores it to its place with the greatest coolness, when the pathetic period is concluded. There is a means of producing effect which the ordinary preachers frequently have recourse to, namely, the square cap they wear on their head, which they take off, and put on again with inconceivable rapidity. One of them imputed to Voltaire, and particularly to Rousseau, the irreligion of the age. He threw his cap into the middle of the pulpit, charging it to represent Jean Jacques, and in this quality he harangued it, saying; "*Well, philosopher of Geneva, what have you to object to my arguments?*" He was silent for some minutes as if he waited for a reply—the cap made no answer: he then put it upon his head again and finished the conversation in these words: "*now that you are convinced I shall say no more.*"

These whimsical scenes are often repeated among the Roman preachers; for real talent in this department is here very scarce. Religion is respected in Italy as an omnipotent law; it captivates the imagination by its forms and ceremonies, but moral tenets are less attended to in the pulpit than dogmas of faith, which do not penetrate the heart with religious sentiments. Thus the eloquence of the pulpit, as well as several other branches of literature, is absolutely abandoned to common ideas, which neither paint nor express any thing. A new thought would cause almost a panic in those minds at once so indolent and so full of ardour that they need the calm of uniformity, which they love because it offers repose to their thoughts. The ideas and phraseology of their sermons are confined to a sort of etiquette. They follow almost in a regular sequence, and this order would be disturbed if the orator, speaking from himself, were to seek in his own mind what he should say. The Christian philosophy, whose aim is to discover the analogy between religion and human nature, is as little known to the Italian preachers as any other kind of philosophy. To think upon matters of religion would scandalise them as much as to think against it; so much are they accustomed to move in a beaten track.

The worship of the Blessed Virgin is particularly dear to the Italians, and to every other nation of the south; it seems in some manner united with all that is most pure and tender in the affection we feel for woman. But the same exaggerated figures of rhetoric are found in what the preachers say upon this subject; and it is impossible to conceive why their gestures do not turn all that is most serious into mockery. Hardly ever in Italy do we meet in the august function of the pulpit, with a true accent or a natural expression.



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Oswald, weary of the most tiresome of all monotony—that of affected vehemence, went to the Coliseum, to hear the Capuchin who was to preach there in the open air, at the foot of one of those altars which mark out, within the enclosure, what is called *the Stations of the Cross*. What can offer a more noble subject of eloquence than the aspect of this monument, of this amphitheatre, where the martyrs have succeeded to the gladiators! But nothing of this kind must be expected from the poor Capuchin, who, of the history of mankind, knows no more than that of his own life. Nevertheless, if we could be insensible to the badness of his discourse, we should feel ourselves moved by the different objects that surround him. The greater part of his auditors are of the confraternity of the *Camaldoli*; they are clad during their religious exercises in a sort of grey robe, which entirely covers the head and the whole body, with two little holes for the eyes. It is thus that the spirits of the dead might be represented. These men, who are thus concealed beneath their vestments, prostrate themselves on the earth and strike their breasts. When the preacher throws himself on his knees crying for *mercy and pity*, the congregation throw themselves on their knees also, and repeat this same cry, which dies away beneath the ancient porticoes of the Coliseum. It is impossible at this moment not to feel the most religious emotion; this appeal from earthly misery to celestial good, penetrates to the inmost sanctuary of the soul. Oswald started when all the audience fell on their knees; he remained standing, not to join in a worship foreign to his own; but it was painful to him that he could not associate publicly with mortals of any description, who prostrated themselves before God. Alas! is there an invocation of heavenly pity that is not equally suited to all men?

The people had been struck with the fine figure and foreign manners of Lord Nelville, but were by no means scandalized at his not kneeling down. There are no people in the world more tolerant than the Romans; they are accustomed to visitors who come only to see and observe; and whether by an effect of pride or of indolence, they never seek to instil their opinions into others. What is more extraordinary still, is, that during Holy Week particularly, there are many among them who inflict corporal punishment upon themselves; and while they are performing this flagellation, the church-doors are open, and they care not who enters. They are a people who do not trouble their heads about others; they do nothing to be looked at; they refrain from nothing because they are observed; they always proceed to their object, and seek their pleasure without suspecting that there is a sentiment called vanity, which has no object, no pleasure, except the desire of being applauded.

Chapter iii.



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The ceremonies of Holy Week at Rome have been much spoken of. Foreigners come thither during Lent expressly to enjoy this spectacle; and as the music of the Sixtine Chapel and the illumination of St Peter's are beauties unique in themselves, it is natural that they should excite a lively curiosity; but expectation is not equally satisfied. The ceremonies themselves, properly speaking—the dinner of the twelve Apostles, served by the Pope, the washing of the feet by him, and all the different customs of this solemn season—excite very moving recollections; but a thousand inevitable circumstances often injure the interest and the dignity of this spectacle. All those who assist at it are not equally devout, equally occupied with pious ideas. These ceremonies, so often repeated, have become a sort of mechanical exercise for most people, and the young priests despatch the service of great festivals with an activity and a dexterity little calculated to produce any religious effect. That indefinite, that unknown, that mysterious impression, which religion ought to excite, is entirely destroyed by that species of attention which we cannot help paying to the manner in which each acquits himself of his functions. The avidity of some for the meats presented them, and the indifference of others in the genuflections which they multiply and the prayers which they recite, often strip the festival of its solemnity.

The ancient costumes which still serve for the vestments of the priests, agree badly with the modern style of treating the hair. The Greek bishop, with his long beard, has the most respectable appearance. The ancient custom also of making a reverence after the manner of women, instead of bowing as men do now, produces an impression by no means serious. In a word, the *ensemble* is not in harmony, and the ancient is blended with the modern without sufficient care being taken to strike the imagination, or at least to avoid all that may distract it. A worship, dazzling and majestic in its external forms, is certainly calculated to fill the soul with the most elevated sentiments; but care must be taken that the ceremonies do not degenerate into a spectacle in which each one plays his part—in which each one studies what he must do at such a moment; when he is to pray, when he is to finish his prayer; when to kneel down, and when to get up. The regulated ceremonies of a court introduced into a temple of devotion, confine the free movement of the heart, which can alone give man the hope of drawing near to the Deity.

These observations are pretty generally felt by foreigners, but the Romans for the most part do not grow weary of those ceremonies; and every year they find in them new pleasure. A singular trait in the character of the Italians is, that their mobility does not make them inconstant, nor does their vivacity render variety necessary to them. They are in every thing patient and persevering; their imagination embellishes what they possess; it occupies their life instead of rendering it uneasy; they think every thing more magnificent, more imposing, more fine, than it really is: and whilst in other nations vanity consists in an affectation of boredom, that of the Italians, or rather their warmth and vivacity, makes them find pleasure in the sentiment of admiration.



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Lord Nelville, from all that the Romans had said to him, expected to be more affected by the ceremonies of Holy Week. He regretted the noble and simple festivals of the Anglican church. He returned home with a painful impression; for nothing is more sad than not being moved by that which ought to move us; we believe that our soul is become dry, we fear that the fire of enthusiasm is extinguished in us, without which the faculty of thinking can only serve to disgust us with life.

Chapter iv.

But Good Friday soon restored to Lord Nelville all those religious emotions, the want of which he so much regretted on the preceding days. The seclusion of Corinne was about to terminate; he anticipated the happiness of seeing her again: the sweet expectations of tender affection accord with piety; it is only a factious, worldly life, that is entirely hostile to it. Oswald repaired to the Sixtine Chapel to hear the celebrated *miserere*, so much talked of all over Europe. He arrived thither whilst it was yet day, and beheld those celebrated paintings of Michael Angelo, which represent the Last Judgment, with all the terrible power of the subject and the talent which has handled it. Michael Angelo was penetrated with the study of Dante; and the painter, in imitation of the poet, represents mythological beings in the presence of Jesus Christ; but he always makes Paganism the evil principle, and it is under the form of demons that he characterises the heathen fables. On the vault of the chapel are represented the prophets, and the sibyls called in testimony by the Christians,

Teste David cum Sibylla.

A crowd of angels surround them; and this whole vault, painted thus, seems to bring us nearer to heaven, but with a gloomy and formidable aspect. Hardly does daylight penetrate the windows, which cast upon the pictures shadow rather than light. The obscurity enlarges those figures, already so imposing, which the pencil of Michael Angelo has traced; the incense, whose perfume has a somewhat funereal character, fills the air in this enclosure, and every sensation is prelusive to the most profound of all—that which the music is to produce.

Whilst Oswald was absorbed by the reflections which every object that surrounded him gave birth to, he saw Corinne, whose presence he had not hoped to behold so soon, enter the women's gallery, behind the grating which separated it from that of the men. She was dressed in black, all pale with absence, and trembled so when she perceived Oswald, that she was obliged to lean on the balustrade for support as she advanced; at this moment the *miserere* began.



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The voices, perfectly trained in this ancient song, proceeded from a gallery at the commencement of the vault; the singers are not seen; the music seems to hover in the air; and every instant the fall of day renders the chapel more gloomy. It was not that voluptuous and impassioned music which Oswald and Corinne had heard eight days before; they were holy strains which counselled mortals to renounce every earthly enjoyment. Corinne fell on her knees before the grating and remained plunged in the most profound meditation. Oswald himself disappeared from her sight. She thought that in such a moment one could wish to die, if the separation of the soul from the body could take place without pain; if, on a sudden, an angel could carry away on his wings our sentiments and our thoughts—sparks of ethereal fire, returning towards their source: death would then be, to use the expression, only a spontaneous act of the heart, a more ardent and more acceptable prayer.

The *miserere*, that is to say, *have mercy on us*, is a psalm, composed of verses, which are sung alternately in a very different manner. A celestial music is heard by turns, and the verse following, in recitative, is murmured in a dull and almost hoarse tone. One would say, that it is the reply of harsh and stern characters to sensitive hearts; that it is the reality of life which withers and repels the desires of generous souls. When the sweet choristers resume their strain, hope revives; but when the verse of recitative begins, a cold sensation seizes upon the hearer, not caused by terror, but by a repression of enthusiasm. At length, the last piece, more noble and affecting than all the others, leaves a pure and sweet impression upon the soul: may God vouchsafe that same impression to us before we die.

The torches are extinguished; night advances, and the figures of the prophets and the sybils appear like phantoms enveloped in twilight. The silence is profound; a word spoken would be insupportable in the then state of the soul, when all is intimate and internal; as soon as the last sound expires, all depart slowly and without the least noise; each one seems to dread the return to the vulgar interests of the world.

Corinne followed the procession, which repaired to the temple of St Peter, then lighted only by an illuminated cross. This sign of grief, alone and shining in the august obscurity of this immense edifice, is the most beautiful image of Christianity in the midst of the darkness of life. A pale and distant light is cast on the statues which adorn the tombs. The living, who are perceived in crowds beneath these vaults, seem like pigmies, compared with the images of the dead. There is around the cross, a space which it lights up, where the Pope clad in white is seen prostrate, with all the cardinals ranged behind him. They remain there for half an hour in the most profound silence, and it is impossible not to be moved at this spectacle. We know not the subject of their prayers; we hear not their secret groanings; but they are old, they precede us in the journey to the tomb. When we in our turn pass into that terrible advance guard, may God by his grace so ennoble our age, that the decline of life may be the first days of immortality!



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Corinne, also,—the young and beautiful Corinne,—was kneeling behind the train of priests, and the soft light reflected on her countenance, gave it a pale hue, without diminishing the lustre of her eyes. Oswald contemplated her as a beautiful picture—a being that inspired adoration. When her prayer was concluded she arose. Lord Nelville dared not yet approach her, respecting the religious meditation in which he thought her plunged; but she came to him first with a transport of happiness; and this sentiment pervading all her actions, she received with a most lively gaiety, all those who accosted her in St Peter's, which had become, all at once, a great public promenade, and a rendezvous to discuss topics of business or pleasure.

Oswald was astonished at this mobility which caused such opposite impressions to succeed each other; and though the gaiety of Corinne gave him pleasure, he was surprised to find in her no trace of the emotions of the day. He did not conceive how, upon so solemn, a day, they could permit this fine church to be converted into a Roman *cafe*, where people met for pleasure; and beholding Corinne in the midst of her circle, talking with so much vivacity, and not thinking on the objects that surrounded her, he conceived a sentiment of mistrust as to the levity of which she might be capable. She instantly perceived it, and quitting her company abruptly, she took the arm of Oswald to walk with him in the church, saying, "I have never held any conversation with you upon my religious sentiments—permit me to speak a little upon that subject now; perhaps I shall be able to dissipate those clouds which I perceive rising in your mind."

Chapter v.

"The difference of our religions, my dear Oswald," continued Corinne, "is the cause of that secret censure which you cannot conceal from me. Yours is serious and rigid—ours, cheerful and tender. It is generally believed that Catholicism is more rigorous than Protestantism; and that may be true in a country where a struggle has subsisted between the two religions; but we have no religious dissensions in Italy, and you have experienced much of them in England. The result of this difference is, that Catholicism in Italy has assumed a character of mildness and indulgence; and that to destroy it in England, the Reformation has armed itself with the greatest severity in principles and morals. Our religion, like that of the ancients, animates the arts, inspires the poets, and becomes a part, if I may so express it, of all the joys of our life; whilst yours, establishing itself in a country where reason predominates more than imagination, has assumed a character of moral austerity which will never leave it. Ours speaks in the name of love, and yours in the name of duty. Our principles are liberal, our dogmas are absolute; nevertheless, our despotic orthodoxy accommodates itself to particular circumstances,



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and your religious liberty enforces obedience to its laws without any exception. It is true that our Catholicism imposes very hard penance upon those who have embraced a monastic life. This state, freely chosen, is a mysterious relation between man and the Deity; but the religion of laymen in Italy is an habitual source of affecting emotions. Love, hope, and faith, are the principal virtues of this religion, and all these virtues announce and confer happiness. Our priests therefore, far from forbidding at any time the pure sentiment of joy, tell us that it expresses our gratitude towards the Creator. What they exact of us, is an observance of those practices which prove our respect for our worship, and our desire to please God, namely, charity for the unfortunate, and repentance for our errors. But they do not refuse absolution, when we zealously entreat it; and the attachments of the heart inspire a more indulgent pity amongst us than anywhere else. Has not Jesus Christ said of the Magdalen: *Much shall be pardoned her, because she hath loved much?* These words were uttered beneath a sky, beautiful as ours; this same sky implores for us the Divine mercy.”

“Corinne!” answered Lord Nelville, “how can I combat words so sweet, and of which my heart stands so much in need? But I will do it, nevertheless, because it is not for a day that I love Corinne—I expect with her a long futurity of happiness and virtue. The most pure religion is that which makes a continual homage to the Supreme Being, by the sacrifice of our passions and the fulfilment of our duties. A man’s morality is his worship of God; and it would be degrading the idea we form of the Creator, to suppose that He wills anything in relation with His creature, that is not worthy of His intellectual perfection. Paternal authority, that noble image of a master sovereignly good, demands nothing of its children that does not tend to make them better or happier. How then can we imagine that God would exact anything from man, which has not man himself for its object? You see also what confusion in the understandings of your people results from the practice of attaching more importance to religious ceremonies than to moral duties. It is after Holy Week, you know, that the greatest number of murders is committed at Rome. The people think, to use the expression, that they have laid in a stock during Lent, and expend in assassination the treasures of their penitence. Criminals have been seen, yet reeking with murder, who have scrupled to eat meat on a Friday; and gross minds, who have been persuaded that the greatest of crimes consists in disobeying the discipline of the church, exhaust their consciences on this head, and conceive that the Deity, like human sovereigns, esteems submission to his power more than every other virtue. This is to substitute the sycophancy of a courtier for the respect which the Creator inspires, as the source and reward of a scrupulous and delicate life. Catholicism in Italy, confining itself to external demonstrations, dispenses the soul from meditation and self-contemplation. When the spectacle is over, the emotion ceases, the duty is fulfilled, and one is not, as with us, a long time absorbed in thoughts and sentiments, which give birth to a rigid examination of one’s conduct and heart.”



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“You are severe, my dear Oswald,” replied Corinne; “it is not the first time I have remarked it. If religion consisted only in a strict observance of moral duties, in what would it be superior to reason and philosophy? And what sentiments of piety could we discover, if our principal aim were to stifle the feelings of the heart? The stoics were as enlightened as we, as to the duties and the austerity of human conduct; but that which is peculiar to Christianity is the religious enthusiasm which blends with every affection of the soul; it is the power of love and pity; it is the worship of sentiment and of indulgence, so favourable to the flights of the soul towards heaven. How are we to interpret the parable of the Prodigal Son, if not that love, sincere love, is preferred even to the most exact discharge of every duty? This son had quitted his paternal abode, and his brother had remained there; he had plunged into all the dissipation and pleasure of the world, and his brother had never deviated for a single moment from the regularity of domestic life; but he returned, full of love for his father and of repentance for his past follies, and his parent celebrated this return by a festival. Ah! can it be doubted that among the mysteries of our nature, to love and to love again is what remains to us of our celestial inheritance? Even our virtues are often too complicated with life, for us to comprehend the gradations of good, and what is the secret sentiment that governs and leads us astray: I ask of my God to teach me to adore him, and I feel the effect of my prayers in the tears that I shed. But to support this disposition of the soul, religious practices are more necessary than you think; they are a constant communication with the Deity; they are daily actions, unconnected with the interests of life and solely directed towards the invisible world. External objects are also a great help to piety; the soul falls back upon itself, if the fine arts, great monuments, and harmonic strains, do not reanimate that poetical genius, which is synonymous with religious inspiration.

“The most vulgar man, when he prays, when he suffers, and places hope in heaven, has at that moment something in him which he would express like Milton, Homer, or Tasso, if education had taught him to clothe his thoughts with words. There are only two distinct classes of men in the world; those who feel enthusiasm, and those who despise it; every other difference is the work of society. The former cannot find words to express their sentiments, and the latter know what it is necessary to say to conceal the emptiness of their heart. But the spring that bursts from the rock at the voice of heaven, that spring is the true talent, the true religion, the true love.



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“The pomp of our worship; those pictures in which the kneeling saints express a continual prayer in their looks; those statues placed on the tombs as if they were one day to rise with their inhabitants; those churches and their immense domes, have an intimate connection with religious ideas. I like this splendid homage paid by men to that which promises them neither fortune nor power—to that which neither punishes nor rewards them, but by a sentiment of the heart. I then feel more proud of my being; I recognise something disinterested in man; and were even religious magnificence multiplied to an extreme, I should love that prodigality of terrestrial riches for another life, of time for eternity: enough is provided for the morrow, enough care is taken for the economy of human affairs. How I love the useless, useless if existence be only a painful toil for a miserable gain! But if on this earth we are journeying towards heaven, what can we do better than to take every means of elevating our soul, that it may feel the infinite, the invisible, and the eternal, in the midst of all the limits that surround us?”

“Jesus Christ permitted a weak, and perhaps, repentant woman, to anoint His feet with the most precious perfumes, and repulsed those who advised that those perfumes should be reserved for a more profitable use. *“Let her alone”* said He, *“for I am only with you for a short time.”* Alas! all that is good and sublime upon earth is only with us for a short time; age, infirmity, and death, would soon dry up that drop of dew which falls from heaven and only rests upon the flowers. Let us then, dear Oswald, confound everything,—love, religion, genius, the sun, the perfumes, music, and poetry: atheism only consists in coldness, egotism, and baseness. Jesus Christ has said: *When two or three are gathered together in my name, I will be in the midst of them.* And what is it O God! to be assembled in Thy name, if it be not to enjoy Thy sublime gifts, and to offer Thee our homage, to thank Thee for that existence which Thou hast given us; above all, to thank Thee, when a heart, also created by Thee is perfectly responsive to our own?”

At this moment a celestial inspiration animated the countenance of Corinne. Oswald could hardly refrain from falling on his knees before her in the midst of the temple, and was silent for a long time to indulge in the pleasure of recalling her words and retracing them still in her looks. At last he set about replying; for he would not abandon a cause that was dear to him. “Corinne,” said he, then, “indulge your lover with a few words more. His heart is not dry; no, Corinne, believe me it is not, and if I am an advocate for austerity in principle and action, it is because it renders sentiment more deep and permanent. If I love reason in religion, that is to say, if I reject contradictory dogmas and human means of producing effect upon men, it is because I perceive the Deity in reason as well as in enthusiasm;



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and if I cannot bear that man should be deprived of any one of his faculties, it is because I conceive them all barely sufficient to comprehend truths which reflection reveals to him, as well as the instinct of the heart, namely, the existence of God, and the immortality of the soul. What can be added to these sublime ideas, to their union with virtue? What can we add thereto that is not beneath them? The poetical enthusiasm which gives you so many charms, is not, I venture to assert, the most salutary devotion. Corinne, how could we by this disposition prepare for the innumerable sacrifices which duty exacts of us! There was no revelation, except by the flights of the soul, when human destiny, present and future, only revealed itself to the mind through clouds; but for us, to whom Christianity has rendered it clear and positive, feeling may be our recompense, but ought not to be our only guide: you describe the existence of the blessed, not that of mortals. Religious life is a combat, not a hymn. If we were not condemned in this world to repress the evil inclinations of others and of ourselves, there would in truth be no distinction to be made except between cold and enthusiastic souls. But man is a harsher and more formidable creature than your heart paints him to you; and reason in piety, and authority in duty, are a necessary curb to the wanderings of his pride.

“In whatever manner you may consider the external pomp and multiplied ceremonies of your religion, believe me, my love, the contemplation of the universe and its author, will be always the chief worship; that which will fill the imagination, without any thing futile or absurd being found in it upon investigation. Those dogmas which wound my reason also cool my enthusiasm. Undoubtedly the world, such as it is, is a mystery which we can neither deny nor comprehend; it would therefore be foolish to refuse credence to what we are unable to explain; but that which is contradictory is always of human creation. The mysteries of heavenly origin are above the lights of the mind; but not in opposition to them. A German philosopher^[31] has said: *I know but two beautiful things in the universe: the starry sky above our heads, and the sentiment of duty in our hearts.* In truth all the wonders of the creation are comprised in these words.

“So far from a simple and severe religion searing our hearts, I should have thought, before I had known you, Corinne, that it was the only one which could concentrate and perpetuate the affections. I have seen the most pure and austere conduct unfold in a man the most inexhaustible tenderness. I have seen him preserve even to old age, a virginity of soul, which the passions and their criminal effects would necessarily have withered. Undoubtedly repentance is a fine thing, and I have more need than any person to believe in its efficacy; but repeated repentance fatigues the soul—this sentiment can only regenerate once. It is the redemption which is accomplished at the bottom of our soul, and this great sacrifice cannot be renewed. When human weakness is accustomed to it, the power to love is lost; for power is necessary in order to love, at least with constancy.



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“I shall offer some objections of the same kind to that splendid form of worship, which according to you, acts so powerfully upon the imagination. I believe the imagination to be modest, and retired as the heart. The emotions which are imposed on it, are less powerful than those born of itself. I have seen in the Cevennes, a Protestant minister who preached towards the evening in the heart of the mountains. He invoked the tombs of the French, banished and proscribed by their brethren, whose ashes had been assembled together in this spot. He promised their friends that they should meet them again in a better world. He said that a virtuous life secured us this happiness; he said: *do good to mankind, that God may heal in your heart the wound of grief*. He testified his astonishment at the inflexibility and hard-heartedness of man, the creature of a day, to his fellow man equally with himself the creature of a day, and seized upon that terrible idea of death, which the living have conceived, but which they will never be able to exhaust. In short, he said nothing that was not affecting and true: his words were perfectly in harmony with nature. The torrent which was heard in the distance, the scintillating light of the stars, seemed to express the same thought under another form. The magnificence of nature was there, that magnificence, which can feast the soul without offending misfortune; and all this imposing simplicity, touched the soul more deeply than dazzling ceremonies could have done.”

On the second day after this conversation, Easter Sunday, Corinne and Lord Nelville went together to the square of St Peter, at the moment when the Pope appears upon the most elevated balcony of the church, and asks of heaven that benediction which he is about to bestow on the land; when he pronounces these words, *urbi et orbi* (to the city and to the world)—all the assembled people fell on their knees, and Corinne and Lord Nelville felt, by the emotion which they experienced at this moment, that all forms of worship resemble each other. The religious sentiment intimately unites men among themselves, when self-love and fanaticism do not make it an object of jealousy and hatred. To pray together in the same language, whatever be the form of worship, is the most pathetic bond of fraternity, of hope, and of sympathy, which men can contract upon earth.

FOOTNOTE:

[31] Kant.

Chapter vi.

Easter-Day was passed, and Corinne took no notice of the fulfilment of her promise to confide her history to Lord Nelville. Wounded by this silence, he said one day before her that he had heard much of the beauty of Naples, and that he had a mind to visit it. Corinne, discovering in a moment what was passing in his soul, proposed to perform the journey with him. She flattered herself that she, should be able to postpone the confession which he required of



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her, by giving him this satisfying proof of her love. And besides she thought that if he should take her with him, it would be without doubt because he desired to consecrate his life to her. She waited then with anxiety for what he should say to her, and her almost suppliant looks seemed to entreat a favourable answer. Oswald could not resist; he had at first been surprised at this offer and the simplicity with which Corinne made it, and hesitated for some time before he accepted it; but beholding the agitation of her he loved, her palpitating bosom, her eyes suffused with tears, he consented to set out with her, without reflecting upon the importance of such a resolution. Corinne was elevated to the summit of joy; for at this moment her heart entirely relied on the passion of Oswald.

The day was fixed upon, and the sweet perspective of their journey together made every other idea disappear. They amused themselves with settling the details of their journey, and every one of these details was a source of pleasure. Happy disposition of the soul, in which all the arrangements of life have a particular charm, from their connection with some hope of the heart! That moment arrives only too soon, when each hour of our existence is as fatiguing as its entirety, when every morning requires an effort to support the awakening and to guide the day to its close.

The moment Lord Nelville left Corinne's house in order to prepare every thing for their departure, the Count d'Erfeuil arrived, and learnt from her the project which they had just determined on.—“Surely you don't think of such a thing!” said he, “what! travel with Lord Nelville without his being your husband! without his having promised to marry you! And what will you do if he abandon you?” “Why,” replied Corinne, “in any situation of life if he were to cease to love me, I should be the most wretched creature in the world!” “Yes, but if you have done nothing to compromise your character, you will remain entirely yourself.”—“Remain entirely myself, when the deepest sentiment of my life shall be withered? when my heart shall be broken?”—“The public will not know it, and by a little dissimulation you would lose nothing in the general opinion.” “And why should I take pains to preserve that opinion,” replied Corinne, “if not to gain an additional charm in the eyes of him I love?”—“We may cease to love,” answered the Count, “but we cannot cease to live in the midst of society, and to need its services.”—“Ah! if I could think,” retorted Corinne, “that that day would arrive when Oswald's affection would not be all in all to me in this world; if I could believe it, I should already have ceased to love. What is love when it anticipates and reckons upon the moment when it shall no longer exist? If there be any thing religious in this sentiment, it is because it makes every other interest disappear, and, like devotion, takes a pleasure in the entire sacrifice of self.”



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“What is that you tell me?” replied the Count d’Erfeuil, “can such an intellectual lady as you fill her head with such nonsense? It is the advantage of us men that women think as you do—we have thus more ascendancy over you; but your superiority must not be lost, it must be serviceable to you.” “Serviceable to me?” said Corinne, “Ah! I owe it much, if it has enabled me to feel more acutely all that is interesting and generous in the character of Lord Nelville.”—“Lord Nelville is like other men,” said the Count; “he will return to his native country, he will pursue his profession; in short he will recover his reason, and you would imprudently expose your reputation by going to Naples with him.”—“I am ignorant of the intentions of Lord Nelville,” observed Corinne, “and perhaps I should have done better to have reflected more deeply before I had let him obtain such power over my heart; but now, what signifies one more sacrifice! Does not my life depend on his love? I feel pleasure, on the contrary, in leaving myself no resource;—there is none when the heart is wounded; nevertheless, the world may sometimes think the contrary, and I love to reflect that even in this respect my calamity would be complete, if Lord Nelville were to leave me!”—“And does he know how you expose yourself on his account?” proceeded d’Erfeuil.—“I have taken great care to conceal it from him,” answered Corinne, “and as he is not well acquainted with the customs of this country, I have a little exaggerated to him the latitude of conduct which they allow. I must exact from you a promise, that you will never undeceive him in this respect—I wish him to be perfectly free, he can never make me happy by any kind of sacrifice. The sentiment which renders me happy is the flower of my life; were it once to decay, neither kindness nor delicacy could revive it. I conjure you then, my dear Count, not to interfere with my destiny; no opinion of yours upon the affections of the heart can possibly apply to me. Your observations are very prudent, very sensible, and extremely applicable to the situations of ordinary life; but you would innocently do me a great injury, in attempting to judge of my character in the same manner as large bodies of people are judged, for whom there are maxims ready made. My sufferings, my enjoyments, and my feelings, are peculiar to myself, and whoever would influence my happiness must contemplate me alone, unconnected with the rest of the world.”

The self-love of Count d’Erfeuil was a little wounded by the inutility of his counsels, and the decided proof of her affection for Lord Nelville which Corinne gave him. He knew very well that he himself was not beloved by her, he knew equally that Oswald was; but it was unpleasant to him to hear this so openly avowed. There is always something in the favour which a man finds in a lady’s sight, that offends even his best friends.—“I see that I can do nothing for you,” said the Count; “but should you become very unhappy you



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will think of me; in the meantime, I am going to leave Rome, for since you and Lord Nelville are about to quit it, I should be too much bored in your absence. I shall certainly see you both again, either in Scotland or Italy; for since I can do nothing better with myself, I have acquired a taste for travelling. Forgive my having taken the liberty to counsel you, charming Corinne, and believe me ever devoted to you!"—Corinne thanked him, and separated with a sentiment of regret. Her acquaintance with him commenced at the same time as with Oswald, and this remembrance formed a tie between them which she did not like to see broken. She conducted herself agreeably to what she had declared to the Count. Some uneasiness disturbed for a moment the joy with which Lord Nelville had accepted the project of the journey. He feared that their departure for Naples might injure Corinne, and wished to obtain her secret before they went, in order to know with certainty whether some invincible obstacle to their union might not exist; but she declared to him that she would not relate her history till they arrived at Naples, and sweetly deceived him, as to what the public opinion would be on her conduct. Oswald yielded to the illusion. In a weak and undecided character, love half deceives, reason half enlightens, and it is the present emotion that decides which of the two halves shall be the whole. The mind of Lord Nelville was singularly expansive and penetrating; but he only formed a correct judgment of himself in reviewing his past conduct. He never had but a confused idea of his present situation. Susceptible at once of transport and remorse, of passion and timidity, those contrasts did not permit him to know himself till the event had decided the combat that was taking place within him.

When the friends of Corinne, particularly Prince Castel-Forte, were informed of her project, they felt considerably chagrined. Prince Castel-Forte was so much pained at it, that he resolved in a short time to go and join her. There was certainly no vanity in thus filling up the train of a favoured lover; but he could not support the dreadful void which he would find in the absence of Corinne. He had no acquaintances but the circle he met at her house; and he never entered any other. The company which assembled around her would disperse when she should be no longer there; and it would be impossible to collect together the fragments. Prince Castel-Forte was little accustomed to domestic life: though possessing a good share of intellect, he did not like the fatigue of study; the whole day therefore would have been an insufferable weight to him, if he had not come, morning and evening, to visit Corinne. She was about to depart—he knew not what to do; however he promised himself in secret to approach her as a friend, who indulged in no pretensions, but who was ever at hand to offer his consolation in the moment of misfortune; such a friend may be sure that his hour will come.



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Corinne felt oppressed with melancholy in thus breaking all her former connections; she had led for some years in Rome a manner of life that pleased her. She was the centre of attraction to every artist and to every enlightened man. A perfect independence of ideas and habits gave many charms to her existence: what was to become of her now? If destined to the happiness of espousing Oswald, he would take her to England, and what would she be thought of there; how would she be able to confine herself to a mode of existence so different from what she had known for six years past! But these sentiments only passed through her mind, and her passion for Oswald always obliterated every trace of them. She saw, she heard him, and only counted the hours by his absence or his presence. Who can dispute with happiness? Who does not welcome it when it comes? Corinne was not possessed of much foresight—neither fear nor hope existed for her; her faith in the future was vague, and in this respect her imagination did her little good, and much harm.

On the morning of her departure, Prince Castel-Forte visited her, and said with tears in his eyes: “Will you not return to Rome?” “Oh, *Mon Dieu*, yes!” replied she, “we shall be back in a month.”—“But if you marry Lord Nelville you must leave Italy!” “Leave Italy!” said Corinne, with a sigh.—“This country,” continued Prince Castel-Forte, “where your language is spoken, where you are so well known, where you are so warmly admired, and your friends, Corinne—your friends! Where will you be beloved as you are here? Where will you find that perfection of the imagination and the fine arts, so congenial to your soul? Is then our whole life composed of one sentiment? Is it not language, customs, and manners, that compose the love of our country; that love which creates a home sickness so terrible to the exile?” “Ah, what is it you tell me,” cried Corinne, “have I not felt it? Is it not that which has decided my fate?”—She regarded mournfully her room and the statues that adorned it, then the Tiber which rolled its waves beneath her windows, and the sky whose beauty seemed to invite her to stay. But at that moment Oswald crossed the bridge of St Angelo on horseback, swift as lightning. “There he is!” cried Corinne. Hardly had she uttered these words, when he was already arrived,—she ran to meet him, and both impatient to set out hastened to ascend the carriage. Corinne, however, took a kind farewell of Prince Castel-Forte; but her obliging expressions were lost in the midst of the cries of postillions, the neighing of horses, and all that bustle of departure, sometimes sad, and sometimes intoxicating, according to the fear or the hope which the new chances of destiny inspire.

Book xi.

NAPLES AND THE HERMITAGE OF ST SALVADOR.

[Illustration]

Chapter i.



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Oswald was proud of carrying off his conquest; he who felt himself almost always disturbed in his enjoyments by reflections and regrets, for once did not experience the pangs of uncertainty. It was not that he was decided, but he did not think about it and followed the tide of events hoping it would lead him to the object of his wishes.

They traversed the district of Albano[32], where is still shown what is believed to be the tomb of the Horatii and the Curiatii. They passed near the lake of Nemi and the sacred woods that surround it. It is said that Hippolitus was resuscitated by Diana in these parts; she would not permit horses to approach it, and by this prohibition perpetuated the memory of her young favourite's misfortune. Thus in Italy our memory is refreshed by History and Poetry almost at every step, and the charming situations which recall them, soften all that is melancholy in the past, and seem to preserve an eternal youth.

Oswald and Corinne traversed the Pontine marshes—a country at once fertile and pestilential,—where, with all the fecundity of nature, a single habitation is not to be found. Some sickly men change your horses, recommending to you not to sleep in passing the marshes; for sleep there is really the harbinger of death. The plough which some imprudent cultivators will still sometimes guide over this fatal land, is drawn by buffaloes, in appearance at once mean and ferocious, whilst the most brilliant sun sheds its lustre on this melancholy spectacle. The marshy and unwholesome parts in the north are announced by their repulsive aspect; but in the more fatal countries of the south, nature preserves a serenity, the deceitful mildness of which is an illusion to travellers. If it be true that it is very dangerous to sleep in crossing the Pontine marshes, their invincible soporific influence in the heat of the day is one of those perfidious impressions which we receive from this spot. Lord Nelville constantly watched over Corinne. Sometimes she leant her head on Theresa who accompanied them; sometimes she closed her eyes, overcome by the languor of the air. Oswald awakened her immediately, with inexpressible terror; and though he was naturally taciturn, he was now inexhaustible in subjects of conversation, always well supported and always new, to prevent her from yielding to this fatal sleep. Ah! should we not pardon the heart of a woman the cruel regret which attaches to those days when she was beloved, when her existence was so necessary to that of another, when at every moment she was supported and protected? What isolation must succeed this season of delight! How happy are they whom the sacred hand of Hymen has conducted from love to friendship, without one painful moment having embittered their course!



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Oswald and Corinne, after the anxious passage of the marshes, at length arrived at Terracina, on the sea coast, near the confines of the kingdom of Naples. It is there that the south truly begins; it is there that it receives travellers in all its magnificence. Naples, *that happy country*, is, as it were, separated from the rest of Europe by the sea which surrounds it and by that dangerous district which must be passed in order to arrive at it. One would say that nature, wishing to secure to herself this charming abode, has designedly made all access to it perilous. At Rome we are not yet in the south; we have there a foretaste of its sweets, but its enchantment only truly begins in the territory of Naples. Not far from Terracina is the promontory fixed upon by the poets as the abode of Circe: and behind Terracina rises Mount Anxur, where Theodoric, king of the Goths, had placed one of those strong castles with which the northern warriors have covered the earth. There are few traces of the invasion of Italy by the barbarians; or at least, where those traces consist in devastation, they are confounded with the effects of time. The northern nations have not given to Italy that warlike aspect which Germany has preserved. It seems that the gentle soil of Ausonia was unable to support the fortifications and citadels which bristle in northern countries. Rarely is a Gothic edifice or a feudal castle to be met with here; and the monuments of the ancient Romans reign alone triumphant over Time, and the nations by whom they have been conquered.

The whole mountain which dominates Terracina, is covered with orange and lemon trees, which embalm the air in a delicious manner. There is nothing in our climate that resembles the southern perfume of lemon trees in the open air; it produces on the imagination almost the same effect as melodious music; it gives a poetic disposition to the soul, stimulates genius, and intoxicates with the charms of nature. The aloe and the broad-leaved cactus, which are met here at every step, have a peculiar aspect, which brings to mind all that we know of the formidable productions of Africa. These plants inspire a sort of terror: they seem to belong to a violent and despotic nature. The whole aspect of the country is foreign: we feel ourselves in another world, a world which is only known by the descriptions of the ancient poets, who have at the same time so much imagination and so much exactness in their descriptions. On entering Terracina, the children threw into the carriage of Corinne an immense quantity of flowers which they gather by the road-side or on the mountain, and which they carelessly scatter about; such is their reliance on the prodigality of nature! The carts which bring home the harvest from the fields are every day ornamented with garlands of roses, and sometimes the children surround the cups they drink out of with flowers; for beneath such a sky the imagination of the common people becomes poetical. By the side of these smiling pictures the sea, whose billows lashed the shore with fury, was seen and heard. It was not agitated by the storm; but by the rocks which stand in habitual opposition to its waves, irritating its grandeur.



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E non udite ancor come risuona
Il roco ed alto fremito marino?

And do you not hear still the hoarse and deep roar of the sea?

This motion without aim, this strength without object which is renewed throughout eternity without our being able to discover either its cause or its end, attracts us to the shore, where this grand spectacle offers itself to our sight; and we experience, as it were, a desire mingled with terror, to approach the waves and to deaden our thoughts by their tumult.

Towards the evening all was calm. Corinne and Lord Nelville walked into the country; they proceeded with a slow pace silently enjoying the scene before them. Each step they took crushed the flowers and extorted from them their delicious perfumes; the nightingales, resting on the rose-bushes, willingly lent their song, so that the purest melodies were united to the most delicious odours; all the charms of nature mutually attracted each other, while the softness of the air was beyond expression. When we contemplate a fine view in the north, the climate in some degree disturbs the pleasure which it inspires: those slight sensations of cold and humidity are like a false note in a concert, and more or less distract your attention from what you behold; but in approaching Naples you experience the friendly smiles of nature, so perfectly and without alloy, that nothing abates the agreeable sensations which they cause you. All the relations of man in our climate are with society. Nature, in hot countries, puts us in relation with external objects, and our sentiments sweetly expand. Not but that the south has also its melancholy. In what part of the earth does not human destiny produce this impression? But in this melancholy there is neither discontent, anxiety, nor regret. In other countries it is life, which, such as it is, does not suffice for the faculties of the soul; here the faculties of the soul do not suffice for life, and the superabundance of sensation inspires a dreamy indolence, which we can hardly account for when oppressed with it.

During the night, flies of a shining hue fill the air; one would say that the mountain emitted sparks of fire, and that the burning earth had let loose some of its flames. These insects fly through the trees, sometimes repose on the leaves, and the wind blows these minute stars about, varying in a thousand ways their uncertain light. The sand also contained a great number of metallic stones, which sparkled on every side: it was the land of fire, still preserving in its bosom the traces of the sun, whose last rays had just warmed it. There is a life, and at the same time, a repose, in this nature, which entirely satisfies the various desires of human existence.



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Corinne abandoned herself to the charms of this evening, and was penetrated with joy; nor could Oswald conceal the emotion they inspired—many times he pressed Corinne to his heart, many times he drew back from her, then returned, then drew back again out of respect to her who was to be the companion of his life. Corinne felt no alarm, for such was her esteem for Oswald, that if he had demanded the entire surrender of her being she would have considered that request as a solemn vow to espouse her; but she saw him triumph over himself, and this conquest was an honour paid her; whilst her heart felt that plenitude of happiness, and of love, which does not permit us to form another desire. Oswald was far from being so calm: he was fired with the charms of Corinne. Once he threw himself at her feet with violence, and seemed to have lost all empire over his passion; but Corinne regarded him with such an expression of sweetness and fear, she made him so sensible of his power while beseeching him not to abuse it, that this humble entreaty inspired him with more respect than any other could possibly have done.

They then perceived in the sea, the reflection of a torch carried by the unknown hand of one who traversed the shore, repairing secretly to a neighbouring house. “He is going to see the object of his love;” said Oswald.—“Yes,” answered Corinne. “And my happiness, for to-day, is about to end,”—resumed Oswald. At this moment the looks of Corinne were lifted towards heaven, and her eyes suffused with tears. Oswald, fearing that he had offended her, fell on his knees to entreat her forgiveness for that love which had overpowered him. “No,” said Corinne, stretching forth her hand to him, and inviting him to return with her. “No, Oswald, I feel no alarm: you will respect her who loves you: you know that a simple request from you would be all-powerful with me; it is therefore you who must be my security—you who would for ever reject me as your bride, if you had rendered me unworthy of being so.” “Well,” answered Oswald, “since you believe in this cruel empire of your will upon my heart, Corinne, whence arises your sadness?”—“Alas!” replied she, “I was saying to myself, that the moments which I have just passed with you were the happiest of my life, and as I turned my eyes in gratitude to heaven, I know not by what chance, a superstition of my childhood revived in my heart. The moon which I contemplated was covered with a cloud, and the aspect of that cloud was fatal. I have always found in the sky a countenance sometimes paternal and sometimes angry; and I tell you, Oswald, heaven has to-night condemned our love.”—“My dear,” answered Lord Nelville, “the only omens of the life of man, are his good or evil actions; and have I not this very evening, immolated my most ardent desires on the altar of virtue?”—“Well, so much the better if you are not included in this presage,” replied Corinne; “it may be that this angry sky has only threatened me.”



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FOOTNOTE:

[32] There is a charming description of the Lake of Albano, in a collection of poems by Madame Brunn, *nee* Muentner, whose talent and imagination give her a first rank among the women of her country.

Chapter ii.

They arrived at Naples by day, in the midst of that immense population, at once so animated and so indolent. They first traversed the Via Toledo, and saw the Lazzaroni lying on the pavement, or in osier baskets which serve them for lodging, day and night. There is something extremely original in this state of savage existence, mingled with civilization. There are some among these men who do not even know their own name, and who go to confess anonymous sins; not being able to tell who it is that has committed them. There is a subterranean grotto at Naples where thousands of Lazzaroni pass their lives, only going out at noon to see the sun, and sleeping the rest of the day, whilst their wives spin. In climates where food and raiment are so easy of attainment it requires a very independent and active government to give sufficient emulation to a nation; for it is so easy for the people merely to subsist at Naples, that they can dispense with that industry which is necessary to procure a livelihood elsewhere. Laziness and ignorance combined with the volcanic air which is breathed in this spot, ought to produce ferocity when the passions are excited; but this people is not worse than any other. They possess imagination, which might become the principle of disinterested actions and give them a bias for virtue, if their religious and political institutions were good.

Calabrians are seen marching in a body to cultivate the earth with a fiddler at their head, and dancing from time to time, to rest themselves from walking. There is every year, near Naples, a festival consecrated to the *madonna of the grotto*, at which the girls dance to the sound of the tambourine and the castanets, and it is not uncommon for a condition to be inserted in the marriage contract, that the husband shall take his wife every year to this festival. There is on the stage at Naples, a performer eighty years old, who for sixty years has entertained the Neapolitans in their comic, national character of Polichinello. Can we imagine what the immortality of the soul may be to a man who thus employs his long life? The people of Naples have no other idea of happiness than pleasure; but the love of pleasure is still better than a barren egotism.

It is true that no people in the world are more fond of money than the Neapolitans: if you ask a man of the people in the street to show you your way, he stretches out his hand after having made you a sign, for they are more indolent in speech than in action; but their avidity for money is not methodical nor studied; they spend it as soon as they get it. They use money as savages would if it were introduced



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among them. But what this nation is most wanting in, is the sentiment of dignity. They perform generous and benevolent actions from a good heart rather than from principle; for their theory in every respect is good for nothing, and public opinion in this country has no force. But when men or women escape this moral anarchy their conduct is more remarkable in itself and more worthy of admiration than any where else, since there is nothing in external circumstances favourable to virtue. It is born entirely in the soul. Laws and manners neither reward nor punish it. He who is virtuous is so much the more heroic for not being on that account either more considered or more sought after.

With some honourable exceptions the higher classes pretty nearly resemble the lower: the mind of the one is seldom more cultivated than that of the other, and the practice of society is the only external difference between them. But in the midst of this ignorance there is such a natural intelligence in all ranks that it is impossible to foresee what a nation like this might become if all the energies of government were directed to the advancement of knowledge and morality. As there is little education at Naples, we find there, at present, more originality of character than of mind. But the remarkable men of this country, it is said, such as the Abbe Galiani, Caraccioli, &c., possessed the highest sense of humour, joined to the most profound reflection,—rare powers of the mind!—an union without which either pedantry or frivolity would hinder us from knowing the true value of things.

The Neapolitan people, in some respects, are not civilized at all; but their vulgarity does not at all resemble that of other nations. Their very rudeness interests the imagination. The African coast which borders the sea on the other side is almost perceptible; there is something Numidian in the savage cries which are heard in every part of the city. Those swarthy faces, those vestments formed of a few pieces of red or violet stuff whose deep colours attract the eye, even those very rags in which this artistic people drape themselves with grace, give to the populace a picturesque appearance, whilst in other countries they exhibit nothing but the miseries of civilization. A certain taste for finery and decoration is often found in Naples accompanied with an absolute lack of necessaries and conveniences. The shops are agreeably ornamented with flowers and fruit. Some have a festive appearance that has no relation to plenty nor to public felicity, but only to a lively imagination; they seek before every thing to please the eye. The mildness of the climate permits mechanics of every class to work in the streets. The tailors are seen making clothes, and the victuallers providing their repasts, and these domestic occupations going on out of doors, multiply action in a thousand ways. Singing, dancing, and noisy sports, are very suitable to this spectacle; and there is no country where we feel more clearly the difference between amusement and happiness. At length we quit the interior of the city, and arrive at the quays, whence we have a view of the sea and of Mount Vesuvius, and forget then all that we know of man.



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Oswald and Corinne arrived at Naples, whilst the eruption of Mount Vesuvius yet lasted. By day nothing was seen but the black smoke which mixed with the clouds; but viewing it in the evening from the balcony of their abode it excited an entirely unexpected emotion. A river of fire descends towards the sea, and its burning waves, like the billows of the sea, express the rapid succession of continual and untiring motion. One would say that when nature transforms herself into various elements she nevertheless preserves some traces of a single and primal thought. The phenomenon of Vesuvius deeply impresses us. We are commonly so familiarised with external objects that we hardly perceive their existence; we scarcely ever feel a new emotion in the midst of our prosaic countries, but that astonishment which the universe ought to cause, is suddenly evoked at the aspect of an unknown wonder of creation: our whole being is shaken by this power of nature, in whose social combinations we have been so long absorbed; we feel that the greatest mysteries in this world do not all consist in man, and that he is threatened or protected by a force independent of himself, in obedience to laws which he cannot penetrate. Oswald and Corinne proposed to ascend Mount Vesuvius, and the peril of this enterprise gave an additional charm to a project which they were to execute together.

Chapter iii.

There was at that time in the port of Naples, an English man-of-war in which divine service was performed every Sunday. The captain, and all the English who were at Naples, invited Lord Nelville to come the following day; he consented without thinking at first whether he should take Corinne with him, and how he should present her to his fellow-countrymen. He was tormented by this disquietude the whole night. As he was walking with Corinne, on the following morning near the port and was about to advise her not to go on board, they saw an English long-boat rowed by ten sailors, clad in white, and wearing black velvet caps, on which was embroidered silver leopards. A young officer landed from it, and accosting Corinne by the name of Lady Nelville, begged to have the honour of conducting her to the ship. At the name of Lady Nelville Corinne was embarrassed—she blushed and cast down her eyes. Oswald appeared to hesitate a moment: then suddenly taking her hand, he said to her in English,—“Come, my dear,”—and she followed him.

The noise of the waves and the silence of the sailors, who neither moved nor spoke but in pursuance of their duty, and who rapidly conducted the bark over that sea which they had so often traversed, gave birth to reverie. Besides, Corinne dared not question Lord Nelville on what had just passed. She sought to conjecture his purpose, not thinking (which is however the more probable) that he had none, and that he yielded to each new circumstance. One moment she imagined that he was conducting her to divine



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service in order to espouse her, and this idea caused her at the time more fear than happiness: it appeared to her that she was going to quit Italy and return to England, where she had suffered so much. The severity of manners and customs in that country returned to her mind, and love itself could not entirely triumph over the bitterness of her recollections. But how astonished will she be in other circumstances at those thoughts, fleeting as they were! how she will abjure them!

Corinne ascended the ship, the interior of which presented a picture of the most studied cleanliness and order. Nothing was heard but the voice of the captain, which was prolonged and repeated from one end to the other by command and obedience. The subordination, regularity, silence, and serious deportment so remarkable on this ship, formed a system of social order rigid and free, in contrast with the city of Naples, so volatile, so passionate, and tumultuous. Oswald was occupied with Corinne and the impressions she received; but his attention was sometimes diverted from her by the pleasure he felt in finding himself in his native country. And indeed are not ships and the open sea a second country to an Englishman? Oswald walked the deck with the English on board to learn the news from England, and to discuss the politics of their country; during which time Corinne was with some English ladies who had come from Naples to attend divine worship. They were surrounded by their children, as beautiful as the day, but timid as their mothers; and not a word was spoken before a new acquaintance. This constraint, this silence, rendered Corinne very sad; she turned her eyes towards beautiful Naples, towards its flowery shores, its animated existence, and sighed. Fortunately for her Oswald did not perceive it; on the contrary, beholding her seated among English women, her dark eyelids cast down like their fair ones, and conforming in every respect to their manners, he felt a sensation of joy. In vain does an Englishman find pleasure in foreign manners; his heart always reverts to the first impressions of his life. If you ask Englishmen sailing at the extremity of the world whither they are going, they will answer you, *home*, if they are returning to England. Their wishes and their sentiments are always turned towards their native country, at whatever distance they may be from it.

They descended between decks to hear divine service, and Corinne soon perceived that her idea was without foundation, that Lord Nelville had not formed the solemn project she had at first supposed. She then reproached herself with having feared such an event, and the embarrassment of her present situation revived in her bosom; for all the company believed her to be the wife of Lord Nelville, and she had not the courage to say a word that might either destroy or confirm this idea. Oswald suffered as cruelly as she did; but in the midst of a thousand rare qualities, there was much weakness and irresolution in his character. These defects are unperceived by their possessor, and assume in his eyes a new form under every circumstance; he conceives it alternately to be prudence, sensibility, or delicacy, which defers the moment of adopting a resolution

and prolongs a state of indecision; hardly ever does he feel that it is the same character which attaches this kind of inconvenience to every circumstance.



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Corinne, however, notwithstanding the painful thoughts that occupied her, received a deep impression from the spectacle which she witnessed. Nothing, in truth, speaks more to the soul than divine service performed on board a ship; and the noble simplicity of the reformed worship seems particularly adapted to the sentiments which are then felt. A young man performed the functions of chaplain; he preached with a mild but firm voice, and his figure bespoke the rigid principles of a pure soul amidst the ardour of youth. That severity carries with it an idea of force, very suitable to a religion preached among the perils of war. At stated moments, the English minister delivered prayers, the last words of which all the assembly repeated with him. These confused but mild voices proceeding from various distances kept alive interest and emotion. The sailors, the officers, and the captain, knelt down several times, particularly at these words, "*Lord, have mercy upon us!*" The sword of the captain, which dragged on the deck whilst he was kneeling, called to mind that noble union of humility before God and intrepidity before man, which renders the devotion of warriors so affecting; and whilst these brave people besought the God of armies, the sea was seen through the port-holes, and sometimes the murmuring of the waves, at that moment tranquil, seemed to say, "*your prayers are heard.*" The chaplain finished, the service by a prayer, peculiar to the English sailors. "*May God,*" say they, "*give us grace to defend our happy Constitution from without, and to find on our return domestic happiness at home!*" How many fine sentiments are united in these simple words! The long and continued study which the navy requires and the austere life led in a ship, make it a military cloister in the midst of the waves; and the regularity of the most serious occupations is there only interrupted by perils and death. The sailors, in spite of their rough, hardy manners, often express themselves with much gentleness, and show a particular tenderness to women and children when they meet them on board. We are the more touched with these sentiments, because we know with what coolness they expose themselves to those terrible dangers of war and the sea, in the midst of which the presence of man has something of the supernatural.

Corinne and Lord Nelville returned to the boat which was to bring them ashore; they beheld the city of Naples, built in the form of an amphitheatre, as if to take part more commodiously in the festival of nature; and Corinne, in setting her foot again upon Italian ground, could not refrain from feeling a sentiment of joy. If Nelville had suspected this sentiment he would have been hurt at it, and perhaps with reason; yet he would have been unjust towards Corinne, who loved him passionately in spite of the painful impression caused by the remembrance of a country where cruel circumstances had rendered her so unhappy. Her



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imagination was lively; there was in her heart a great capacity for love; but talent, especially in a woman, begets a disposition to weariness, a want of something to divert the attention, which the most profound passion cannot make entirely disappear. The idea of a monotonous life, even in the midst of happiness, makes a mind which stands in need of variety, to shudder with fear. It is only when there is little wind in the sails, that we can keep close to shore; but the imagination roves at large, although affection be constant; it is so, at least, till the moment when misfortune makes every inconsistency disappear, and leaves but one thought and one grief in the mind.

Oswald attributed the reverie of Corinne solely to the embarrassment into which she had been thrown by hearing herself called Lady Nelville; and reproaching himself for not having released her from that embarrassment he feared she might suspect him of levity. He began therefore in order to arrive at the long-desired explanation by offering to relate to her his own history. "I will speak first," said he, "and your confidence will follow mine." "Yes, undoubtedly it must," answered Corinne, trembling; "but tell me at what day—at what hour? When you have spoken, I will tell you all."—"How agitated you are," answered Oswald; "what then, will you ever feel that fear of your friend, that mistrust of his heart?" "No," continued Corinne; "it is decided; I have committed it all to writing, and if you choose, to-morrow—" "To-morrow," said Lord Nelville, "we are to go together to Vesuvius; I wish to contemplate with you this astonishing wonder, to learn from you how to admire it; and in this very journey, if I have the strength, I will make you acquainted with the particulars of my past life. My heart is determined; thus my confidence will open the way to yours." "So you give me to-morrow," replied Corinne; "I thank you for this one day. Ah! who knows whether you will be the same for me when I have opened my soul to you? And how can I feel such a doubt without shuddering?"

Chapter iv.

The ruins of Pompei are near to Mount Vesuvius, and Corinne and Lord Neville began their excursion with these ruins. They were both silent; for the moment approached which was to decide their fate, and that vague hope they had so long enjoyed, and which accords so well with the indolence and reverie that the climate of Italy inspires, was to be replaced by a positive destiny. They visited Pompei together, the most curious ruin of antiquity. At Rome, seldom any thing is found but the remains of public monuments, and these monuments only retrace the political history of past ages; but at Pompei it is the private life of the ancients which offers itself to the view, such as it was. The Volcano, which has covered this city with ashes, has preserved it from the destroying hand of Time. Edifices, exposed to the air, never



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could have remained so perfect; but this hidden relic of antiquity was found entire. The paintings and bronzes were still in their pristine beauty; and every thing connected with domestic life is fearfully preserved. The amphorae are yet prepared for the festival of the following day; the flour which was to be kneaded is still to be seen; the remains of a woman, are still decorated with those ornaments which she wore on the holiday that the Volcano disturbed, and her calcined arms no longer fill the bracelets of precious stones which still surround them. Nowhere is to be seen so striking an image of the sudden interruption of life. The traces of the wheels are visible in the streets, and the stones on the brink of the wells bear the mark of the cord which has gradually furrowed them. On the walls of a guardhouse are still to be seen those misshapen characters, those figures rudely sketched, which the soldiers traced to pass away the time, while Time was hastily advancing to swallow them up.

When we place ourselves in the midst of the crossroads from which the city that remains standing almost entire is seen on all sides, it seems to us as if we were waiting for somebody, as if the master were coming; and even the appearance of life which this abode offers makes us feel more sadly its eternal silence. It is with petrified lava that the greater part of these houses are built, which are now swallowed up by other lava. Thus ruins are heaped upon ruins, and tombs upon tombs. This history of the world, where the epochs are counted from ruin to ruin, this picture of human life, which is only lighted up by the Volcanoes that have consumed it, fill the heart with a profound melancholy. How long man has existed! How long he has suffered and died! Where can we find his sentiments and his thoughts? Is the air that we breathe in these ruins impregnated with them, or are they for ever deposited in heaven where reigns immortality? Some burnt leaves of manuscripts, which have been found at Herculaneum, and Pompei, and which scholars at Portici are employed to decipher, are all that remain to give us information of those unhappy victims, whom the Volcano, that thunder-bolt of earth, has destroyed. But in passing near those ashes, which art has succeeded in reanimating, we are afraid to breathe lest a breath should carry away that dust where noble ideas are perhaps still imprinted.

The public edifices in the city itself of Pompei, which was one of the least important of Italy, are yet tolerably fine. The luxury of the ancients had almost ever some object of public interest for its aim. Their private houses are very small, and we do not see in them any studied magnificence, though we may remark a lively taste for the fine arts in their possessors. Almost the whole interior is adorned with the most agreeable paintings and mosaic pavements ingeniously worked. On many of these pavements is written the word *Salve*. This word is placed on the threshold of the door, and must



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not be simply considered as a polite expression, but as an invocation of hospitality. The rooms are singularly narrow, and badly lighted; the windows do not look on the street, but on a portico inside the house, as well as a marble court which it surrounds. In the midst of this court is a cistern, simply ornamented. It is evident from this kind of habitation that the ancients lived almost entirely in the open air, and that it was there they received their friends. Nothing gives us a more sweet and voluptuous idea of existence than this climate, which intimately unites man with nature; we should suppose that the character of their conversation and their society, ought, with such habits, to be different from those of a country where the rigour of the cold forces the inhabitants to shut themselves up in their houses. We understand better the Dialogues of Plato in contemplating those porches under which the ancients walked during one half of the day. They were incessantly animated by the spectacle of a beautiful sky: social order, according to their conceptions, was not the dry combination of calculation and force, but a happy assemblage of institutions, which stimulated the faculties, unfolded the soul, and directed man to the perfection of himself and his equals.

Antiquity inspires an insatiable curiosity. Those men of erudition who are occupied only in forming a collection of names which they call history, are certainly divested of all imagination. But to penetrate the remotest periods of the past, to interrogate the human heart through the intervening gloom of ages, to seize a fact by the help of a word, and by the aid of that fact to discover the character and manners of a nation; in effect, to go back to the remotest time, to figure to ourselves how the earth in its first youth appeared to the eyes of man, and in what manner the human race then supported the gift of existence which civilization has now rendered so complicated, is a continual effort of the imagination, which divines and discovers the finest secrets that reflection and study can reveal to us. This occupation of the mind Oswald found most fascinating, and often repeated to Corinne that if he had not been taken up with the noblest interests in his own country, he could only have found life supportable in those parts where the monuments of history supply the place of present existence. We must at least regret glory when it is no longer possible to obtain it. It is forgetfulness alone that debases the soul; but it may find an asylum in the past, when barren circumstances deprive actions of their aim.

On leaving Pompei and returning to Portici, Corinne and Lord Nelville were surrounded by the inhabitants, who cried to them loudly to come and see *the mountain*; so they call *Vesuvius*. Is it necessary to name it? It is the glory of the Neapolitans and the object of their patriotic feelings; their country is distinguished by this phenomenon. Oswald had Corinne carried in a kind of palanquin as far as the hermitage of St Salvador, which is half way up the mountain, and where travellers repose before they undertake to climb the summit. He rode by her side to watch those who carried her, and the more his heart was filled with the generous thoughts that nature and history inspire, the more he adored Corinne.



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At the foot of Vesuvius the country is the most fertile and best cultivated that can be found in the kingdom of Naples, that is to say, in the country of Europe most favoured of heaven. The celebrated vine, whose wine is called *Lacryma Christi*, grows in this spot, and by the side of lands which have been laid waste by the lava. One would say that nature has made a last effort in this spot, so near the Volcano, and has decked herself in her richest attire before her death. In proportion as we ascend the mountain, we discover on turning round, Naples, and the beautiful country that surrounds it. The rays of the sun make the sea sparkle like precious stones; but all the splendour of the creation is extinguished by degrees as we approach the land of ashes and smoke which announces the vicinity of the Volcano. The ferruginous lava of preceding years has traced in the earth deep and sable furrows, and all around them is barren. At a certain height not a bird is seen to fly, at another, plants become very scarce, then even the insects find nothing to subsist on in the arid soil. At length every living thing disappears; you enter the empire of death, and the pulverised ashes alone roll beneath your uncertain feet.

Ne griggi ne armenti
Guida bifolco, mai guida pastore

Neither flocks nor herds does the husbandman or the shepherd ever guide to this spot.

Here dwells a hermit on the confines of life and death. A tree, the last farewell of vegetation, grows before his door: and it is beneath the shadow of its pale foliage that travellers are accustomed to wait the approach of night, to continue their route; for during the day, the fires of Vesuvius are only perceived like a cloud of smoke, and the lava, so bright and burning in the night, appears black before the beams of the sun. This metamorphosis itself is a fine spectacle, which renews every evening that astonishment which the continuity of the same aspect might weaken. The impression of this spot and its profound solitude, gave Lord Nelville more resolution to reveal the secrets of his soul; and desiring to excite the confidence of Corinne, he said to her with the most lively emotion:—"You wish to read the inmost soul of your unhappy friend; well, I will tell you all: I feel my wounds are about to bleed afresh; but ought we, in this desolate scene of nature, to dread so much those sufferings which Time brings in its course?"

[Illustration]

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