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About This Edition

This book is a simplified English adaptation created for extensive reading practice.
The text was generated using ChatGPT and prepared for intermediate English learners as part of an educational project.

Target reading level: CEFR A2-B1

This edition aims to support fluency development through accessible vocabulary, expanded narration, and improved readability while preserving the original story structure.

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Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho: A Romance* (Simplified Edition, Adapted and Simplified by ChatGPT)

Part 1

In the year 1584, on the green banks of the Garonne in Gascony, stood the small château of Monsieur St. Aubert. Behind it rose the Pyrenees, sometimes clear and blue, sometimes dark with cloud and pine. Before it lay soft fields, vines, olives, and the shining river. St. Aubert had once lived in the busy world, but he had grown tired of pride, false friendship, and empty ambition. “Let others chase noise and honor,” he often said quietly. “I ask only for peace, books, and the people I love.”

He had come to La Vallée with his wife and daughter after giving up the greater hopes of his family. He did not wish to grow rich by tricks at court, and he did not wish to marry for money. He married the woman he loved, though she brought no great fortune. Together they made their simple home beautiful, not by splendor, but by good taste and calm happiness. “This is enough,” Madame St. Aubert would say, looking at the river and the trees. “More than enough,” her husband answered, taking her hand.

Their house was plain, but it was full of quiet pleasures. There was a library that opened toward a grove and the western light, a green-house filled with rare plants, and a room for Emily with books, drawings, birds, and music. St. Aubert loved flowers, mountain paths, and old trees that had known him since childhood. In the evening he sat with his wife and daughter under the broad plane-tree above the river. Sometimes he read aloud, sometimes they talked, and sometimes they only watched the sun go down. “These are the true riches of life,” he said more than once, with tears bright in his eyes.

Their happiness had not been without grief. Two little sons had died in early childhood, and that sorrow never fully left the hearts of their parents. Emily was now their only child, and her father watched her with loving care. She was gentle, warm-hearted, and quick to pity, but she felt everything too deeply. St. Aubert saw

this clearly. “My dear child,” he would tell her, “you must not let every feeling carry you away. A kind heart is a blessing, but without self-command it may become the cause of misery.”

Emily was beautiful like her mother, but what most touched those who knew her was the life of her face, which changed with every fine movement of the mind. She loved books, music, drawing, and long walks in nature. Her father taught her French, Latin, and English, not to make a show of learning, but to open her mind. “A mind with good thoughts is safer than an empty one,” he said. “Teach yourself to think, Emily. Then the world will have less power to lead you into foolish things.” She listened with deep attention, for she loved him with the trust of a devoted daughter.

Of all the places near La Vallée, Emily loved best a small fishing-house in a wooded glen, beside a stream that came down from the mountains. The woods there were thick and cool, and through their openings she could sometimes see great rocks, lonely huts, or the far rich plains of Gascony. St. Aubert loved the place too, and the family often spent part of the day there. One evening Emily found some lines written in pencil on the wall, lines full of hidden love and sorrow. She read them twice, then looked about the empty room. “Who could have written this?” she whispered. No answer came, and she tried to think of it no more.

Not long after, her father fell ill with a fever. Though the danger passed, he became very weak, and his recovery was slow. When at last he was able to go out, the first place he visited was the little fishing-house. A basket of food was sent there, and Emily’s lute was taken too. The day was sweet and calm, and for a few hours the old happiness seemed to return. St. Aubert spoke more cheerfully than he had done since his illness, and Madame St. Aubert, moved by his recovery and by the beauty around her, looked at her husband and daughter with tears in her eyes. “You are tired,” St. Aubert said gently. “No,” she answered with a faint smile. “I am only too happy.”

After dinner, while her parents walked farther into the glen, Emily went back toward the fishing-house to fetch her lute. As she drew near, she stopped. Someone was playing it. The air was soft, sad, and exquisitely beautiful. Emily

stood still, hardly daring to breathe. “Who is there?” she almost called, but fear held her silent. When the music ceased, she went in with trembling steps and found the room empty. Her lute lay on the table. Everything seemed still. Then her eyes fell upon the wall again, and she saw that more lines had been added, and that this time her own name was there.

Startled and confused, Emily snatched up her lute and hurried away. She found her father and mother on a height above the glen, where they had stopped to enjoy the evening view. She played for them there, and they stayed till the light faded over the plains. When they returned to the fishing-house, Madame St. Aubert missed a bracelet that held a small picture of Emily. It could not be found. Emily blushed and grew thoughtful, for she now felt sure that the unknown writer, the unseen player, and the thief were one person. Yet she said nothing. “I will never come here alone again,” she resolved in silence.

When the family returned to La Vallée, they found unexpected guests already arrived: Monsieur Quesnel, Madame St. Aubert’s brother, and his wife. Quesnel was a worldly man, proud of rank, display, and political talk. He looked on St. Aubert’s quiet life almost with contempt. During the evening he spoke much of Paris, of great people, and of his own importance. Madame Quesnel described balls, banquets, and processions with endless delight. Emily listened with the lively curiosity of youth, but her mother, watching her, felt no envy. “Splendor is not happiness,” she thought. “Only virtue can give that.”

Quesnel also spoke of changes he meant to make on the old family estate he had bought from St. Aubert years before. He talked of pulling down part of the house, cutting old trees, and building fine new rooms and stables. “That great chestnut must come down,” he said. St. Aubert looked at him in pain. “That tree has stood there for centuries,” he replied. “I climbed in its branches when I was a boy. Must everything old and noble be destroyed because it is not fashionable?” Quesnel only smiled and answered, “Our ideas are larger now.” St. Aubert said no more, but his silence was full of sorrow.

Soon after the guests left, Madame St. Aubert, who had seemed tired for some days, became seriously ill. The fever that had touched her while she nursed

her husband now showed itself openly, and this time it was more dangerous. St. Aubert sent for a physician and stayed near her night and day. He tried to speak with hope before Emily, but fear was heavy in his heart. Madame St. Aubert herself seemed to know the truth. When she found a moment alone with the physician, she said, “Do not deceive my family for my sake. If I must die, let them learn to bear it from my example.”

Her last days were calm, patient, and full of tenderness. She spoke often with her husband and daughter of God, of death, and of meeting again in another world. More than once St. Aubert was forced to leave the room because his grief overcame him. Emily, remembering all her father had taught her, struggled to command herself while her mother lived. But when the end came, and that beloved voice was still forever, her strength failed, and she sank under the full weight of sorrow. The peasantry mourned sincerely when Madame St. Aubert was buried in the village church, for they had long loved her goodness.

That evening St. Aubert called his household together and read prayers in a low, solemn voice. His tears fell upon the book, yet by the end his face had become more steady. Later he spoke to Emily alone. “My child,” he said, “grief is natural, and I do not ask you not to feel. But do not let sorrow rule your whole life. We owe something to our dead, but we also owe something to ourselves and to God. Try to remember what I have taught you. Command your feelings, do not kill them. A cold heart is worse than a suffering one.” Emily looked through her tears at her father and answered softly, “I will try, dear sir. I will try.”

Part 2

After these first heavy days of mourning, a few visitors came to La Vallée. One was Monsieur Barreaux, a grave man who had often met St. Aubert among the mountains, though he had never before entered the château. He did not speak much of sorrow, but his voice was softer than usual, and his manner showed true feeling. Madame Cheron, St. Aubert’s surviving sister, also came, and she spoke many proper words about loss and patience. “You must change place,” she said.

“It is wrong to give way too much to grief.” St. Aubert bowed and thanked her, but Emily felt that her aunt understood very little of either love or sorrow.

There was, however, one visit that St. Aubert could not longer delay. Some business of importance required him to go to his brother-in-law, Monsieur Quesnel, and he took Emily with him to Epourville. As their carriage entered the forest near his old family home, he saw once more the avenue of chestnut trees and the dark towers rising between them. He sighed deeply and said nothing. Emily looked at him with concern, but she thought his sadness came only from memory.

The great house seemed changed in spirit as much as in appearance. The old hall no longer showed the arms and banners of the family, and the heavy oak had been covered with tasteless paint and light ornaments. Everything spoke of display instead of dignity. “This is no longer my father’s house,” St. Aubert said quietly, as he looked round. Quesnel received them with politeness and vanity together, and soon began again to talk of plans for cutting down trees, changing halls, and remaking everything that age had made noble.

After dinner, St. Aubert went out alone to see once more the old chestnut tree which Quesnel had promised to destroy. He stood long under its branches and looked upward through the leaves to the trembling blue sky. Images of youth came back to him there, followed at last by the face of his dying wife. When he returned to the house, his silence was deeper than before. On the way back to La Vallée, Emily tried once or twice to draw him into conversation, but he only pressed her hand and forced a faint smile.

Weeks passed, and though Emily’s grief became less wild, her father’s health seemed to sink more steadily. At last the physician told him that he must travel if he wished to recover any strength. The air of Languedoc and Provence was advised, and St. Aubert resolved to move slowly along the shore of the Mediterranean. To Emily’s surprise, he dismissed almost all the servants before the journey. “Why must this be so, dear sir?” she asked at last. “To save expense, my child,” he answered. “We are going on a costly excursion, and we must live with care.”

They left La Vallée with sorrowful hearts, and for some days travelled quietly southward. The changing scenes amused Emily a little, and she watched her father with constant tenderness. Sometimes he looked revived by the open air and the wide prospect, and then hope returned to her. At other times she saw how quickly he tired, and fear came back stronger than before. Still he tried to cheer her. “We must look at the world while we have it before us, Emily,” he said. “Nature has not lost her power to comfort.”

As they entered the wilder country near the Pyrenees, the road became rough, the mountains closed in around them, and evening often found them still among dark passes and lonely glens. One such evening, when they were uncertain of the way to the next village, they saw a young stranger in the dress of a hunter, with two dogs beside him. His face was open and animated, and his whole manner had something frank and noble in it. St. Aubert asked if the village was far. “Only half a league, sir,” the stranger replied. “I am going there myself, and I will gladly show you the road.”

St. Aubert thanked him and invited him to ride in the carriage, but the young man declined. “I will walk with the mules,” he said. “But I must warn you that you will find poor lodging. These mountain people are simple folk. They have not many of the comforts that are thought necessary elsewhere.” St. Aubert smiled and answered, “Then you are not one of them, sir.” “No,” said the stranger, “I am only a wanderer.” Emily listened in silence, yet she had already begun to observe him with interest.

The dusk grew thicker as they went on, and they were glad of a guide. High among the dark mountains Emily saw one shining white light far away and asked what it was. “It is snow,” said St. Aubert. “The highest summit still catches the last rays of the sun.” Soon the lights of the village began to twinkle below, reflected in a stream, but when they came near they found there was no inn there at all. The young stranger at once offered to walk ahead and ask some cottage for shelter. “You are very good, sir,” said St. Aubert. “I hardly know how to thank you.”

On the way, St. Aubert asked him if he had had good sport in the chase. “Not

much," the stranger answered. "To tell the truth, I care more for the country than for game. My dogs are almost more my friends than my helpers. I wander because these scenes please me, and because a lonely traveller is treated with more respect if he seems to have some business." St. Aubert looked at him with growing pleasure. "I understand you very well," he said. "Were I younger, I might have envied such freedom."

They found poor but clean shelter in the village, and on the next day the road led them again among grander heights and deeper solitudes. By now St. Aubert and the young stranger talked with ease, for their tastes in nature and thought were much alike. Emily, seated in the carriage, listened more than she spoke, but she listened with delight. Toward evening, however, danger came suddenly. A shot was fired among the rocks, and, in the confusion that followed, the young stranger was wounded in the arm while helping to defend the travellers.

Emily turned pale with terror, and for a moment believed him killed. St. Aubert sprang to support him, and, when he saw the blood, his distress was great. "Can you bear the carriage?" he asked. "We must reach Beaujeu as quickly as possible." The young man, though faint, tried to smile. "Do not be alarmed for me, sir," he said. "It is a slight matter." They lifted him into the chaise, and while the mules moved on slowly through the dark, St. Aubert asked in surprise why he had appeared on this same road. The stranger hesitated, then answered with honest warmth, "You, sir, renewed my taste for society. When you left the hamlet, it became a solitude to me. I wished to see a more romantic road—and I hoped to overtake you."

Night had now fallen almost completely, and the travellers soon saw, at a little distance below them, a fire burning red among the rocks. As they drew nearer, they discovered a band of gipsies preparing supper by the blaze. Savage faces, half seen in the moving light, looked up toward the road, while children and dogs ran about the rude tents. Emily shuddered and drew closer to her father. Valancourt, for so the young stranger had now named himself, laid a silent hand on one of St. Aubert's pistols, and St. Aubert took out another. "Drive on," he said to the muleteer. "Lose not a moment."

They passed without attack and at length reached Beaujeu, where the only inn was poor enough, though better than the cottages behind them. A surgeon came and found that the ball had gone through the flesh without touching the bone. When the pain lessened, Valancourt's spirits returned, and the danger they had shared gave an easy warmth to the little party. St. Aubert soon saw both the generosity and the quick, ardent nature of this young man. On the following morning, when the wound proved too painful for further travel, he said, "We will wait here till you are better." Valancourt made polite objections, but St. Aubert would not hear them, and Emily, though silent, felt a secret joy that the delay was necessary.

Part 3

Several days passed at Beaujeu before Valancourt was strong enough to travel again. During that time St. Aubert watched him closely, and what he saw pleased him more and more. The young man was generous, quick, sincere, and full of delight in whatever was noble or beautiful, though he was also warm, rash, and little trained by the world. "This young man has never been at Paris," St. Aubert said to himself more than once, and then sighed as if the thought brought back old experience. At last, when Valancourt could bear the carriage though not his horse, St. Aubert said to him, "You must go with us a little farther. I cannot leave you till you are fully recovered."

Valancourt accepted with undisguised joy, and they set out again among the mountains. They travelled slowly, stopping wherever a prospect was unusually grand, sometimes climbing on foot to some high point from which the view opened more widely, sometimes lingering among fragrant plants and under deep woods. St. Aubert often bent over flowers and wild herbs while Emily and Valancourt walked a little before him. He pointed out to her the forms of the hills, the distant valleys, the shifting clouds, and lines from poets she loved; and as he spoke, his voice had a tenderness it could not hide. Emily, feeling too well the meaning of silence, often broke it by speaking eagerly of the scene around them.

“Look there,” she would say, “how the light lies on that ridge!” and Valancourt would answer, “Yes, but it is your eye that teaches me to see it better.”

From Beaujeu the road rose higher and higher into the upper regions of the Pyrenees. They passed glaciers, fields of eternal snow, black forests, and awful precipices where the torrent below was seen rather than heard. Sometimes they sat upon some lonely height and looked over cliffs no human foot had touched, while the eagle cried above them and the vulture circled below. Emily felt as if she had entered another world, more vast and pure than any she had imagined. “I have no words for this,” she said softly once. “Nor I,” replied Valancourt. “One can only feel it.”

At last they began to descend toward Rousillon, and beauty again mixed itself with grandeur. Green pastures, cottages, children, and flowers appeared among the rocks, and the eye, tired with immensity, rested gladly on these gentler forms. Yet St. Aubert still took pleasure in watching his young companions, who seemed themselves like creatures belonging to the scene, simple, ardent, and untouched by common vanity. He looked at them, smiled faintly, and thought how rare it was that innocence and fine feeling should remain unspoiled. “The world laughs at such happiness,” he said to himself, “because it has lost the power to understand it.”

One evening, after they had wandered too far from the road, they were forced to seek shelter in a convent hidden among woods above the valley. Before they found it, St. Aubert, overcome with weariness, sat down on a little green height in the moonlight between Emily and Valancourt. The valley lay below in silver and shadow, and the low sound of distant waters only deepened the stillness. After a long silence Valancourt said, “Scenes like this make the heart softer and better. They bring back those we love, and make us love them still more.” His voice trembled, and St. Aubert, thinking of his dead wife, answered in a subdued tone, “Yes. At such an hour the memory of those we have lost comes like distant music in the night.”

The convent received them for the night, and Emily, after she had gone to her room, stood long at the open casement. The midnight bell sounded, footsteps

passed along the gallery, and then the chant of the monks rose from the chapel below. The night was clear, the woods were still, and the stars shone with that solemn brightness which lifts the mind above itself. Emily forgot for a little while both fear and sorrow, and felt only awe, gratitude, and a humble joy in the presence of God. When at last she slept, it was with a calmer heart than she had known for many days.

In the morning they went on again, hoping to reach Rousillon before night. The road was wild but lovely, and now and then opened into little green valleys bright with flowers, flocks, and running water. St. Aubert was often tired, yet the beauty around him seemed to give him strength for a time. Near noon they lost the road once more and came upon a shepherd's cottage, where two little children were playing alone. Emily and her father sat on a rustic bench beneath the pines while Valancourt went in search of Michael and the carriage; and when he returned, a poor young woman had just come up to the cottage in tears. Her husband had been robbed in the night by gipsies, and the loss would ruin the family.

St. Aubert gave her some money, and Emily gladly added from her own small purse. But Valancourt, after asking quietly what sum was still needed, stood a moment in painful thought. "If I give it," he said to himself, "they are saved. If I keep it, I travel more easily." At that instant the shepherd himself appeared with his children running to meet him, and the sight decided all. Valancourt threw down almost all the money he had, kept only a few louis, and hurried after his friends with such lightness of step that St. Aubert noticed it at once. "What has made you so happy?" he asked. Valancourt laughed and answered only, "What a beautiful day this is! How bright the sun is, and how pure the air!" St. Aubert understood him very well. "May you always deserve such sunshine," he said warmly. "May benevolence and reason always keep it in your heart."

Soon after, they rested on a height from which the whole country seemed spread beneath them, the mountains behind, the rich plains before, and beyond all the distant glitter of the Mediterranean. They looked long upon the wonderful union of beauty and terror in that scene. In the evening they descended fully into

the lowlands and reached Arles, where they were to pass the night. There, after the pleasures and fatigues of the day, a new sadness fell upon them, for Valancourt had now no excuse to remain longer. St. Aubert invited him to go farther, but did not press the invitation, and Valancourt, though sorely tempted, refused with a modest firmness that pleased St. Aubert more than ready obedience would have done. “Then we part tomorrow,” he said quietly. “Tomorrow,” answered St. Aubert. Emily said nothing.

Their farewell on the following morning was restrained but deeply felt. The sound of the carriage below ended breakfast and brought them all to silence. At last St. Aubert said, “You will not pass La Vallée without visiting us, I hope.” “Never, if I can help it,” Valancourt replied quickly, and then looked toward Emily with timid earnestness. When they reached the carriage, none of them seemed able to say the last word. At length St. Aubert said, “Farewell.” Emily repeated it in a low voice, and Valancourt answered it with a sad smile. As the carriage moved away, Emily looked back and saw him still standing at the little inn, following them with his eyes, and she raised her hand in silence.

For some time neither she nor her father spoke. Then St. Aubert said, “This is a promising young man. It is many years since I have liked anyone so much in so short a time. He brings back to me the feelings of my own youth.” After another pause he added, “The world was opening before me then. Now it is closing.” Emily turned to him in alarm. “My dear sir, do not say so,” she cried. “You must live many years yet—for your own sake and for mine.” He pressed her hand and answered gently, “For thy sake, Emily, I hope so.”

They went on along the shore to Colioure and then toward Perpignan. While her father slept from weariness, Emily searched among the books in the carriage and found, in place of one she had expected, a small volume of Petrarch that belonged to Valancourt. His name was written in it, and lines were marked in pencil under passages of tender feeling that he had not dared to read aloud. Emily understood at last that he had left it there purposely. She opened it with trembling hands, and as she read, tears gathered in her eyes. “Then I am loved,” she whispered, holding the little book close.

They reached Perpignan by sunset, where letters from Quesnel were waiting. St. Aubert read them, and the change in his face so alarmed Emily that she could scarcely sleep that night. On the following day, as they travelled onward, she renewed her gentle questions, and at last he answered. “My dear child,” he said, “I wished to spare you for a little longer, but your anxiety makes silence useless. The greater part of my small property was in the hands of a man at Paris, whom I trusted. He is ruined, and I am ruined with him.” Emily turned pale and said, after a long pause, “Must we then leave La Vallée?” “That is not yet certain,” he replied. “But my income will be sadly reduced, and it is for you, Emily, that I suffer most.”

She looked at him through tears, yet spoke with a courage learned from himself. “Do not grieve for me, dear father. If La Vallée remains, we shall still be happy, and even if we are poor, we shall not be miserable. We have never cared for vain luxuries, and poverty cannot take from us what is best. It cannot rob us of our love for one another, or of books, thought, duty, and the beauty of nature.” St. Aubert hid his face for a moment, unable to answer. Then he drew her to him, and their tears fell together, but they were no longer tears of despair.

Part 4

On the following day they continued their journey along the shore into Languedoc. The sea lay bright on one side, and on the other spread wide plains, rich with vines and autumn light. St. Aubert tried to speak cheerfully, and sometimes he succeeded for a little while, but Emily saw how often a shade passed over his face. She smiled whenever he looked at her, because she wished to give him courage, yet her own heart was full of pain. She understood too well that misfortune and weakness were working together upon him.

Toward evening they reached a small village, where they hoped to rest for the night, but all the beds were taken by travellers connected with the vintage. There was no choice except to go on. St. Aubert, who was already exhausted, leaned back in the carriage and closed his eyes for some time; then he opened them and looked long at the country round him. The gay songs of the peasants,

the loaded vines, the golden sky, and the distant mountains seemed only to make his sadness deeper. “All this will soon be lost to me,” he thought, though he did not say the words aloud.

Emily watched him with silent terror, and at last, when she felt his hand tremble in hers, tears rushed to her eyes. He understood her without seeing her face. “My dear child,” he said very softly, “do not look so at me.” She turned toward the window to hide her grief, but she pressed his hand first, as if to tell him that she understood everything and would not leave him even in thought. The last light faded over the Mediterranean, and the dusk grew colder every minute.

St. Aubert now felt so ill that he asked Michael how far it was to the next post-house. “Nine miles, your honour,” replied Michael. “Nine miles!” said St. Aubert. “That is too far. Ask if there is any house on the road where we may pass the night.” A peasant came by and said there was no inn near, but he spoke of a château standing in woods at some distance from the road. Another man, when asked about it, seemed surprised that anyone would go there. “You may try your luck,” he said, “but I would not advise it.”

Since there was no better hope, St. Aubert ordered Michael to drive toward the woods. The road entered a long dark avenue of ancient trees, whose branches met above like a roof. Emily shivered as they moved slowly under that black arch, for the place was gloomy and perfectly still. Once Michael stopped and pointed out a figure moving ahead in the dusk, but St. Aubert, though uneasy, told him to go on a little farther. Suddenly a deep hollow voice sounded from among the trees, so strange that it seemed scarcely human, and Michael instantly whipped the mules round and drove back toward the highway with all speed.

St. Aubert had now become so faint that Emily forgot every fear except that of losing him. When the carriage stopped again, music was heard at a distance among the woods, and she caught at that sound as if it were hope itself. “There must be some house near!” she cried. In the faint moonlight she thought she saw a building beyond the trees, but no clear road led to it. Hearing voices farther off, she begged to go and seek help. Before either her father or Michael could fully stop her, she had left the carriage and hurried down a narrow lane into the darkness.

For a few moments she seemed carried forward only by terror and love. Then the place itself began to strike her imagination. The moon was shut out by heavy branches, the music had ceased, and she could hear nothing but her own quick steps among the leaves. At last she reached an open green where several cottages stood round a little level of turf, and on that turf peasants were dancing to the music of the vintage. The contrast between their joy and her own distress was almost painful. She ran to a group of elder people near one of the cottages and said at once, “My father is very ill on the road. For pity’s sake, come and help us.”

Several men rose immediately and followed her back. When they reached the carriage they found that St. Aubert had recovered enough strength to speak, though he was still extremely weak. An old peasant, grave and kind in manner, stepped forward and said, “Monsieur, my cottage is poor, but the best bed in it is at your service.” St. Aubert accepted the offer with simple gratitude. “You give help like a friend,” he said. “I thank you as one.” The old man bowed and led the way through the lane toward the moonlit glade.

As the carriage moved in among the cottages, the dancers stopped and gathered round with eager kindness. Some young girls ran for wine and grapes and pressed them upon the travellers. At last they reached the cottage of the old peasant, whose name was La Voisin, and St. Aubert was helped into a small inner room where moonlight came through the open casement and the air was sweet with honeysuckle. Rest seemed at once to soothe him. La Voisin brought fruit and cream, placed them on the table, and then stood respectfully behind his guest’s chair until St. Aubert insisted that he sit down and share the meal.

By degrees St. Aubert grew calmer, and La Voisin began to speak of his family, of his daughter Agnes, her husband, and the children who were dancing outside on the grass. Emily listened with tears in her eyes, because the old man’s simple happiness touched her more deeply than proud speeches ever could. At length he said, “When I lost my wife, I came to live with my daughter. I am old now, monsieur, and I hope only to die among my children. There is comfort in dying where one has been loved.” St. Aubert’s voice shook as he answered, “My good friend, may that comfort be yours for many years yet.”

La Voisin sighed gently and said, “I do not know that I wish for many years. I trust that when I die I shall go where my poor wife has gone before me. Sometimes, on a still moonlight night, I almost think I see her again among these woods. Tell me, monsieur, do you believe that the dead are allowed to return and look upon those they loved?” Emily could no longer keep back her tears. St. Aubert pressed her hand and replied in a low voice, “I do not know it, but I hope it. We are not commanded to believe it, yet we may innocently hope it. If separation were eternal, death would be far more bitter than it is. Look up, my dear Emily. We shall meet again.”

A quiet peace stole over his face as he spoke, and for a little while none of them said anything more. Then St. Aubert, wishing perhaps to turn Emily’s thoughts, asked about the strange music heard in the woods. La Voisin said it was sometimes heard late at night under his very window, played on an instrument no one could identify, and often joined by a voice so sweet and sad that many people believed the place haunted. “Some say it comes to warn people of death,” he added. Emily could not help shuddering, though she tried to smile at the superstition.

St. Aubert asked where the music came from, and La Voisin pointed through the casement toward a bright spot above the dark trees. “Do you see that turret in the moonlight?” he said. “It belongs to the Château Le Blanc, which once belonged to the Marquis de Villeroi.” At that name St. Aubert started violently. “What did you say?” he asked. “Le Blanc? Are we so near it?” La Voisin, surprised, answered that they were, and then added that the Marquis was dead and that the place had passed into other hands. St. Aubert sank into a troubled silence, and Emily, astonished by his emotion, did not dare to question him.

After a time La Voisin spoke again of the late marchioness, praising her beauty and goodness. Tears stood in St. Aubert’s eyes. “Enough,” he said with difficulty. “Enough, my friend. Let us speak of something else.” At that moment the music returned, floating faint and solemn through the still night. They all listened in silence. The sound rose, trembled, and slowly died away among the woods, leaving the cottage more quiet than before. Emily sat close beside her father, unable to free her heart from a dark fear, while he looked out into the

moonlight with an expression at once mournful and resigned.

Part 5

"My dear sir," Emily said at last, forcing herself to speak, "you must think of rest now. You have talked too long, and the night air is growing colder." St. Aubert started a little, as if waking from painful thoughts, and looked at her with affection. "You are right, my love," he answered. "If I am stronger tomorrow, we will set out early and turn homeward. I wish now for La Vallée more than for any distant journey." Agnes was called, a bed was prepared, and Emily withdrew to her small room with a heart oppressed by fear.

Yet she did not sleep at once. She stood long at the open casement and looked up into the clear heaven, where the stars burned in a deep and awful peace. Everything below was quiet; the dance had ceased, the cottages were dark, and only now and then some far, faint sound told that human life still watched somewhere in the night. Her thoughts rose from grief to prayer, and from prayer to those solemn hopes of another life which her father had spoken of so tenderly. But when at last she remembered the Marquis de Villeroi and the strange emotion his name had caused, curiosity returned and mingled itself with sorrow.

In the morning the fresh air, the woods bright with sun, and the distant sound of a convent bell soothed her for a little while. She found her father already risen, but he looked no better than herself. At breakfast he tried to talk with La Voisin in his old gentle manner. "I envy you this cottage," he said. "It is peaceful, neat, and full of the air that gives health." Emily begged him not to travel that day, but he answered with unusual eagerness, "No, my child. I must go home as soon as I can."

Even while he was speaking, she saw his face change. Before she could reach him, he fell back in his chair. In a few moments he revived, but the effort of concealment was over now, and he admitted that he could not travel. "Help me upstairs," he said faintly. Emily gave him her arm and guided him to his room with a steadiness that cost her all her strength. When he was once more in bed, he

asked that she alone might remain with him.

Then, at last, he told her plainly that they must soon part. Emily wept without power to answer, and he struggled first with his own grief and then with hers. “We must speak of it,” he said. “Let us not lose these moments in silence. Death is not terrible to those who trust in God, and I would leave you with that trust living in your heart.” He spoke of her mother, of Providence, and of the peace that faith could still give even when earthly hope was gone.

After a pause he fixed his eyes upon her with solemn earnestness and said, “I have a promise to ask, Emily, and you must give it before I explain.” She dried her tears and listened. “Promise me,” he said, “that you will do exactly as I command in one matter, without turning aside from my words.” Awed by his tone, she made the promise, though she trembled without knowing why. “You will not break it?” he asked once more. “Never, dear sir,” she answered.

Then he described to her a sliding board in the floor of the closet near his room at La Vallée, telling her exactly how she should know it and how she should open it. Emily listened so closely that for a few moments grief itself seemed suspended by the effort to remember. “When you return home,” he continued, and at those words she burst again into tears, “when you return, you will find beneath that board a packet of papers. You must burn them at once, and you must not read them.” Emily, astonished, ventured to ask why. “Do not ask me,” he said. “It is enough that your peace depends upon obedience.”

He then added that she would find there also a small purse of gold, and he told her with painful clearness how narrow her future means might be. At last he gave one more command. “Whatever happens,” he said, “never sell the château. If you ever marry, make it a condition that La Vallée shall remain yours. Promise me that too.” Emily knelt by the bed, kissed his hand, and answered through tears, “I promise everything. I will keep every word you have given me.” After that his mind seemed lighter, as if some burden had been laid down.

He fell into a short doze, and while Emily watched beside him La Voisin came softly to say that a confessor from the convent was below. When St. Aubert awoke, he asked for the priest, and Emily withdrew while they remained alone

together. When she was called back, her father seemed more shaken, yet also more prepared. “Pray with me,” he said. La Voisin and Agnes came in, and all knelt round the bed while the friar read the service for the dying. More than once Emily’s sobs broke the solemn words, though St. Aubert himself lay calm and almost serene.

When the prayers were ended, he asked La Voisin to come nearer. “Our acquaintance has been short,” he said, “but you have shown me the kindness of a friend. My daughter will remain here for a few days after I am gone, and she will need gentle care. I trust her to you.” The old man wept and promised everything in his power, even offering to accompany Emily into Gascony if necessary. St. Aubert thanked him with deep feeling, and then, when they were again alone, turned once more to Emily, as if he must use every breath that remained in advising her.

He spoke then with a force and clearness that seemed greater than before. “Do not be proud of fine feeling,” he said. “Sensibility is dangerous when it is not governed. Happiness is found in peace, not in violent emotion. Do not mistake fortitude for hardness, or sentiment for virtue. One act of real usefulness is worth more than all the feelings in the world that end in nothing.” Then he spoke of Madame Cheron, saying that he had placed Emily under her care because he had no better choice. “Try to conciliate her kindness,” he added. “Do this for my sake.”

At last his sight began to fail. He asked where she was, stretched out his hands toward her, and gave her his final blessing. Emily bent over him, kissed his forehead, and felt the cold of death already there. For some hours he still breathed, but without speech, and about three in the afternoon he died so quietly that she could scarcely tell the exact moment when life left him. There was no struggle, no sigh, only a slow passing away. La Voisin and his daughter led her from the room while she seemed scarcely conscious of what they said or did.

That evening the monk returned and brought a message from the abbess of the convent, full of kindness and pity. His mild words calmed Emily enough to let her look again upon her father’s body. At first she stood motionless, staring at the beloved face as if she could not believe death had fixed it so completely. Then she

took the cold hand, spoke to him, and, finding no answer, fell into a passion of grief. Later that night she dreamed he came smiling toward her, and as she woke she heard once more the mysterious music floating through the darkness outside her window.

On the following day she visited the convent, where the abbess received her with true maternal tenderness. “Do not speak yet,” the lady said gently. “I know what is in your heart. Come with us to prayers, and then we will talk.” The peace of the place, the solemn service, and the compassion of those around her brought a little strength back to Emily’s spirit. Soon afterward St. Aubert was buried, according to his wish, in the church of St. Clair, near the old tombs of the Villeroi family, and when she heard the earth fall upon the coffin, the anguish she had so long restrained broke from her in one deep groan.

The abbess persuaded her to remain for some weeks at the convent, where sorrow and a slow fever kept her quiet and weak. Madame Cheron wrote cold words of condolence and sent only a servant to conduct her back, which showed Emily too clearly how little real kindness she might expect there. Yet the gentle order of convent life, the sea, the woods, and the nuns’ tender care began slowly to soften the first violence of grief. In that quiet retreat she almost thought of renouncing the world forever; but as her strength returned, another image returned too. She remembered Valancourt—his voice, his mind, his face among the mountains—and with that remembrance came, not happiness, but the first faint wish to live on.

Part 6

Emily remained at the convent for some weeks after her father’s burial. The abbess watched over her with a tenderness that seemed almost maternal, and the quiet order of the place gradually soothed her spirits. Sometimes she sat in the parlour with the nuns, listening to their gentle talk; sometimes she walked alone beneath the trees, and sometimes she went to the chapel, where prayer gave her the only peace she could now fully receive. “You must not strive to forget,” the

abbess said to her one day. “You must learn to remember with resignation.” Emily kissed her hand and answered, “Yes, madam, I will try.”

She often visited the grave of St. Aubert, and there her sorrow became calmer and more solemn than at first. She no longer yielded so entirely to violent grief, but rather sat near the tomb in a silence full of thought, as if his spirit were still near her in that peaceful place. The sea, the woods, the distant mountains, and the convent bell at evening all seemed to speak one language to her heart. She thought of his lessons, of his patience, of the mild firmness with which he had guided her from childhood. “I have lost my father,” she said to herself, “but I have not lost his voice.”

At length the abbess judged that she was strong enough to return to Gascony. Emily herself had long delayed the moment, for she knew too well what she must suffer when she saw La Vallée again; yet she remembered that duty now called her thither. She had her father’s last commands to fulfil, and no one else could perform them. When the morning of departure came, the nuns embraced her as a sister, and the abbess said, “Our prayers will go with you, my child. When your heart is heavy, remember that this house will always receive you.” Emily answered through tears, “You have been more than kind to me. I shall remember you always.”

La Voisin himself undertook to guide her back through the woods to the road. The old man walked on in his simple, grave manner, sometimes speaking of his children and grandchildren, sometimes keeping silence when he saw that Emily wished only to think. Once, as they passed near the cottage where St. Aubert had died, she stopped and looked at the little window that opened toward the glade. “This place will never leave my memory,” she said. La Voisin bowed his head and answered, “No, mademoiselle. Good people leave a blessing behind them.” Emily could not speak again for some time.

The journey to Gascony was slow and mournful, but it had none of the terror that had marked her father’s last journey. Every mile seemed now to carry her nearer not to hope, but to memory. When she at last drew near the old woods and saw the familiar grounds of La Vallée, her heart beat so violently that she was

forced to close her eyes for a moment. Yet when she entered the house, the first sharp pain was followed by a tender and almost grateful feeling. “This is still home,” she whispered. “They are gone, but this is still home.”

One of the first rooms she entered was her father’s library. Everything there seemed to keep his image living before her—the chair near the window, the table, the books he had loved, the view of the grove beyond. She seated herself where he had often sat and gave herself up for a while to recollection. The tears that fell then were not like those first tears of despair, but softer and less bitter. “If sorrow could bring you back,” she said in a low voice, “I would never cease to weep. But since it cannot, I will remember and obey you.”

Before evening she was visited by the venerable Monsieur Barreaux, who came with more kindness than formality to welcome her to the long-deserted house. His severe countenance was softened by real feeling, and though he said little, the little he said had weight. “Your father was one of the few men I have respected without reserve,” he told her. “If I can now serve his daughter, I shall think it an honour.” Emily thanked him warmly, and his presence, grave as it was, gave her a sense of support which she had not expected to find. After he had gone, the loneliness of the château seemed a little less oppressive.

Theresa, too, welcomed her with the tears and faithful affection of old service. She could scarcely see Emily without weeping, and yet there was comfort in these signs of attachment. She led Emily from room to room, speaking of small household matters only because stronger subjects were too painful. Every object recalled some lost happiness, and yet Emily would not turn away from any of them. “Leave all as it is,” she said when Theresa spoke of changing certain things. “Nothing must be altered unless need requires it. I wish to find my home as my father left it.”

That same evening, when the house was still and she was alone, Emily remembered the command given to her in St. Aubert’s last hours. With a trembling hand she went to the closet he had described and found, after some search, the concealed board in the floor. Beneath it lay the little packet of papers and the purse of gold exactly as he had said. For a moment she held the papers and looked at

them in silence. Curiosity, grief, and filial obedience struggled together in her heart, but obedience conquered. “He trusted me,” she said. “I will not betray that trust even for one glance.”

She carried the packet to her chamber, lit a candle, and burned it unopened. As the papers blackened and curled in the flame, she felt as if some unknown secret of her father’s life were vanishing forever before her eyes. The thought was painful, but there was also peace in having obeyed him perfectly. When all was consumed, she opened the purse and found there a sum which, though small, seemed precious because his hand had placed it there for her. She pressed it to her lips and then locked it away. “This too I will keep for your sake,” she whispered.

During the next days she moved through the grounds and rooms of La Vallée like one living among beloved shadows. The plane-tree on the terrace, the fishing-house in the glen, the lawns, the grove, and the river all spoke to her of her parents. Yet time had already changed grief enough that she could now seek these places instead of fleeing from them. She even found a melancholy sweetness in sitting beneath the plane-tree at sunset, where they had so often been together. “You taught me to love these scenes,” she said inwardly to St. Aubert. “Perhaps they will teach me now to endure.”

But she was not allowed to remain long in this sad sanctuary. A letter soon came from Madame Cheron, written in that style of cold propriety which wounds more than open unkindness. She spoke of duty, arrangement, and the impropriety of Emily’s living alone; she added that her niece must soon come to Toulouse and place herself under her care. Emily read the letter with reluctance, for every line showed how little sympathy she might expect there. “I must go,” she said at last to Theresa. “My father wished it, and I have no right now to choose only what is easiest.” Theresa shook her head and muttered, “Ah, mademoiselle, La Vallée is a kinder home than many fine houses.”

Emily delayed only so long as was necessary to arrange the house and collect a few books and possessions for the journey. Each preparation made departure more painful. On the last evening she walked alone through the grounds, looking long at every scene that had once been familiar to happiness. The twilight was

soft, the river quiet, and the woods already darkening at their edges. “Farewell for a little while,” she said, turning toward the château. “If I cannot be happy here now, I can at least remember here.” The next morning, with a heavy heart but a composed countenance, she left La Vallée for Toulouse and the protection of Madame Cheron.

Part 7

Madame Cheron received Emily at Toulouse with formal kindness rather than tenderness. Her house was larger and finer than La Vallée, and her way of living was formed to impress the world. She spoke much of good company, appearance, rank, and the necessity of knowing how to conduct oneself in society. Emily listened respectfully, because duty required it, but every room in the house seemed strange to her heart. “You must learn to live a little more in the world,” her aunt said. “Retirement may do for old people and philosophers, but not for a young woman.” Emily answered softly, “My father taught me that peace is better than show, madam.”

Madame Cheron did not argue long, for she cared more to command than to convince. She soon began to carry Emily with her to visits and small assemblies, partly because she wished to display her niece’s beauty, and partly because she hoped such occasions would increase her own importance. Emily obeyed in all things, though she often returned from these entertainments more weary than pleased. The music, lights, dresses, and compliments all seemed empty beside the simple joys she had lost. “You are too quiet,” Madame Cheron said to her one evening. “People will think you have no spirit.” Emily smiled faintly and replied, “Perhaps, madam, they will think me only thoughtful.”

Among the persons whom Madame Cheron most wished to please was Madame Clairval, a rich and splendid widow newly settled near Toulouse. Her house was famous for its large suppers, music, and elegant company, and to be often seen there was a distinction which Madame Cheron valued highly. Emily was taken there one evening when her heart was already low, and she entered the

bright saloon with little curiosity and no expectation. But while she was crossing the room, her eyes suddenly met those of Valancourt. For a moment both stood still, as if all the company had disappeared and only that one sight remained.

Emily turned pale and would have withdrawn, but Madame Cheron, not yet understanding the cause of her confusion, led her on. Valancourt, after a moment of visible struggle, came forward with respectful haste and addressed Madame Cheron first. He then bowed to Emily in a manner at once restrained and full of feeling. Madame Cheron looked from one to the other and instantly saw much more than either had spoken. The rest of the evening passed to Emily like a troubled dream. She heard voices, music, and laughter around her, but her whole mind was occupied by the certainty that Valancourt was near and that her aunt had observed them.

At supper Valancourt was seated far from Emily, with a beautiful young lady for his partner, and this circumstance, which he had no power to change, gave her more pain than she wished to confess even to herself. Madame Cheron, meanwhile, asked in a sharp voice who the young man was who had presumed to place himself at the table, and when she heard his name she spoke of him with open displeasure. “I admire the lady,” she said of his partner, “but I cannot admire her choice.” Others answered in his praise, and one hinted that he might soon marry a rich heiress. This report vexed Madame Cheron so much that she declared, almost before the whole table, “It was only this morning that I rejected his suit.”

Emily’s distress at hearing this was so great that she could scarcely remain in the room. Valancourt, who from his distant seat could not hear every word, nevertheless understood enough from looks and whispers to know that he had become a subject of public comment. When the company broke up, he watched anxiously for some chance to speak with Emily, but Madame Cheron allowed none. As soon as they reached home, she ordered Emily to follow her into a private room, and there began at once to question and accuse. “So, child,” she said, “this is the result of my brother’s excellent way of bringing you up!”

Emily, already trembling, yet answered with dignity. “Madam, I have done nothing that should offend you.” “Nothing?” cried Madame Cheron. “This young

man has had the impertinence to tell me that he admires you, and at the same time to confess that he has little fortune and depends chiefly on his profession and an elder brother. Was I to listen to such presumption?" Emily's tears rose then, not only from wounded feeling, but from pride in Valancourt's openness. "At least, madam," she said, "he has not tried to deceive you." "That makes him neither richer nor wiser," replied her aunt coldly.

She then went on to declare that Valancourt should receive his dismissal from herself alone, and that if Emily ever attempted any private interview or correspondence she should leave the house immediately, or be sent to a convent. Emily, hurt by such suspicions, forgot her timidity for a moment. "How little you know me, madam," she said, "if you think such warnings necessary! My father taught me to respect myself." But Madame Cheron, who trusted no one's principles where her own will was concerned, insisted on a promise. Emily gave it without hesitation. "I will neither see nor write to Monsieur Valancourt without your knowledge," she said. "That is what I require," returned her aunt, and dismissed her.

Left alone at last, Emily went out to a little pavilion at the end of the terrace, where she could think without restraint. There she reviewed, with that exactness which modesty and grief together gave her, every part of her former conduct toward Valancourt at La Vallée. She found nothing that ought to humble her, and this restored some peace to her mind. She loved him still, but she resolved that no secret correspondence, no hidden meeting, should ever stain the memory of the parents who had formed her character. "If he truly esteems me," she said, "he will not ask what I ought not to grant." Yet the resolution cost her many tears.

On the following day Valancourt wrote to Madame Cheron, requesting leave to justify himself and declaring that he would receive his dismissal from Emily only. The letter was delivered into Emily's hands, but she gave it unopened to her aunt. Madame Cheron read it with impatience at first, then with a visible softening. When she returned it, Emily scarcely dared to breathe. "What am I to say, madam?" she asked at last. "Why," replied Madame Cheron, affecting great composure, "I suppose we must hear what the young man has to say. He may come this evening."

Emily looked at her in astonishment. “Do not stare so,” said her aunt. “I choose to judge for myself.”

The cause of this change was not kindness, but vanity. Valancourt had revealed that he was related to Madame Clairval, whose friendship Madame Cheron was eager to secure, and that connection suddenly gave him consequence in her eyes. When he came that evening, she received him alone for some time before calling Emily into the room. He rose the moment she entered, and hope and fear were so strongly mixed in his face that she could hardly support the sight. Madame Cheron then delivered one of her long speeches. “I permit this intercourse,” she said, “but only under my eye, and only on the understanding that no thought of immediate marriage is to be indulged. Monsieur Valancourt must rise in his profession, or some other prudent circumstance must occur, before any such thing can be considered.”

Valancourt, confused by the coarse manner in which this indulgence was granted, scarcely knew how to answer. At length he said, “Madam, flattering as your permission is, I cannot value it unless Mademoiselle St. Aubert herself allows me to hope.” “I will answer for my niece,” replied Madame Cheron. “My will is hers.” With that she left the room, satisfied with the importance she had given herself in the whole affair. For a few moments Emily and Valancourt could not speak freely, so much had embarrassment and sudden joy overcome them both. Then he said in a low voice, “You do not banish me, then?” Emily looked at him through tears and answered, “No—if I may still esteem you, I cannot wish you banished.”

From that time Valancourt became a frequent visitor at the château, and Emily passed the happiest hours she had known since the death of her father. They read together, walked in the pavilion on the terrace, and found at every meeting new proofs that their tastes, feelings, and hopes were formed to answer each other. They did not look far into the future, because the present was too dear and too uncertain. Madame Cheron, meanwhile, was pleased to boast of the connection wherever she went, and Madame Clairval’s notice increased her vanity every day. Another visitor also now began to appear frequently at the house—a dark,

commanding man named Montoni, whose silent power and fierce eye awakened in Emily an uneasiness she could not explain.

Part 8

Thus the winter months passed in a happiness so quiet and complete that neither Emily nor Valancourt could bear to look far beyond it. In the pavilion on the terrace he read aloud to her and to Madame Cheron, then laid the book aside and spoke of mountains, poetry, memory, and hope, till Emily felt more and more that their minds were made to answer each other. At last even Madame Cheron's vanity began to work in their favour. Madame Clairval's splendid entertainments, her high place in the neighbourhood, and the thought of an alliance with so admired a house overcame caution and greed together. "You must prepare for your marriage," Madame Cheron said one day with sudden authority. Emily stared in astonishment. "So soon, madam?" she asked. "Yes, so soon," replied her aunt. "I have decided it."

Emily was at first unable to understand this complete change in her aunt's conduct. What had once been treated as folly was now urged with impatience, and Valancourt himself, when he heard the news, hardly dared believe it true. Yet when he saw Emily again and read in her face that she did not reject him, all doubt vanished. "Then I may hope?" he said in a low voice. "You have long known that," she answered, blushing through tears. Preparations were at once begun for the wedding, and the house took on the appearance of a festival. But while these things were going forward, Montoni's power over Madame Cheron grew every day more evident, and Emily's uneasiness deepened.

One bright spring morning Emily sat in the pavilion with her work while Valancourt read aloud near her, often stopping to speak instead of reading. A servant came suddenly and said Madame Cheron wished to see her that instant. Emily found her aunt in the dressing-room, richly dressed, yet strangely troubled in countenance. "Niece," she said, hesitating in a way unusual to her, "I have news. From this hour you must consider Signor Montoni as your uncle. We were married

this morning." Emily stood speechless, less amazed that the marriage had happened than that it had been hidden so carefully. Madame Montoni quickly added, "I wished to avoid useless noise. But now it is done, all shall know it."

She then went on with a cool selfishness that wounded Emily almost more than the secrecy itself. "The ornaments prepared for your wedding need not be wasted," she said. "They shall serve to celebrate mine, and your own affair may wait a little. You will wear what is ready, to do honour to my entertainment. You may also inform Monsieur Valancourt that I have changed my name, and he can tell Madame Clairval." Emily returned to the pavilion in confusion and repeated all to Valancourt. He turned pale, then flushed with anger. "Your wedding put aside for this?" he said. "The very decorations meant for you used for her triumph?" Emily tried to smile and calm him, but his grief and indignation would not wholly yield.

Montoni now took possession of the house as if it had long belonged to him, and his friend Cavigni was almost treated like a second master. A grand entertainment was soon given, with music, dancing, and supper, and Valancourt of course was Emily's partner. He tried to be cheerful for her sake, but every lighted room and every ornament reminded him of what had been promised them and then stolen away. Madame Montoni laughed, danced, and talked without rest, while her husband moved among the guests silent, proud, and watchful, as if he despised the very company he had collected. Emily observed him closely that evening and shrank more than ever from the fierce fire of his eye and the gloomy reserve of his manner. "I do not trust him," she said to herself. "I never shall."

Only a few weeks had passed after this when Madame Montoni told Emily that the Signor intended to return to Italy as soon as the journey could be arranged. "We go first to Venice," she said. "After that to his estate in Tuscany. You, who admire fine prospects and romantic countries, ought to rejoice." Emily looked at her in real alarm. "Am I to go too, madam?" she asked. "Certainly," replied her aunt. "What else could be meant?" Then, with cruel carelessness, she added, "Signor Montoni is gone this very day to inform Madame Clairval that the proposed connection between your family and hers must be thought of no more."

The words fell on Emily like a sentence. She tried to ask why so sudden and total a change had taken place, but Madame Montoni answered only that the Signor considered such a marriage far beneath what Emily might now expect. “I leave the whole matter to him,” she said. “You must submit to those who know better than yourself.” Emily could not yet argue or entreat. She went away to her room and sat for a long time in that dull, stunned misery which follows a blow too sharp to be understood at once. Italy seemed suddenly not beautiful but terrible, a far country full of distance, danger, and power not her own. Above all, the thought of separation from Valancourt drove every other thought into darkness.

That day at dinner her grief was so great that she begged to remain in her chamber, but Madame Montoni refused. They sat almost silent till the cloth was removed, and then Emily once more pleaded for Valancourt with all the gentleness she could command. Her aunt answered with anger rather than reason, and the conversation ended only when Emily withdrew in tears. As she crossed the hall, she saw someone enter by the great door and at first thought it was Montoni. Then a voice, known in an instant, cried, “Emily! My Emily!” It was Valancourt, wild with anxiety and distress. “I must speak with you,” he said. “Do not send me away like this.”

At first she insisted that he should see her aunt, but when he named Montoni with a look of such fierce resentment that she trembled for him, her refusal changed. He led her into a parlour, and there she pleaded with him not to seek redress by violence. “For my sake,” she said, “promise me you will not.” His eyes, which a moment before had flashed with rage, softened at once. “For your sake, Emily,” he answered, “I will restrain myself. But do not ask me to submit tamely. I cannot be unworthy of you.” When Madame Montoni entered and found them together, she rebuked them both sharply; Valancourt defended Emily, then spoke with controlled but feeling force on the injustice done him. Her shame quickly turned to hatred, and at last he was forced to leave before his own temper should fail him.

After that he wrote repeatedly to Montoni, first asking an interview, then entreating one, and at last begging only to be allowed to bid Emily farewell.

Montoni refused or kept silence. Emily heard nothing from Valancourt and suffered all the more because she thought he must be suffering too. In truth, letters were written, but Madame Montoni had ordered that all addressed to her niece should first pass through her own hands, and those she disliked she destroyed. So the last day before departure drew near without one line of comfort reaching Emily. Madame Montoni, far from pitying her, reproached even her silence, saying, "You look as if you were ready to cry this moment, in spite of my commands."

That night, long after the household had gone to rest, Emily still sat where she had first dropped into a chair, unable either to lie down or to pray with any steadiness of mind. At last, growing faint, she opened a casement and felt the cool moonlit air revive her a little. The stillness of the avenue below and the thought of the pavilion, where she had passed so many happy hours with Valancourt, drew her irresistibly from her room. She moved softly down the staircase, unlocked a garden door, and passed alone into the avenue, sometimes hurrying, sometimes stopping, thinking every shadow among the trees might hide a watcher. Yet love and sorrow led her on to the terrace and at last to the pavilion itself.

There she threw herself into a chair by the lattice and looked out upon the pale landscape, the moon on the river, the trees in silver and shadow, and the far country that seemed already to belong to memory. "Never, never again shall we look on this together," she whispered, and at that instant a voice near her answered. She shrieked, then knew it was Valancourt. He sprang forward, supported her, and for some moments neither could speak. At last he said, "I have watched here night after night with one faint hope. I thought I might never see you again, and yet I could not leave this place." Emily answered only with tears and assurances of unchanging affection. He in his turn spoke of despair, begged her to trust her own heart, and even urged an immediate secret marriage on the following morning.

The conflict in Emily was terrible, but when strength returned after a moment of near faintness, duty and judgment conquered even then. She told him plainly, though with all the tenderness of love, that she could not accept a clandestine marriage, could not begin their life together in disobedience and danger, and could not risk drawing him into future misery for the sake of present escape. His grief

then changed from passionate urgency to a more generous sorrow. “I leave you, then, for ever,” he cried. Yet before they parted he warned her of dark rumours he had heard concerning Montoni from an Italian stranger, rumours vague but alarming enough to deepen his fears. Even this, however, could not shake her final resolve. At last, near the avenue gate, they forced themselves to say farewell. “Trust me,” he said, struggling to be firm, “we shall meet again—meet to part no more.” “Farewell,” Emily whispered. They clung together one last moment, then separated, and as she moved slowly back toward the château she listened to his steps dying away in the distance until only the silence of night remained.

Part 9

Emily remained for some time in the pavilion after Valancourt was gone, too much oppressed even for tears. The chair he had left, the moonlight on the terrace, and the silence of the avenue seemed all to tell her that happiness had just passed from her life. At last the Countess’s voice in the garden below roused her, and with an effort she rose and returned to her chamber. There she tried to pray, but her thoughts wandered continually to the terrace and to that last farewell. When morning came, she had slept little, and the day that was to carry her from France seemed hardly real.

Montoni appeared early, stern, collected, and impatient only for departure. Madame Montoni complained of haste, of servants, of weather, and of every arrangement that was not made to her mind; but her husband heard her with cold indifference. Emily, pale and silent, took her place in the carriage without once daring to ask whether any message had come. She looked from the window as they passed the pavilion and the trees beyond it, half hoping, half fearing, that she might see Valancourt. No figure appeared. “He is gone,” she thought, and then turned away lest even the servants should see her grief.

For some days the journey went on through scenes that at another time would have delighted her. They crossed rich provinces, entered rougher country, and at length approached the long line of the Alps. Sometimes the road wound through

valleys full of vines and villages; sometimes it climbed among rocks where the mules could scarcely find a path. Emily observed all with that ready eye her father had formed, yet sorrow still lay at her heart. “Look there,” Madame Montoni said once, pointing unwillingly toward a great mountain pass, “people call this sublime, I suppose.” Emily answered softly, “It is more than beautiful. It is solemn.” Montoni, who rode near the carriage, turned for a moment and looked at her, but said nothing.

As they rose higher among the mountains, the air became colder, the woods darker, and the precipices more tremendous. Torrents rushed below in foam, bridges hung over dreadful depths, and now and then some convent, shepherd’s hut, or ruined tower appeared on a cliff where no human dwelling seemed possible. These scenes, grand as they were, often brought back Valancourt with painful force, for they had once talked together of such prospects among the Pyrenees. Emily tried not to dwell on this resemblance, but memory had here too much power over her. More than once she turned aside to hide tears which even Madame Montoni’s vanity did not fail to notice.

At last, after many wearisome stages, they crossed the last heights and began to descend into Italy. The change was gradual, yet striking. The severe magnificence of the upper Alps softened into warmer valleys, richer colours, and air full of a different sweetness. Emily saw new forms of trees, vineyards hanging upon slopes, white towns glittering in sun, and far plains fading into tender blue. “This, then, is Italy,” she said to herself, and for the first time since leaving Toulouse she felt something like curiosity awaken. Even sorrow yielded for a while to the power of such a scene, though it soon returned with the thought that she had no beloved companion beside her to share it.

From the inland roads they moved on at length toward Venice, and the singular approach to that city impressed Emily deeply. The wide waters, the distant domes and towers rising as if from the sea, the long lines of palaces, and the strange silence of streets without horses or wheels gave her at first almost the feeling of enchantment. “Is this a city,” she asked, “or some vision upon the waves?” Madame Montoni, who was cold, weary, and displeased with her

accommodations, answered only, “I see nothing to admire in damp air and troublesome boats.” But Emily, forgetting her for a moment, continued to gaze until the gondola touched the steps of Montoni’s house.

The palace itself united magnificence with neglect. One great saloon, opening on a terrace above the water, was splendid with light, mirrors, and rich furniture; but the rooms beyond seemed half furnished, lonely, and long deserted. The effect of this mixture of show and desolation struck Emily strongly. After supper, while Madame Montoni sat in peevish silence because her husband had already gone out with Cavigni, Emily withdrew to a lattice and watched the life below. Dancers passed on the terrace, singers followed them, and afterwards a water procession, shining with lights and music, floated along the canal like some pageant of romance.

The charm of the night, the Italian music, and the moon upon the water touched Emily’s imagination in spite of all her sadness. For a little while she forgot danger, distance, and grief, and gave herself up to that sweet melancholy which beautiful sounds and scenes awaken. She thought of the sea as if it were peopled with nymphs and spirits, and when she retired late to her chamber, still under the power of those fancies, she wrote some verses before trying to sleep. Her room, however, though large and lofty, had that same forlorn air which belonged to so much of the palace, and when at last she lay down, the bright enchantment of the terraces below gave place again to more serious thoughts.

On the following day Montoni introduced several of his friends at dinner. There were men of bold manners and dangerous expression, whom Emily instinctively feared before she knew anything of their lives. Among them, however, were also the Venetian Count Morano and a lady named Signora Livona, whose graceful manners and gentle voice at first won Emily’s favour. Madame Montoni, dressed with ostentatious splendour, received the party with visible ill-humour, and the contrast between her hard displeasure and Emily’s quiet simplicity was remarked by everyone present. Montoni himself preserved his usual commanding reserve, speaking little, but watching all.

Emily soon perceived that these were not companions chosen by taste or

friendship in any noble sense. They flattered Montoni because they feared him, or because they hoped to profit by him, and he in turn seemed to value them only as instruments of pleasure, gaming, or design. There was in him a restless force that could not bear ease or harmless enjoyment for long. If no great object occupied him, he created one from hazard, rivalry, or power over other men. Emily observed this with uneasiness, though she could not yet measure the full danger of such a character. “He never seems at peace,” she thought, “unless he is making others uneasy.”

In the cool of the evening the party went out upon the water. The sunset still glowed in the west, while the first stars began to tremble above the quiet sea, and the gondola glided so smoothly that it seemed less to move than to dream over the surface. Emily sat in silence, given up to remembrance. Her father, La Vallée, and Valancourt all returned upon her heart with that softened but piercing tenderness which belongs to evening and music heard from afar. The moon rose higher, and its light, falling through her thin black veil, touched her features with a softness that drew every eye.

Count Morano, who sat near her and had watched her long without speaking, now took up a lute and began to sing. His voice was fine, the air full of tender sadness, and the whole manner of his song seemed meant to reach Emily’s very heart. Under other circumstances she might have admired the music only; now she felt at once that it was an address. She listened because she could not well avoid it, but she neither encouraged his attention nor answered it by a look. When the song ended, he bent slightly toward her and said, “You are silent, signora. Have I sung so ill?” Emily replied with calm civility, “No, sir. You have sung too well not to be heard with pleasure.”

Morano smiled as if this were more favour than she had intended, and Emily immediately regretted even that slight concession to politeness. The gondola still moved over the moonlit water, Signora Livona spoke softly with Madame Montoni, and the distant notes of other music came faintly from the city. Outwardly all seemed tranquillity and pleasure. Yet Emily, while she looked upon the shining sea and listened to the measured dip of the oars, felt a secret oppression

that beauty itself could not remove. She had reached Italy, but not freedom; she had escaped one sorrow only to enter a world in which danger was already drawing near.

Part 10

The days that followed only confirmed Emily's first distrust. Count Morano now came often to Montoni's palace, and his attentions, though still covered with the forms of politeness, became every day more direct and more offensive. Emily tried at first to check them by cold reserve, then by clear refusal, and at last by words which left no doubt of her meaning. But his vanity seemed stronger than either delicacy or pride. "You are severe, signora," he said one day with a smile meant to be graceful. "I am only just, sir," Emily answered. "I can neither encourage what I do not approve nor listen to what I cannot return."

She had now another anxiety, which was to write safely to France. She wished to inform Theresa of her arrival and to say something that might comfort the old servant without increasing her alarm. She also longed to write to Valancourt, and at length she did so, though with the utmost caution. She described the Alps, the first shining view of Italy, the singular beauty of Venice, and some slight peculiarities of the people around her; but she carefully avoided naming Count Morano or dwelling upon Montoni's conduct. "Why should I give him pain which he cannot lessen?" she thought. "He would suffer more from knowing my danger than I from bearing it alone."

Meanwhile, Emily could not fail to observe that Montoni's manner toward her aunt had changed from neglect into open displeasure. He no longer even pretended that marriage had brought him contentment. Madame Montoni, who had once imagined herself almost a princess because she possessed a Venetian palace and an Apennine castle, found herself daily mortified by the cold contempt of the man for whom she had sacrificed so much vanity and cunning. Emily now understood more clearly that Montoni had married for wealth and had been disappointed, while Madame Montoni, on her side, felt injured without once

honestly admitting that she too had deceived. Their pride fought against each other in every look and tone.

This domestic discord made the palace more uneasy every day. Cavigni and other dark companions came and went at strange hours, as if business of no innocent kind were carrying them abroad after midnight. Madame Montoni complained loudly, then suddenly flattered her husband, then turned again to anger, while he heard her either with chilling silence or with a short fierce answer that made her tremble. Emily, who had little kindness to expect from her aunt and much reason to fear her husband, began to think even of the remote Castle of Udolpho as a possible refuge if it would free her from Morano's pursuit. "Among mountains and old walls," she said to herself, "there may be solitude at least, if not peace."

Yet before any journey was spoken of openly, Count Morano pressed his suit more boldly than ever. One day at dinner Emily thought there was something almost triumphant in his manner, something which seemed to say that her fate was already decided without her. She answered him more coldly than she had yet done, but he appeared rather animated than repelled by this. More than once he tried to draw her apart from the company. "I have something important to say," he whispered. Emily replied at once, "If it is proper, you may say it before all who are present. If it is not proper, I must not hear it at all."

That same evening Madame Montoni and her party prepared to go out upon the water. As Emily came down to the portico, Morano advanced to lead her to a small vessel waiting below the steps, and, before she could prevent him, carried her hand to his lips with an air of warm gratitude. She drew back instantly, offended and astonished. Then, seeing by the livery that the boat was his and not Montoni's, and noticing that the rest of the party were already arranged in other gondolas at some distance, she understood the design in a moment. "I wish you a good evening, sir," she said, and turned back toward the hall.

Morano followed in haste, entreating, explaining, and almost commanding by turns; but before the scene could go farther, Montoni himself came from the palace. Without even asking Emily's reason, he took her hand and led her down

the steps toward the Count's vessel. "Sir," she said in a low but trembling voice, "I entreat you to spare me this humiliation." Montoni did not relax his hold. "This caprice is intolerable," he said. "There is no impropriety here, and I will not have myself opposed in trifles." Emily then felt not only dislike but abhorrence toward Morano, whose daring perseverance under such circumstances seemed to show that he held both her will and her character of no account where his own desire was concerned.

She was forced to enter the boat, and the evening that followed was one long suffering. Morano spoke with confidence where he should have spoken with shame, and though he clothed his meaning in compliments and professions, every word told Emily more clearly that some understanding existed between him and Montoni. Once she said distinctly, "Count Morano, whatever may have been told you, I can give you no hope." He answered with a smile that froze her heart. "You are too modest in your severity, signora. Time will explain much that now seems strange." These words convinced her more than any avowal could have done that her consent was scarcely intended to be asked.

When she returned to the palace that night, she went at once to her apartment and remained there long in miserable thought. She considered the conduct of Montoni, the dauntless selfishness of Morano, her own distance from all true protectors, and the uncertainty whether even in France she had now any home open to receive her. Valancourt came often to her mind then, not as one who could save her, for she knew his profession held him far away, but as one who would at least feel with her and would have suffered rather than see her thus oppressed. Yet even now she resolved not to write what would only torture him. "I would not have his imagination fill every hour with pictures worse than truth," she said. "Love is fearful enough without help from me."

On the following day Montoni ended all uncertainty. He sent for Emily, and when she appeared before him, pale but collected, he spoke without disguise. "I have borne enough of this folly," he said. "Your marriage with Count Morano is advantageous beyond any reasonable hope you could have formed for yourself. Since argument is useless with a mind so weak as to resist its own interest, I shall

no longer delay the measure. The marriage shall take place, and, if need be, without your consent." Emily, driven at first from remonstrance to supplication, begged him to consider that she could never esteem the man, much less love him, and that to force such an union would be barbarous. Montoni's only answer was a smile of malicious power.

Gathering a little courage from despair itself, she then asked by what right he claimed authority so absolute over her fate. "By what right?" he repeated, and his smile became darker still. "By the right of my will. If you can escape that, I shall not trouble myself to inquire by what right you do it. Remember only this: you are a stranger in a foreign country, and it is your interest to make me your friend. You know the means. If you choose to make me your enemy, the punishment shall exceed your expectation. I am not a man to be trifled with." When he left her, Emily remained for some time where she stood, unable even to weep. It was misery without movement, a stunned consciousness of danger too complete to be measured.

Madame Montoni came in soon afterward and, softened for a moment by Emily's despairing countenance, spoke more kindly than she had ever done before. Emily's heart rose eagerly toward this small appearance of compassion. She described all that had just passed, implored her aunt to save her from the Count, and even knelt before her in the earnestness of fear. But ambition soon hardened Madame Montoni again. She wished to be aunt to a countess, and, besides, she dreaded opposition to her husband where she herself was concerned. "You do not know your own interest," she said at last. "You are romantic, obstinate, and foolish. Count Morano is a noble match, and you ought to be grateful."

Emily then withdrew and gave way at last to grief, though not to weakness of purpose. When her thoughts became a little more steady, she saw that no force could truly marry her while she refused to speak the vows required of her. The reflection did not remove terror, for Montoni's vengeance might take many forms, but it restored something of courage. She thought again of Valancourt, of the warning he had once half given her concerning Montoni, and of the sad necessity which had made her reject his offer of a secret marriage. "I do not repent that

refusal," she said, drying her tears. "I would rather suffer all that can come than escape by dishonour." Soon after, however, events arose in the house which for a time drew even Montoni's thoughts away from her, and thus gave her a short, uncertain respite.

Part 11

The respite Emily had gained was slight and uncertain. On the following day her aunt spoke of Count Morano with a hardness that showed too clearly how willing she was to sacrifice her niece to vanity and advantage. "You have encouragement from me in nothing else," Madame Montoni said, "but you shall have it in this. If young people will not know their own interest, those older than they are must teach it them." Emily answered with quiet firmness, "My interest can never be separated from my peace, madam, and no one can make me happy by force."

Madame Montoni only grew more severe when she found persuasion useless. She said Morano's offer was an honour beyond Emily's claims, spoke with malice of St. Aubert's modest fortune, and praised what she called plain sense above all fine feeling. Emily bore this as long as she could, but when her father's memory was touched, her spirit rose at once. "My father's pride, if you call it pride," she said, "was founded on goodness, knowledge, and charity. He never thought himself greater than the unfortunate because he possessed more money, nor less than the powerful because he possessed less. I shall think it my glory to resemble him." Her aunt looked at her with mingled anger and surprise, then answered in a sneer, "You and your father had these high notions to yourselves. I would rather see you reasonable."

Emily left the room before resentment could carry her farther. In her chamber she gave way for some time to grief, but grief soon passed into thought, and thought into fresh anxiety. Montoni no longer spoke of Morano, and Morano himself had not appeared again. This silence alarmed her almost as much as open violence had done. "Some new plan is at work," she said to herself. "It is

impossible that danger has ended only because it is not named."

Thus several days passed in alternating fear and hope. Sometimes she imagined that Morano, wearied and offended, had at last abandoned his pursuit. At other times she suspected that he and Montoni understood one another still, and that their silence only covered some design more dangerous than open threats. Montoni scarcely addressed her, but his looks told her that his resentment was not forgotten. "He waits," she thought. "I do not know for what, but he waits."

At length the day came when Montoni was to leave Venice for his villa at Miarenti. He delayed departure till evening that he might avoid the heat, and the family embarked an hour before sunset. Emily sat near the stern of the barge and watched the city slowly sink behind her into distance and light. The domes and towers of Venice, touched by the last gold of day, seemed like something too splendid and too unreal to belong wholly to earth. For a little while even sorrow gave place to wonder, and she said in a low voice, "Farewell, beautiful city. I leave you without regret, yet not without awe."

The vessel glided on under the deepening sky, and the broad waters of the Adriatic opened around them. Emily looked long toward the eastern horizon, where no shore could be seen, and thought of Greece, of ancient names, of ruined greatness, and of all those heroic stories that had filled her imagination from childhood. The immense quiet of sea and heaven entered her heart with a melancholy sweetness. Yet even there, in that vast scene, Valancourt returned to memory, and every noble image of the past world seemed joined to him. "If he were here," she thought, "how differently would all this strike my heart!"

When they landed and continued the journey by land, the country soon changed from broad plains to more broken and secluded ground. At first the scenes were beautiful rather than terrible, full of evening light, distant villages, and rich cultivation. But as they advanced, the roads grew narrower, the mountains darker, and the woods more deep and lonely. Emily's spirits, which beauty had partly raised, again began to sink. "Whither are we going?" she once ventured to ask Annette in a whisper. "To the Signor's castle among the mountains, they say," replied Annette. "And Heaven send it may not be haunted, ma'amselle,

for I have already had enough of gloomy places."

Late that night, after many windings and steep ascents, they stopped for rest; and when the following morning came, Emily was told that they must prepare to leave at once. The summons came so suddenly that it filled her at first with terror. She thought Count Morano must at last have reached them, and she could scarcely stand when Annette entered her room in great haste. "What is it?" Emily cried. "Tell me at once. Is he below?" Annette, half frightened and half breathless from running, answered, "No, ma'amselle, not that I know. But the Signor says we must leave this instant, and there is such a bustle below stairs as I never saw in all my life."

Emily, though still trembling, felt a momentary relief. She dressed as quickly as she could, scarcely knowing whether to hope or fear, and presently went to her aunt's dressing-room, where she found Madame Montoni almost as much disordered as herself. "What is the meaning of all this?" Emily asked. "Do you know it, madam?" Her aunt answered peevishly, "Nothing except that your uncle chooses to turn us all out of our beds before dawn, and to hurry us away without explanation. That is enough to prove, at least, that he is as inconsiderate as ever." Montoni soon appeared, impatient at every delay, and would say nothing more than that the road was long and time was precious.

They embarked once more, and when the gondola shot from the steps and passed out into open water without pausing to receive Morano, Emily's heart grew lighter than it had been for many days. The first colour of dawn spread over the Adriatic, touching the remote shores and the tops of mountains with pale light, while the city behind them still lay in blue shadow. Madame Montoni wrapped herself in her cloak and slept from ill-humour and fatigue, and Montoni sat dark and silent. Emily alone watched the morning strengthen over sea and shore, and in that tranquil hour she almost believed danger itself had grown less because it was no longer immediate. "Whatever comes," she thought, "at least this morning has given me one reprieve."

But as the journey led them farther inland and higher among the Apennines, the character of the landscape gradually oppressed her imagination. The roads

wound through forests of pine and among broken rocks where scarcely any sign of human life appeared. Sometimes a shepherd's hut, a flock among the slopes, or a narrow green valley gave a brief softness to the scene; then all changed again to wild passes, gloomy steeps, and precipices from which torrents foamed into unseen depths. The mountains seemed to multiply as they advanced, and each summit, once reached, only showed others beyond it still more lonely and remote. "These are not scenes to quiet the heart," Emily said softly. Annette crossed herself and answered, "No, ma'amselle, nor to quiet the fancy either."

Toward evening they came into a deeper and more dreadful region than any they had yet passed. Mountain rose over mountain in solemn perspective, their ridges clothed with pines, their sides often lost in mist, while the lower valleys were already full of shadow. Sometimes a sudden opening discovered only barren crags and a cataract flashing among them. Sometimes a hidden pasture, a clear stream, and a little hut appeared for a moment like an image of peace enclosed within terror. Emily looked on all with that painful mixture of admiration and fear which sublime scenery always awakened in her, but now fear had more power than admiration.

At length the road wound into a valley almost surrounded by precipices, and there, far above, where the last beams of the setting sun struck across the darkening woods, she saw the towers and battlements of a vast castle stretching along the brow of a cliff. It stood in full light while the valley below was already in gloom, and the contrast made the place seem at once more glorious and more terrible. "There," said Montoni, breaking silence for the first time in many hours, "is Udolpho." Emily fixed her eyes upon it with melancholy awe. "Udolpho!" she repeated inwardly. "Then this is the place from which I am to ask neither joy nor mercy."

As they descended farther, the splendour faded from the walls and left only a deep purple shade upon the old grey stone. The towers remained visible for a little while above the woods, then they too darkened into the general obscurity of evening. The carriages entered the thick forest below, where the branches seemed to shut out the last remains of day, and Emily almost expected to see armed men

spring from the thickets. When at length they emerged and reached the castle gates, the deep sound of the portal bell, the giant walls, the broken battlements, and the weeds waving from the old towers increased every emotion of dread that had gathered within her. “It is not a house,” she thought, as the first gate slowly opened. “It is a prison.”

A second gate admitted them into another court, more lonely and more desolate than the first. Grass grew among the stones, the walls were heavy with moss and nightshade, and all around spoke of neglect, violence, and long suffering. Emily entered the vast gothic hall in a silence so profound that the distant glimmer of a single light only made it more awful. Pillars and pointed arches rose half seen through the dusk, and every step echoed with a hollow sound that seemed to deepen the solitude instead of breaking it. As she looked round this place, and felt herself within the power of Montoni in the very heart of these savage mountains, her courage almost failed her, and she said to herself with a shudder, “Now indeed my trials begin.”

Part 12

In the room to which they had been led, the fire soon burned more brightly, and the shadows moved upon the black wood of the walls and upon the tall mirror near the hearth. Old Carlo came in again, bent under pine branches, and spread them on the fire with the careful pride of a servant who still loved the place he served. “Your Excellency is welcome home,” he said. “The castle has been lonely these two years.” Montoni answered shortly, and when Carlo began to speak of broken roofs, fallen battlements, and dangerous passages, his master cut him off with visible impatience. Emily heard enough, however, to understand that the castle was not only gloomy but partly ruined.

When the old man had gone, Montoni drew his chair nearer the hearth, and for a few moments the silence was broken only by the crackling of the pine wood. Madame Montoni tried to begin conversation more than once, but her husband answered with such cold displeasure that she soon sat still. Emily at length

gathered courage to ask why they had come so suddenly to Udolpho. Montoni looked at her darkly and replied, “It does not suit me to explain my actions. Time may show what now seems strange. Till then, learn to command your curiosity.” The words, and still more the tone in which they were spoken, made her feel more than ever that she had been brought to this place for some purpose she was not meant to know.

Soon afterward Annette arrived with a lamp to guide Emily to her chamber. As they crossed the great hall, their footsteps echoed so heavily through the arches that Annette clung close behind her mistress and began to talk more than ever from fear. “This is just the place for giants, ma’amselle,” she whispered. “And if giants do not live here now, ghosts surely do. I would rather sleep in a mill than in this old mountain palace.” Emily, though oppressed herself, forced a smile and answered, “Then we must hope the ghosts are polite enough not to trouble strangers.” Annette crossed herself and said, “Ghosts are never polite, ma’amselle. That is what makes them so dreadful.”

They went up the great staircase, then through a corridor, then down a turning passage, and then along another gallery so long and so imperfectly lighted that Emily began already to fear she could never find her way back alone. Annette, who had spoken confidently at first, soon became uncertain. “This way, I think,” she said. Then she stopped. “No, perhaps that way. Holy Virgin, what a place!” At last, after taking one turning too many, she confessed they were lost. Emily heard the wind moan faintly through distant passages, and the whole maze of walls and doors seemed to close round them like a trap.

Rather than wander on at random, Emily opened a door near her hand and entered an ancient apartment. One room led into another, and another still beyond, all large, half furnished, and in various stages of decay. Some were hung with old tapestry, some with dark wood, and in all there was the same cold air of long abandonment. In one chamber she paused before the picture of a mounted soldier driving his spear at a fallen enemy, and the fierce expression of the conqueror strangely reminded her of Montoni. She turned away quickly. Then, in the next room, she saw a picture covered with a black veil.

The sight of that veil arrested her at once. “What can this mean?” she said. Annette instantly grew pale. “Ma’amselle, do not touch it,” she cried. “I am sure this is the picture they spoke of at Venice.” Emily turned on her in surprise. “What picture? And who spoke of it?” Annette hesitated, stammered, and tried to move away with the lamp. “Nothing, ma’amselle. I know nothing clearly. Only let us go.” Emily, whose curiosity was now powerfully awakened, said, “Hold the light steady. I will look for myself.” But Annette, terrified beyond obedience, actually carried the lamp from the room.

Emily was unwilling to remain alone in the darkness and was forced to follow her. When at last she overtook the girl in the passage, she asked again what had been said of the veiled picture. Annette, torn between fear and the desire to tell a secret, answered by fragments. “They say it has something dreadful to do with the former owners of the castle. They say it has been covered with black for many years. They say no one looks at it. That is all, ma’amselle. Ask me no more.” Emily, half amused and half disturbed, replied, “It is plain that you know both nothing and everything at once.” Yet the singularity of the object, joined with Annette’s terror, left a deep impression on her mind.

After much more wandering they at last found the chamber prepared for Emily. It was called the room over the south rampart, and though large and lofty, it had nothing cheerful in its appearance. The furniture was old, the corners lay in shadow, and one door, opening toward a narrow private staircase, immediately drew her attention. The bed itself stood in a remote part of the room where the light reached only faintly, and Annette, as she set down the lamp, looked uneasily about her. “I would not sleep here alone for all Venice,” she muttered. Emily tried to laugh at this, but the chamber was indeed so desolate that her heart secretly agreed with the words.

Annette then remembered more tales. “They say this room is haunted,” she whispered. “And there is something worse still, but I cannot tell it. I promised.” Emily, checking her impatience, asked more simply whether any servant had come in that morning and fastened the staircase door. “No one, I am sure,” replied Annette. “At least no one that I know of. But if that door was bolted after you had

left it open, I like the room less than ever." Emily examined the bolts and saw that they were old and rusty, which made Montoni's careless explanation about the wind seem impossible. Her uneasiness grew stronger, though she said little.

The next morning she spoke to Montoni at breakfast and begged to be moved to another room. He dismissed the request at once. "I have no leisure for these foolish terrors," he said. "The room was prepared for you, and there you will stay. If you cannot conquer fear, at least do not torment others with it." Emily felt both wounded and angered, for in this matter her alarm seemed to her far from childish. Madame Montoni would not support her. Outwardly she said she knew nothing, but Emily saw plainly that fear and resentment were both at work in her aunt, though neither had taught her generosity.

Later that day Emily tried to escape from thought by walking alone on the ramparts. The views were vast and terrible. On every side stretched mountains, forests, ravines, and precipices, while the castle itself rose in stern magnificence above the rock. Once she saw Montoni below with Carlo and a peasant, pointing toward the walls and speaking eagerly, as if he were planning the defence of the place. This sight renewed all her doubts. "He has not brought us here for peace," she thought. "Everything about him now speaks of danger, secrecy, and force." Yet with no friend near and no road open before her, she could only endure and watch.

Returning within, she was again lost among the passages and, while seeking her room, heard low moaning behind one of the doors. At first terror held her still, but pity soon overcame it. She opened the door gently and discovered Madame Montoni in an inner room, weeping bitterly beside her dressing-table, while a man sat near the fire speaking in a low voice. Emily could not distinguish him clearly, and she withdrew at once without adding surprise to misery. But the scene convinced her that her aunt too was suffering under some oppression she dared not confess. "We are both unhappy here," Emily thought, "though not in the same way."

That evening Annette brought little useful news from the servants, except that Signor Cavigni had arrived with others and that the household below was

noisier and less lonely than before. She chattered also of Ludovico, one of the new servants, whose singing and good looks she praised with such warmth that even Emily, in her anxiety, was forced to smile. When she was left alone at last, however, the smile faded quickly. Her father's miniature lay open upon the table, and beside it were some papers that brought back old fears and old mysteries. The chamber, the staircase door, the veiled picture, and the memory of Madame Montoni's hidden grief all returned upon her together.

At last she resolved not to undress, but to lie down in her clothes, with her father's faithful dog Manchon at the foot of the bed. "You at least will not leave me," she said, as she laid her hand on the creature's head. The lamp burned low upon the hearth. The great room lay half in shadow, half in uncertain light, and no sound came from any part of the castle. Emily listened for a long time, then tried to sleep; yet sleep was slow to come, and when at last her eyes closed, it was with fear still waking beneath them.

Part 13

On the following day the disturbed state of the castle became more plain. Workmen were busy on the outer defences, stones were moved, stores carried, and armed men passed more frequently along the courts and terraces. Madame Montoni, who had hitherto complained only of discomfort, now began to suspect real danger. "Why are they repairing walls and bastions," she said to Emily, "if we are here only for a visit? Your uncle is hiding something from me." Emily could not answer, for she believed the same.

Toward afternoon Madame Montoni went out upon the ramparts, and Emily followed her through the lofty arch that led toward the eastern side of the castle. There they saw, on a distant mountain road, a long train of men winding downward among the woods. At first the troop was too far off to be clearly known, but soon the glitter of weapons and the motion of regular ranks showed that they were soldiers. The line seemed endless. "Look there!" cried Madame Montoni. "What can this mean? Are we to be shut up here in the middle of war?" Emily,

though alarmed, still hoped the procession might pass by without noticing the castle.

Madame Montoni, now thoroughly frightened, sent Emily to summon Montoni. It was an errand she greatly disliked, for she had often felt his displeasure when disturbed among his followers. As she approached the chamber where he sat, she heard loud and earnest voices within, and for a moment hesitated at the door. At last she entered and delivered the message. Montoni turned on her impatiently and said only, “Tell Madame Montoni I am engaged.” But when Emily mentioned the armed men on the mountain, he and his companions rose at once and hurried to the ramparts.

From the walls they watched the troop descend and pass along the valley. Trumpets sounded below, and other notes answered from the heights. Montoni listened closely, then said the signals were not hostile, and that the men were most likely condottieri on their march elsewhere. Yet though he affected composure, Emily saw that the sight had stirred him deeply. Cavigni and Verezzi seemed animated by it, as if danger itself were a pleasure to them, while Montoni became afterward more thoughtful than before. When the last sound had died away among the mountains, he turned from the wall in silence.

That evening the men supped apart, and Emily went to Madame Montoni’s apartment before retiring. She found her aunt in tears and much agitation, far beyond what wounded vanity alone could explain. Emily used every gentle word that affection and pity suggested, but for a time they produced little effect. At length Madame Montoni said in a broken voice, “He will ruin me and then imprison me. I know him now too well.” Emily took her hand and answered, “Let me stay with you tonight. You are not fit to be alone.” “No,” replied her aunt, after a pause, “but do not leave me yet.”

Soon afterward Montoni himself entered the room. Emily was rising to withdraw, but her aunt desired her to remain, and Montoni no longer seemed to care whether their disputes had a witness. “I insist on knowing immediately what all this means,” said Madame Montoni. “What are these armed men abroad? Why is the castle fortified? Do you expect attack?” Montoni looked at her with

contempt rather than anger. Then, as if impatient of all concealment, he said, “I did not come here to answer questions. I came to demand once more that you sign the writings and yield up your estates.”

Madame Montoni, frightened though she was, answered with sudden violence. “They shall never be signed,” she cried. “They shall never support your wild designs. You may threaten, but you shall not rob me.” Montoni’s face darkened. “Sign,” he said, “and you may know more. Refuse, and you may remain here long enough to learn fear properly.” She then accused him of serving banditti and enemies of Venice rather than any honourable cause. For a moment he looked at her so sternly that even she seemed to feel she had said too much. Then he replied slowly, “You shall be removed this very night to the east turret. There perhaps you may understand the danger of offending a man who has unlimited power over you.”

Emily, horror-struck, threw herself at his feet and begged for mercy. Her aunt, now trembling between rage and terror, could scarcely join her entreaties coherently. But Montoni, shaking Emily from him with brutal force, left the room without another word. She fell and struck her forehead, yet scarcely noticed the pain, for at that same instant a deep groan from Madame Montoni called all her attention. Her aunt had sunk back in the chair, her eyes distorted and her features convulsed. Emily ran to support her, called for water, and then for servants, believing every moment that she was dying before her.

Assistance came slowly, and compassion more slowly still. A physician at length declared that the attack had been brought on by violent emotion and that the patient was in immediate danger. Emily, forgetting all past harshness, watched over her aunt with unwearied tenderness. She prepared cordials, arranged the bed, cooled the burning hands, and received from the sick woman, for the first time perhaps in her life, something like quiet dependence. Madame Montoni, broken by fear and suffering, no longer commanded, reproached, or complained. She looked at Emily with a kind of helpless wonder, as if goodness shown to her in that hour were something she had not expected to meet.

Even then Montoni’s severity did not end. While his wife lay between life

and death, he sent orders that she should remain in the turret to which he had condemned her. Emily, shocked into unusual boldness, went to him and pleaded that another removal would kill her. At first he answered with shocking indifference. “If she is dying,” he said, “what difference can a chamber make?” Emily, unable to restrain herself, replied, “It may make the difference, sir, between your having all a murderer’s remorse and a little of a man’s pity.” The words offended him, but after long entreaty and perhaps under the influence of a better feeling which he was ashamed to own, he yielded so far as to let Madame Montoni remain where she was.

Through the whole day Emily scarcely left the bedside. She saw now not the proud and selfish woman who had once wounded her so often, but only the sister of her dear father, brought low by misery and terror. Toward night Madame Montoni became more composed, though not more hopeful, and a physician hinted that the crisis would be past about midnight. Emily resolved to sit up, but the invalid would not suffer it. “You are worn out,” she said faintly. “Go and rest a little. Annette will stay, and if I grow worse, you shall be called.” Reluctantly, and only after the clock had passed twelve, Emily kissed her aunt, charged Annette to remain vigilant, and withdrew to her own chamber.

She was too full of sorrow and apprehension to sleep. The thought of Madame Montoni dying almost alone in that dreadful castle, the thought of her own helplessness, and the sense that no limit could be set to Montoni’s power filled her mind with a sadness deeper than fear. She opened the casement and leaned out upon the cool night. Woods and mountains lay silent under the moon, and the lonely murmur of the pines below gradually softened her agitation into tears. “How peaceful all this is,” she thought, “and how unlike the hearts that dwell within these walls.”

After she had stood thus for some time, she lowered the handkerchief from her eyes and happened to look upon the terrace beneath. There, directly opposite her casement, stood a figure, silent and motionless, as if fixed to the spot. Emily started back so suddenly that for a moment she could neither call nor think. Then curiosity, struggling with terror, drew her again to the window. The moonlight was

clear, yet the outline remained uncertain, and she could not discover whether what she saw was a human form, a shadow thrown strangely by the wall, or something still more awful to an excited imagination. It did not move, it did not speak, and Emily, after long and fearful watching, remained unable to decide whether it belonged to life, to trick, or to something beyond both.

Part 14

For some moments Emily remained motionless at the casement, scarcely daring either to trust her sight or to withdraw from it. The figure below still kept its place on the terrace, and in the clear moonlight seemed now less like shadow than before, though no feature could be distinguished. She tried to say, “Who is there?” but the words failed upon her lips. Then, as if memory itself came back in that instant, she remembered that her lamp might expose her to dangerous notice from below. “I must remove the light,” she said to herself. “If it is some human being with evil purpose, I am already too much seen.”

She had scarcely stepped back from the window when she thought she saw the figure move. Turning again, she perceived what seemed like an arm slowly lifted and waved toward her. The action was repeated. Emily stood fixed in fear, unable to determine whether it invited, warned, or threatened her. “Good Heaven!” she whispered, pressing one hand against her heart. “What can this mean, and why does it call to me?” Yet even then she could not go nearer.

While she still hesitated, a faint groan came from without. The sound was so low that for an instant she doubted whether sorrow had deceived her ear, but presently it came again, more distinctly than before, and all uncertainty ended. “That was human,” she said. “It was no sound of the wind, nor of my own fancy.” Her terror then changed for a moment into pity, and pity nearly gave her courage. She listened again, bending forward in breathless expectation.

After a long pause, the same low moan rose once more, and with it returned the mysterious beckoning. Emily now compelled herself to step to the casement. Her voice was weak and scarcely obeyed her will, yet she spoke. “Who is it,” she

cried faintly, “that wanders at this late hour?” At the sound, the figure seemed to raise its head, as if it had indeed heard and understood her. Then, suddenly, it glided away down the terrace with a swiftness that renewed all her horror.

She watched it in the moonlight as long as she could distinguish the obscure outline among the shadows of the rampart. No footstep sounded beneath it. No rustle came from the stones. The silence of its motion appeared to her more dreadful than the swiftness. “No living person moves thus,” she thought; yet even while the thought came, she felt that the groan she had heard had surely been mortal. She remained leaning from the window till the last trace vanished into the obscurity beyond the western angle.

Soon afterward a sentinel from the farther extremity of the rampart came slowly along. Hearing his step after so deep a silence gave Emily almost as much alarm as relief. The man paused beneath her window, looked upward, and called her by name. She would have withdrawn at once, but he repeated the summons in a respectful tone, and she answered him. “Have you seen anything pass, signora?” he asked. “I have,” replied Emily. The soldier said no more, but went on in the direction the figure had taken, and she followed him with her eyes till distance and shadow swallowed him up.

When at last she left the casement, her spirits were too much agitated for immediate rest. She walked to and fro in the chamber, trying to recover command of her thoughts and to force them into some reasonable order. “If it were supernatural,” she said, “why did it groan like a human creature? If it were human, how could it move with such silence over those rough stones?” She considered whether it might be some prisoner, some concealed friend of Madame Montoni, some unfortunate person shut up in the lower rooms, or some messenger who feared discovery. But none of these explanations satisfied her wholly, and when she at last lay down, it was rather from weariness than composure.

The next morning she rose unrefreshed and more thoughtful than Annette had ever before seen her. The girl, noticing this, asked many frightened questions of her own. Emily at first tried to avoid the subject, but finding Annette’s imagination only grew wilder in silence, she told her that she had again seen the

figure on the terrace. “Again, ma’amselle!” cried Annette. “Then I am sure the place is haunted. Did it speak? Did it come near? Did it look like a dead person?” Emily answered with as much calmness as she could assume, “It neither spoke nor approached, but it made signs, and I heard a groan.” Annette crossed herself repeatedly and declared she would never again walk alone after sunset.

Yet when Emily’s first emotion had somewhat passed, reason resumed a little of its power. She examined the terrace from the window in daylight and observed certain projections of shade and broken masonry that might, she thought, help illusion in uncertain light. She even tried to persuade herself that what had seemed a figure when motionless might have been some old part of the wall, and that the apparent gestures had arisen from leaves or vapours shifting in the moonbeam. “I was weak, watched, and terrified,” she said. “It is possible I deceived myself.” Still, in the very moment that she formed this explanation, the remembered groan returned with dreadful clearness to her ear, and the whole comfort of doubt vanished again.

When night came once more, another feeling mingled with fear. Emily remembered the mysterious strains of music she had formerly heard, and the weakness of her over-harassed spirits now gave superstition a power which in happier times it could not have gained. She thought of her father with a tenderness almost religious. “If the dead are permitted to watch over those they loved,” she said inwardly, “might not some guardian spirit linger near me here?” With this mixture of hope and awe, she dismissed Annette early and resolved to watch alone. A small book lay open before her, but she read nothing that was in it, and rose again and again to listen at the casement.

The castle sank by degrees into its midnight stillness. Far-off sounds died away one after another. The heavy murmur that had long seemed to live somewhere within those vast walls gradually ceased, and sleep appeared to reign over all. Emily then seated herself at the window, and after some time was startled from a painful reverie, not by music, but by a low sound like the lament of some suffering person. It came at intervals, faint and mournful, as though rising from chambers beneath the rampart. She leaned out to see whether any light appeared

below, but the rooms under her seemed dark and silent. Then, farther off along the terrace, she thought she perceived something moving.

At first the starlight was too weak to show what it might be, and she half believed it only a soldier on watch. She removed her own light to a more distant corner of the room that she might observe without being herself observed, and then returned to the casement. The object still remained and presently advanced toward her window. As it drew nearer, the likeness of a human form became too strong to be denied, yet the noiselessness of its motion convinced her it was no sentinel. “It comes again,” she whispered. “Whatever it is, it comes again.”

When the figure reached the place directly opposite her casement, it paused and remained motionless as before. The same awful silence hung over everything. Emily felt the whole force of former terror return and was on the point of retreating, when the form on a sudden started away and glided down the rampart into darkness. She watched long after it had disappeared, scarcely doubting now that she had witnessed something beyond common life. Yet when at last her spirits grew more composed, she looked once more around the chamber, and then toward the moonlit terrace, as if still compelled to seek some explanation less dreadful than the one her imagination offered.

Part 15

When her spirits had in some degree recovered from the shock of what she had seen, Emily forced herself to look round for some explanation less dreadful than the first her imagination had given. “I may have been deceived,” she said. “This castle is full of long shadows, broken walls, and uncertain lights.” She remembered how weak she was from watching, how much her mind had been tried by fear for Madame Montoni, and how easily sorrow turns strange sights into supernatural ones. Yet whenever she recalled the silent motion of the form upon the terrace, and the low sounds that had reached her ear, reason again seemed too feeble to satisfy her.

Thus she passed the rest of the night between doubt and terror. Sometimes

she almost resolved to speak of the figure to Annette on the following morning. Then she checked herself. “What good would that do?” she asked. “It would only fill the poor girl with fresh alarms, and perhaps spread through the servants some tale that might bring on consequences I cannot foresee.” At last, worn out by long watching and agitation, she threw herself upon the bed and slept a little toward dawn.

The day that followed brought no peace with it. The castle remained full of the same busy preparations, the same goings and comings of armed men, the same air of concealed danger. Montoni himself was seen only at intervals, and then his countenance was more than usually stern and thoughtful. His followers, who in Venice had seemed chiefly formed for gaming, pleasure, and intrigue, now appeared in another character. They spoke lower, watched more closely, and seemed to wait for something that might at any hour require sudden action.

In truth, Montoni’s affairs had gone far beyond the bounds even which those bold communities of soldiers and adventurers commonly ventured to pass. The governments around, though they often tolerated such men when their own interest could use them, rarely forgave them when their violence became too great or too public. Montoni, whose ruined fortune and fierce ambition had long driven him from one hazardous design to another, had of late increased both his power and his offences. “He would not stop where gain ended and outrage began,” Emily might have said had she known the whole. “A man who has no rule within himself must at last become terrible even to those who once encouraged him.”

Thus, while Emily sat in her lonely chamber imagining only her own danger and that of her unhappy aunt, measures were already on foot beyond the mountains for Montoni’s punishment. Some who had served under him were ready to betray him, partly from resentment, partly from hope of pardon. Others, who still feared him, were watched by men more cunning than themselves. The senate of Venice, which had so long endured what suited it to overlook, had at last resolved to strike. Montoni, however, suspected enough of the truth to fortify Udolpho and to surround himself with followers who could fight as well as plunder.

Emily knew nothing clearly of these wider movements, but she felt their shadow in the altered look of everyone around her. Once, as she crossed a gallery, she heard two men speaking low in Italian, and though she could not distinguish all the words, she caught enough to understand that they were speaking of troops, of watchwords, and of secret approaches to the castle. She stopped involuntarily. The voices ceased at once. When she moved on again, she said within herself, “This place is not only gloomy. It is in danger.”

Still the memory of the figure upon the terrace returned more frequently than all these outward signs. When night again approached, she remembered also the mysterious strains of music she had formerly heard and felt, in spite of all fear, a strange wish to listen once more. The weakness of her long-harassed mind now gave superstition a power it had never before possessed over her. She thought of her father with a tenderness almost religious. “If the dead are permitted to watch near those they loved,” she whispered, “might not some guardian spirit linger near me even here?”

Yet another thought quickly checked that gentle illusion. “If the being I saw was no enemy,” she said, “perhaps it was some prisoner, some sufferer, some one who wished to warn or implore me. But if it has designs upon the castle, my curiosity may destroy me.” The conflict of fear and pity, of imagination and reason, kept her restless through the evening. At last she dismissed Annette earlier than usual and seated herself once more by the casement. There was now a moon, and as it rose above the tufted woods, its yellow light made the lonely terrace and the towers beyond more distinct than they had appeared in the pale twilight of the stars.

For a long time she sat listening to every little sound. Now and then the watchword passed from one sentinel to another. Then came the measured tread of men relieving guard, whom she knew at a distance by the faint glitter of their pikes in the moonbeam and by the few short words with which they hailed their fellows. Whenever such steps approached her window, Emily withdrew within the chamber and waited till all was quiet again. “If the figure returns tonight,” she thought, “I will not speak to it.” Yet even while she made this resolution, she felt

how uncertain fear would leave her when the moment came.

Midnight passed, and still nothing appeared except the common watch of the castle. The moon climbed higher and shone with a clearer lustre over the terrace, the woods, and the western towers. Emily began to doubt whether what she had seen on the former night had been real. “Was it only some trick of shade and grief?” she asked herself. “Have I suffered my imagination to govern my senses?” Still she lingered, too much agitated for rest, and watched the terrace so steadily that her eyes ached with the effort.

At length she perceived only one solitary sentinel pacing at the farther end of the rampart. He turned, came back a little way, stopped, and turned again, always with the same dull regularity of movement. No other form appeared. No low groan rose from the chambers below. No sign or signal came from the moonlit stones under her casement. Wearied at last with expectation, and ashamed that expectation itself still held her there, Emily withdrew from the window and prepared to seek some rest.

Yet even then she did not feel wholly reassured. The absence of the figure was not enough to destroy the impression it had made. “I have not explained anything,” she said, as she laid herself down. “I have only seen nothing tonight.” The thought was far from comforting, but fatigue now overpowered anxiety. Soon afterward, while the moon still shone upon the silent terrace and the sentinels still paced below the walls of Udolpho, Emily sank into an uneasy sleep.

Part 16

On the following day Emily was surprised to find that Annette already knew something of Madame Montoni’s imprisonment and of a secret meeting that was to take place at night. Barnardine, the porter, had sent a message begging that Emily would meet him alone on the terrace a little after midnight, and he said he would then lead her where she wished to go. The proposal filled her with alarm. She could not tell whether he meant to show her the chamber of her aunt, or to betray her into some danger prepared by Montoni. “I do not know whether I am

invited to pity or to destruction," she said to herself.

Her fears grew darker when she thought of her aunt's estates. If Madame Montoni were dead, and had never yielded them to her husband, they would pass to Emily; and in that case she herself might be in danger from the same hand. She remembered Montoni's violence, Barnardine's rough manner, and the strange silence around the turret. "What if my aunt is already gone?" she whispered. "What if I am the next obstacle?" Yet even while terror suggested these thoughts, pity for Madame Montoni, and the wish to know the truth at any cost, struggled against them.

At first she resolved not to meet Barnardine at all. "Tell him," she said to Annette, "that if he has anything of consequence to say, I will hear him in the corridor when he can come there. I will not wander over the castle at midnight under his guidance." Annette carried the message and was absent a long time. When she came back, she said Barnardine could not leave his post long enough for that, but if Emily would come to the east rampart soon after sunset, he might perhaps steal away and speak to her there. "He says it must be rather dusky, ma'amselle," added Annette. "The watch will be set, but not thick at that end."

Emily hesitated again, yet at last agreed. Barnardine had the key of a gate leading from the end of the rampart toward the courts, and the sentinels at the far side, Annette said, would be too distant to notice him if the light were low. "I must hear what he has to tell," Emily answered. "You shall go with me, Annette, and he must be punctual, for I too may be seen." Annette then mentioned that Ludovico was still ill from his wound, and that Count Morano, who had been hurt almost as badly, had now recovered and returned to Venice. Emily heard this with relief, but her mind was too full of other fears to dwell long on it.

All that day she had no chance of speaking with Montoni. He sat in council with his followers, and servants went to and fro with signs of feasting below and preparation above. Emily was left almost alone, and her thoughts returned again and again to the message of Barnardine. Sometimes she believed it concerned only her aunt. Sometimes she imagined it hid a warning for herself. As evening drew near, impatience and fear rose together within her, and when the sun had set

she went with Annette to the east rampart.

They were twice challenged by the sentinels before they reached the lonely end of the terrace. Emily disliked even that exposure, and hurried on, wishing only to be hidden again. Barnardine was not yet there. At length his voice sounded near them out of the dusk, and when he came forward he desired Emily to follow him alone through a small gate, while Annette should remain behind with a lamp and keep the outer door partly open. Emily refused at once. “I will not go alone into unknown passages,” she said. “If I am to hear anything, Annette shall go with me.” Barnardine would not allow it, but he so worked upon her pity and anxiety for Madame Montoni that she finally consented.

He led her first along a dark passage, then down a few steps into a ruined chapel. The roof was half fallen, the old gothic windows were thick with ivy, and damp shone upon the broken pavement in the torchlight. Barnardine stumbled once and cursed under his breath, and the hollow echo of the place made the sound more dreadful. From the chapel he turned to another flight of steps that seemed to descend into vaults below. “Whither are you taking me?” Emily asked, pausing at the top. “To the portal,” he answered roughly. “Make haste. I cannot wait here all night.”

Forced now to choose between following him and being left alone in that place, she went on. The passage below was foul with cold vapours, and the torch burned so dimly that every moment she expected it to die. Then, by a sudden flash of light, she saw through iron gates beside them the vaults beyond, and near her an open grave with heaps of newly moved earth. At that sight a horrible belief rushed upon her mind. “This is for my aunt,” she thought, and in the same instant, “perhaps it is for me.” She had scarcely strength to stand, but fear of showing her thoughts kept her silent.

“For whom is that grave prepared?” she asked at last in a failing voice. Barnardine lifted his eyes and looked fixedly at her, but did not answer. He shook the torch, moved on again, and Emily, trembling in every limb, followed him up another flight of steps. A door at length opened into the first court of the castle. Before she could understand where she was, voices called for the torch, horsemen

appeared in the red light, and several rough men gathered round as if in great haste. Emily cried faintly for help, and the men began to dispute which horse should carry her away.

At that very instant a number of lights came suddenly from the great gates, and with them Emily heard the sharp voice of Annette above the others. Then she saw Montoni himself advancing with Cavigni and several armed followers. Fear of him vanished in the greater danger of the moment, and she looked toward him almost with hope. A short struggle followed. The horsemen, seeing themselves outnumbered, soon broke away into the dark, while Barnardine fled and was lost among the shadows. Emily, shaking so violently that she could scarcely walk, was led back into the castle she had so lately wished to escape.

Montoni ordered her to wait for him in the cedar parlour, and when he came there he questioned her sternly about the whole affair. Emily, still overcome by terror, could hardly answer clearly, yet what she said convinced him that she had not gone willingly with the men who had tried to carry her off. He dismissed her at last and turned to examine the servants and discover who had been concerned in the plot. When Emily had reached her room, the agitation of her mind for some time allowed no connected thought; but by degrees memory returned, and with it the image of the grave, the dreadful haste of the horsemen, and the belief that Madame Montoni must indeed have been murdered.

The next evening, however, when Barnardine was again able to approach her secretly, he told a story darker and more confused than she had yet imagined. He spoke first of the quarrels between Montoni and his wife, then of an order given to him by his master, but on that point he stopped and would not at first speak plainly. “It was a fiend that drove him,” he said in a gloomy voice. Emily shuddered and cried, “Then you have killed her! I am speaking to a murderer!” He stood silent, and when he turned as if to go she almost sank with weakness. “If you are innocent, tell me quickly,” she said. “I cannot bear this suspense.”

At first he still refused. Then, when Annette had been sent away a little distance, he came back and said in a lower tone, “The Signora is alive—for me. His Excellency has shut her up in the chamber over the great gate of the court,

and I have charge of her. I meant to let you see her—but after what you said—" Emily, relieved in one instant from an almost unbearable weight, forgot everything except the hope of seeing her aunt again. She begged his pardon, implored his pity for Madame Montoni, and promised him any reward in her power. At last he consented. "Come tomorrow night, when the Signor is asleep, to the postern-gate," he said. "Perhaps you shall see her." Emily thanked him again and again, yet even in that moment of joy she thought she saw something like dark triumph in his face. Still she put the thought away, and retired to her chamber with the first real hope she had known for many days.

Part 17

The following night Emily waited with a mixture of hope and dread till the castle had sunk into its late silence. Then, wrapping her cloak closely round her, she went down by private passages to the postern-gate, where Barnardine already stood with a torch. He spoke little, and that little in so gloomy a tone that her heart again misgave her. "Come, lady," he said, "and lose no time. If you would see the Signora, you must follow where I lead." Emily answered only, "Lead on, then, but remember that I trust myself to your honour."

He conducted her across the court and through the small door in the great gateway, then up the winding staircase of one of the towers. The place was wild and desolate. The rough walls sweated with damp, the narrow openings admitted gusts of wind that made the torch flare and nearly die, and an old suit of armour hanging on the wall seemed in that uncertain light like a sentinel of the dead. When Barnardine said, "The Signora lies above," Emily repeated the word faintly. "Lies?" she said. "She lies in the upper chamber," he answered, and went on.

At a landing-place he unlocked a door and told her to wait in the room while he went higher to prepare her aunt. "There is no need of ceremony," said Emily quickly. "My aunt will rejoice to see me." Barnardine gave her a look she did not understand. "I am not so sure of that," he replied, and, taking a lamp from a stand in the stairway, set it in her hand before closing the door behind her.

Emily stood listening after him in deep anxiety. She thought she heard him descend instead of ascend, yet the wind that whistled round the tower and the thickness of the old walls prevented certainty. After some minutes she could bear the suspense no longer and tried the door. It was fastened. At that discovery all her former fears returned with new force. “He has deceived me,” she whispered. “My aunt is dead, and I am brought here for some purpose of horror.”

She went to a grated window that looked down into the court and there heard Barnardine’s hoarse voice below, mingling with the blast, though not so clearly that she could distinguish the words. Presently a torch flashed beneath the arch of the gateway, and the long giant shadow of a man stretched over the stones. Other voices rose and sank again in the wind. Emily now no longer doubted that Barnardine was not alone and that whoever was with him was no gentle companion. “They are waiting,” she thought. “For what, unless for me?”

Desperation then gave her a little courage. Holding up the lamp, she examined the chamber more carefully in search of some means of escape. It was large, bare, and terrible in its appearance. In the middle stood an iron chair fastened to the floor, with rings upon the arms and bars below for the feet, and above it hung another iron ring from the ceiling by a chain. Emily gazed upon these things with growing horror. “This is a room of torture,” she said. “Some miserable creature has suffered here, and perhaps died here.”

In the farthest part of the chamber hung a dark curtain reaching from ceiling to floor. Too weak to stand much longer, she moved toward it, thinking there might at least be a bench or stool behind. Twice she stopped, checked by recollection of the dreadful object once before hidden by a black veil at Udolpho. Then a more frightful thought seized her, that perhaps the body of her murdered aunt lay there concealed. In a kind of frenzy she snatched aside the curtain.

Beyond it appeared a low couch, and on that couch a corpse stretched in blood. The face was disfigured by death and wounds, and the floor beneath was stained darkly with the same dreadful sign. Emily bent over it for one wild instant, trying still to know whether this dead man might somehow be her aunt disguised by horror. In the next moment the lamp fell from her hand, and she herself dropped

senseless at the foot of the couch. When sense partly returned, she found men lifting her from the floor and bearing her away without ceremony or pity.

She was carried down the staircase and through the archway to the great gate. One of the men opened the small door in it, and by the light of the torch she saw several horsemen waiting without upon the road. A quarrel then began among her captors as to who should place her upon his horse, and the delay saved her. At that instant other lights flashed from the court behind, voices cried out, steel clashed, and Montoni with several followers rushed beneath the arch. Barnardine and his companions, finding themselves surprised, let Emily fall upon a heap of cloaks and weapons, and in the confusion of the struggle she crawled toward the inner court, where Annette's voice at length guided her to safety.

What followed remained long confused in her memory. She knew only that she was brought at last to her own chamber, that Annette wept and questioned, and that no answer fit to be understood would come from her lips. The image of the iron chair, the hidden corpse, and the horsemen waiting beyond the gate possessed her whole mind. When Montoni himself entered and spoke to her more gently than usual, she retreated from him in trembling terror and could only say "Yes" to whatever he asked, as if the meaning of words had almost left her. Annette, alarmed beyond measure, begged him to send for help; but he, seeing no wound upon Emily, ordered only that she should be watched through the night.

By degrees her tears came, and with tears a little relief. She spoke of her father, complained that all had forsaken her since his death, and then sank into broken sleep. On the following day, when she was somewhat more composed, Barnardine again sought an interview and at last, pressed by her anguish, disclosed the truth. Madame Montoni, he said, was not dead but alive, imprisoned in the chamber over the great gate; the blood Emily had seen had come from a wounded man employed in carrying the prisoner, and the corpse on the couch was that of another who had died after the recent affray. Emily listened in such joy and agitation that she could scarcely keep her seat. "Alive!" she cried. "Then take me to her this instant, and I forgive all that has passed."

She was at last admitted to her aunt's room and there found, not a corpse, but

a living sufferer so changed by fever and neglect that life itself scarcely seemed to remain. Madame Montoni lifted her heavy eyes and said faintly, “Where have you been so long? I thought you had forsaken me.” Emily caught her cold hand and burst into tears. Then, when she learned how Montoni had left this helpless woman shut up under guard, almost without comfort, under the mad suspicion that she had plotted against his life, all fear of his displeasure gave way to indignation and pity. She went instantly to him and said, “Madame Montoni is dying, sir. Your resentment surely will not follow her to the last hour. Let her be removed from this dreadful chamber, and let her at least have the common help due to misery.” Montoni resisted long, but Emily’s entreaties did not cease, and at last, ashamed perhaps of better feeling, perhaps only weary of opposition, he consented that his wife should be carried back to her own apartment and that Emily might attend her there.

Part 18

Emily remained beside Madame Montoni through the greater part of the following day, leaving her only when some little nourishment was to be prepared. The fever still burned, and yet the patient seemed too much exhausted even to struggle against it. She no longer complained loudly, nor blamed others with her former sharpness, but lay with a heavy stillness that touched Emily more than any violence could have done. “Will you take this, madam?” Emily said, bringing a cordial to her lips. Madame Montoni looked at her for a moment as if trying to remember where she was, then answered faintly, “It is all the same. Nothing can save me now.”

Annette moved softly about the chamber, frightened by the sickroom and by the silence of the castle beyond it. Once Carlo came in and looked with honest concern at Emily’s pale face and the slight wound she had received in her late fall. “Dear young lady,” he said, “you should take more care of yourself. This is an ugly hurt, though you smile and call it little.” Emily thanked him kindly and tried to turn his thoughts from her own condition to that of her aunt. When he was gone,

Annette whispered, “Did my lady tell the Signor what Ludovico said, ma’amselle?” Emily checked her at once. “No more of that now,” she replied. “You see how ill my aunt is.”

After a long interval of watching, Madame Montoni sighed deeply and at last seemed to know her niece again. Her first words were not words of kindness, but of fear. “Has he said I shall be removed again?” she asked. “Has Montoni spoken of the turret?” Emily answered gently, “No, madam. He has not renewed that cruelty, and you must try to keep your mind quiet.” “Quiet!” repeated her aunt in a low bitter tone. “How is quiet to be found in this place?” Then she turned her face away and appeared lost in dark thoughts which neither comfort nor reasoning could reach.

Hoping still to do something by perseverance, Emily left her for a short time with Annette and went in search of Montoni. She found him on a remote part of the ramparts among several of the fierce men who had lately entered the castle. Their dress, their weather-beaten faces, and the savage independence of their manner made her shrink before she drew near, yet she forced herself onward. Montoni was pointing to the walls and speaking earnestly about watches and stations. One man, rougher even than the rest, leaned on his pike and seemed rather an equal conferring than a servant obeying. As the group broke up, Emily heard Montoni say, “At sunset, then, let the watch begin.”

When the others had gone, she approached and begged him once more not to expose his wife to any new removal. “She is dying, sir,” she said. “If you have no pity for her, have some for yourself. Let not your last remembrance of her be one of needless cruelty.” Montoni turned toward her with an impatience that scarcely concealed deeper uneasiness. “I have granted enough,” he replied. “You women use sickness as an argument in everything.” Emily, too anxious to be repelled, answered, “I ask no favour beyond common humanity.” He made no direct promise, but neither did he renew his former order, and Emily returned with a little comfort to the chamber.

The afternoon wore away heavily. From time to time there came distant sounds from the courts, the tread of armed men, short calls from the walls, and

once the clatter of hoofs in the outer enclosure. These noises made Madame Montoni restless whenever they reached her ear. “What is doing below?” she asked more than once. “Are there more of his men? Is the castle to be attacked?” Emily could only answer that she did not know. “Then all is lost,” murmured her aunt. “He has brought us here not for safety, but for destruction.” After that she sank again into silence, broken only by wandering questions and broken complaints.

Toward evening her strength declined more visibly. She scarcely knew Emily, and when she did, it was only for a moment. Once she stretched out her hand suddenly and cried, “Do not let him take me back there!” Emily knelt and answered, “No one shall remove you, madam. You are safe here while I can watch.” The poor assurance perhaps brought a little comfort, for Madame Montoni grew calmer afterward, and lay with closed eyes as if too weary to fear even further suffering. Emily and Annette then watched beside her almost without speaking, each listening inwardly for the change they dreaded.

At length the long night drew on. The wind rose among the mountains and moaned at intervals round the towers, while within the room the lamp burned low and the fire gave out only a dull red glow. Madame Montoni, who in her stronger days had loved neither gentleness nor truth, now lay humbled alike in body and spirit, and the sight of her touched Emily with solemn pity. “Whatever her faults have been,” she thought, “she is my father’s sister, and she suffers.” When midnight passed, and there was still no immediate change, Madame Montoni herself insisted that Emily should go for a little rest. “You are worn out,” she said faintly. “Leave me with Annette. If I grow worse, you shall be called.” Emily resisted long, but at last, fearing to distress the sufferer by opposition, she kissed her hand and withdrew.

She had scarcely entered her own chamber when all the desolation of her situation returned with redoubled force. She was alone in a vast mountain fortress, cut off from every friend, under the power of a man she had learned to dread alike for violence and for craft. For some time she leaned at the casement looking over the moonlit woods and listening to their lonely murmur, till grief softened terror

into tears. Yet the brief rest she took gave her little relief, for before dawn Annette came trembling to summon her. Emily needed no explanation. She rose in silence and followed.

When she re-entered the apartment, she knew at once that the last change had come. Madame Montoni still breathed, but with that solemn slowness which seems already half withdrawn from life. Her eyes were closed, her features sunk, and all the passions that had once hardened her countenance were gone. Emily spoke to her and received no answer. She took her hand and felt how fast its faint warmth was passing away. “Madam,” she said in a voice broken by tears, “if you hear me, forgive all that has been painful between us. I would willingly have served you better.” Whether the dying woman understood or not could not be known; but a slight motion of the lips followed, and soon after, without struggle or complaint, life was ended.

Emily remained for some time beside the bed in that still grief which is too deep for immediate tears. Annette sobbed aloud and crossed herself again and again, terrified not only by death itself, but by the thought of what might follow when Montoni heard it. At length Emily rose from her chair and said with sudden firmness, “This cannot continue. I must see him at once.” Annette stared at her. “See the Signor now, ma’amselle?” “Yes,” Emily answered. “My aunt is dead, and I can no longer remain here as before. I will ask leave to depart.”

Later that morning she sent to know at what hour Montoni would receive her, and was told to come at eleven. The appointed moment found her in the cedar chamber doorway, where he sat with several officers about him. Their rough attention and his studied neglect made the scene more hateful to her than ever, but she forced herself to speak. “I would speak with you, Signor Montoni, if you are at leisure.” He answered coldly, “These are my friends. Whatever you have to say, they may hear.” Emily turned away without replying, and after a moment he followed her into a smaller room, shutting the door violently behind him.

For an instant the recollection of her aunt’s death and of all his former cruelty shook her so much that she could scarcely explain herself. He watched her with apparent indifference. “I have no time for trifling,” he said. “What is it you want?”

Emily then told him she wished to return to France and begged that he would permit her to depart. When he asked the reason, she summoned all her courage and answered, “While my aunt lived, sir, my residence here was not improper. But now that she is no more, I may surely be allowed to go. My stay can serve you in nothing and will only prolong my distress.” Montoni fixed his eyes on her and said, “Who told you that Madame Montoni is dead?” Emily trembled, yet replied, “I know it too well. Spare me questions on a subject so dreadful.” He refused her request without hesitation. “It is my will that you remain here,” he said. “Let that suffice you.”

Part 19

The certainty of her aunt’s death, which Emily had drawn from terror, was almost shaken in the next moment by Montoni himself. As she sat on the bench, hardly able to breathe, he turned at the door and said, “If you wish to see her, you may. She lies in the east turret.” Then he left her without another word and went back to the cedar room, where his fierce companions soon returned to their schemes and disputes. Emily scarcely knew what to think. “Can she still live?” she whispered. “Or does he speak only of the body?” Yet, whether life remained or not, she felt that she must go.

After a long struggle with horror, she returned to her own chamber and called Annette. The poor girl, when she heard where Emily meant to go, clasped her hands and cried, “To the turret, ma’amselle! To the turret at such an hour! Indeed, I cannot.” Emily answered with more steadiness than she felt. “You need not enter the chamber if you are afraid, but you shall go with me as far as you can. I must not fail in this last duty.” At length Annette consented to follow her to the staircase, though every step she took toward it seemed forced from her by obedience rather than courage.

They passed through the dark corridor and reached the foot of the winding stairs. There Annette stopped at once. “No farther,” she said, trembling so much that the lamp shook in her hand. “Do not ask it of me, dear ma’amselle. I will wait

here and pray for you." Emily, who now wanted all her strength for herself, did not attempt to press her. She took the lamp, said only, "Wait here then, and if I call, come if you can," and began slowly to ascend alone. When she saw again, upon the stone steps, the old dark track that had before confirmed her dreadful suspicions, she was compelled to pause and lean against the wall till the faintness passed.

At last she reached the landing-place and saw the door of the chamber before her. She expected it to be fastened, yet when she touched it, it yielded immediately. The room within was dim, silent, and heavy with the air of illness. Emily stood still and looked fearfully round, then advanced a few steps, when a hollow voice seemed to speak from the farther end. For an instant she could neither answer nor move. Then the voice came again, and because it resembled, though faintly, that of Madame Montoni, all her spirits returned at once. She hurried to the bed in the remote corner, drew the curtain aside, and saw, not a corpse, but a living face, pale, wasted, and almost beyond knowledge.

Madame Montoni still lived, though fever, neglect, and fear had reduced her so cruelly that Emily scarcely knew her. She seized the cold hand on the coverlet, let it fall, seized it again, and cried, "Do you indeed live? Speak, if you know me. Say only that you know me, or I shall lose my senses." The sick woman opened her heavy eyes more fully and said in a faint voice, "Where have you been so long? I thought you had left me here to die alone." Emily burst into tears. "No, madam, no. I was deceived by horror. I would have come sooner if I had known." Madame Montoni answered only, "I am dying now, but I have suffered enough before this."

By broken words and later by fuller explanation, Emily learned what had happened. Montoni, under the wild suspicion that his wife had joined in an attempt against his life, had shut her in this turret, ordered strict secrecy, and left her almost without pity or care while fever consumed her. The blood Emily had seen upon the stairs had come from one of the men who had carried her thither, and the dreadful body in the portal-chamber had been that of another wounded man, not of Madame Montoni at all. "He meant to keep me here till I signed," said Madame

Montoni, trying to raise herself on the pillow. “And if I had died before signing, he would have been little troubled, except for the papers.” Emily soothed her as well as she could, asked a hundred anxious questions, and then, forgetting every fear for herself, resolved to seek Montoni again.

She found him among his officers and addressed him with a courage born of pity. “Madame Montoni is now dying, sir,” she said. “Your resentment surely will not follow her to the last moment. Let her be brought from that forlorn room and have the common comforts of a sick chamber.” Montoni answered coldly, “Of what use is removal if she is dying?” Emily, unable to command herself, replied, “Of use enough, at least, to save you from some part of the remorse you must one day feel.” He ordered her away with anger, but she returned to entreaty, humbling herself, reasoning, pleading, and at last softening him in spite of himself. He turned aside with a half-sullen shame and consented that his wife should be removed and that Emily might attend her.

Dreading every delay, Emily hurried back with Annette, prepared the bed, brought a cordial, and superintended the removal herself. Madame Montoni had scarcely reached her own room when a message came from Montoni that she should remain in the turret after all. Emily flew to him once more and said, “She is already removed, and a second removal would kill her instantly.” Whether from weariness, or shame, or some sudden touch of better feeling, he yielded and let her remain where she was. Through the whole day Emily scarcely left the bedside except to prepare some slight nourishment, which Madame Montoni received with a quiet submission new to her character. “You are kind,” she said once, looking at Emily with languid surprise. “I did not expect kindness here.”

When night came, Emily wished to sit up, but her aunt forbade it. “You can do me no good by dying before me,” Madame Montoni said faintly. “Go and rest, and let Annette remain.” Emily resisted till long after midnight, then at last obeyed, charging Annette to watch and to call her on the least change. But when she reached her own chamber, rest was impossible. She leaned on the open casement and looked out upon the woods and mountains lying peaceful in the moonlight, till the lonely murmur of the trees softened her agitation and brought tears. When

at length she raised her handkerchief from her eyes, she saw once more, directly below on the terrace, the same silent figure that had before alarmed her.

Terror for a while overcame curiosity. Then she returned to the casement and compelled herself to observe the appearance. It stood motionless, as if fixed to the spot, and she began almost to doubt whether it was animated, when it moved and seemed to wave an arm toward her. The action was repeated. While she still gazed, unable to speak, a faint groan rose from below. “Good God! what can this mean?” she whispered. At last, forcing out the words, she cried in a failing voice, “Who is it that wanders there at this hour?” The figure raised its head, lingered one instant, and then glided away down the terrace with a swiftness and silence that made her heart stop.

She watched it as long as moonlight allowed, and while she still leaned from the window a sentinel came slowly along and stopped beneath her casement. Seeing her above, he called respectfully, and when she answered, asked whether she had observed anything pass. On her saying that she had, he went on without another word, and soon afterward his voice was heard at a distance, calling loudly. Other voices answered. The watchword passed from post to post. Presently several soldiers moved hastily under the window, but when Emily called to ask what had happened, none replied. She remained there in fearful expectation till at last three men appeared, supporting a fourth between them. This was Roberto, who, they said, had fallen in a fit upon the rampart. But Roberto himself, looking up with a face still pale from terror, declared, “It was no common fit, lady. What I saw was enough to frighten the Pope himself.”

“What did you see?” Emily asked, trembling in spite of her effort to smile at the others’ laughter. Roberto crossed himself. “I saw the same shape that has troubled us before. It passed the east tower, and when I came near the old arch, I heard such a sound as I never heard in all my life. It was not a groan, nor a cry, nor any voice of man. After that, I remember nothing till my comrades stood over me.” Another of the soldiers added, “This is not the first time. Sebastian and I saw it some nights ago, but no one would believe us.” A third broke in roughly, “It is the devil himself. No living man gets within these walls after dark unless he

belongs to the castle, and if he belonged to it, why should he hide and vanish so?" Emily questioned them farther, but obtained nothing certain, only fear, superstition, and contradictory details. At last they went away again to their posts, leaving her more disturbed than before.

In the morning she found Madame Montoni still alive, though very weak, and almost cheerful only when Emily remained near her. Soon Montoni entered, not to console, but to make one last attempt to secure the signature that would give him her estates in France. The scene that followed was dreadful. "Sign, then, and let me die in peace," he said at last with savage impatience. Madame Montoni answered, gathering all her remaining spirit, "Never. You have had my life already. You shall not have my lands with it." Emily threw herself between them, implored him to spare his wife, and even offered to resign every claim herself if only he would end the dispute. He persisted till Madame Montoni fainted from exhaustion, and when she revived, it was only to speak with painful clearness to Emily of papers concealed from Montoni, papers which she charged her never to let escape. By evening, after a long sleep, she seemed somewhat easier; and when Emily at last withdrew after midnight, it was with a heart worn out by pity, terror, and that gloomy expectation which told her the worst was still near.

Part 20

In the morning Emily found Madame Montoni almost as she had been on the night before. She had slept little, and what little sleep had come had brought her no strength. Yet when she saw Emily, she smiled faintly, and seemed comforted by her presence, though she spoke only a few broken words. Soon afterward Montoni entered, and at the mere knowledge that he was in the room, his wife grew visibly agitated. Emily rose from the bedside, but Madame Montoni begged, in a failing voice, that she would not leave her.

Montoni had not come to ask pardon, nor to soften the last hours of the woman he had so deeply injured. He came only to make one more attempt to force from her the signature that would secure her estates to himself after her death. The

scene was dreadful. On his side there was the same cold cruelty and iron will; on hers there was a spirit which suffering had not yet entirely subdued. Emily more than once declared that she would willingly surrender every claim to those lands rather than see her aunt tormented thus, but Montoni would not depart till Madame Montoni, exhausted by dispute, sank back insensible.

For some moments Emily believed that life had gone. At length her aunt revived, opened her eyes, and tried to speak, though her words at first were broken and unintelligible. Afterwards, restored a little by a cordial, she became clearer, and talked for some time, with surprising precision, of her estates in France. She directed Emily where certain papers concerning them had been hidden from Montoni's search, and charged her earnestly never to let them fall into his hands. "Guard them for yourself," she said, "and against him. Promise me that." Emily promised at once, and Madame Montoni seemed satisfied.

Soon after this she sank into a deep sleep, and continued sleeping till evening, when she appeared somewhat easier than she had been since her removal from the turret. Emily never left her for an instant till long after midnight, and even then withdrew only because her aunt entreatied her to take some rest. Annette received the same orders as on the night before, and Emily returned to her own room. But her mind was too wakeful and too troubled for sleep. Remembering the mysterious appearance on the terrace, and wishing once more to know whether it was real or only the work of terror and shadow, she resolved to watch.

It was now about the second watch of the night, near the very hour at which the strange figure had before appeared. When the sentinels had changed guard and the ramparts were again quiet, Emily placed her lamp in a distant part of the room and seated herself at the casement. The moon gave only a doubtful light, for heavy vapours rolled across it and often left the whole scene below in darkness. During one of these intervals she perceived a small pale flame moving slowly along the terrace. It vanished, came again, and while she watched it, silent lightning began to flash from cloud to cloud above the woods and towers of Udolpho.

The sight held her with a gloomy delight. Sometimes a single mountain sprang out in splendour while all else remained in shade. Sometimes one arch,

one turret, or one part of the fortress blazed forth and vanished in an instant. Looking back to the rampart, she again saw the little flame, and soon afterward she was certain she heard a step below. Then, by a stronger gleam, she distinguished some person on the terrace, and all her former anxieties returned. At last, forcing herself to speak, she called faintly, “Who passes there?”

“A friend,” answered a voice. Encouraged a little, Emily said, “What friend? Who are you? And what light is that you carry, which darts upward and then disappears?” The man replied that he was Anthonio, one of Montoni’s soldiers, and that the flame had tonight played upon the point of his lance ever since he had gone on watch. “My comrade has the same on his arms,” he added. “He says he has seen it before, and that it is an omen, though of what he cannot tell.” Emily, though startled by his account, was relieved to find that this appearance at least belonged to a living man and not to some spirit of the castle.

She questioned him further concerning the former night and told him briefly what she herself had then seen. He answered that he had not been on guard at that time, but had heard strange stories from others, stories which he did not choose to repeat. “There are those here,” he said, “who believe many things of this castle. For my own part, I complain of nothing. Our chief rewards us well.” Emily gave him a small piece of money and dismissed him, then opened the casement again after he was gone. Thunder now began to mutter among the mountains, and the clouds, wholly covering the moon, took on a red and fearful colour that foretold a violent storm.

She remained at the window till the lightning grew so frequent that it was no longer safe to stay there. Then she went to her bed, yet still listened with awe to the storm, whose rolling echoes seemed to shake the castle from battlement to foundation. While she lay thus sleepless, she thought she heard, amid the uproar, a voice near the door. The next instant it opened, and Annette rushed in with a face wild from terror. “She is dying, ma’amselle,” she cried. “My lady is dying!” Emily sprang up and followed her instantly.

When she reached the chamber, Madame Montoni lay still and senseless. Emily applied every means that care and love could suggest, but the last struggle

had already passed. Life was gone. Annette, trembling and weeping, could only tell that her mistress had seemed to sleep quietly, even through the thunder, until a strange sound drew her to the bed and showed that death was already upon her. Emily doubted not that the sudden violence of the storm had completed the ruin of a frame worn out by fever, grief, and oppression. Then, because she could not bear to hear from Montoni at such a moment some new expression of resentment or cruelty, she resolved to conceal the event till morning.

Alone with Annette, she performed the last sad offices for the dead and watched through the remainder of the night beside the body. The storm still shook the air, and the solemnity of that chamber, where death lay so newly present, was deepened by every peal of thunder and every flash that gleamed through the casement. More than once Emily sank upon her knees and addressed herself to Heaven for support. The prayers she then uttered were not for herself alone, but for the soul of the dead woman, misguided and unhappy though she had been. Toward morning her grief became calmer, though not less deep.

When Montoni at last learned that his wife was dead, his first emotion was not sorrow, but rage that she had died without yielding him the signature he desired. Emily anxiously avoided his presence and gave herself for two days and nights almost without intermission to the care of the corpse. During that time she forgot all the faults of her aunt and remembered only her sufferings. On the second evening Annette informed her that the interment was to take place that very night, at an hour chosen, no doubt, that the remains of Madame Montoni might be committed to the earth with as little notice as possible. Emily determined that, whatever it cost her, the dead should not go to the grave without one relative near.

After midnight the men came with torches, their faces made fiercer by the glare of the light and by the gloom around them. Without speaking, two of them lifted the body, while a third went before with the torch, and the mournful procession moved through the courts toward the ruined chapel. Emily, supported by Annette, followed, scarcely hearing the night-birds among the battlements or the bats that crossed her path. But when the bearers paused at the steps leading down into the vaults, and she saw the dark abyss below, all her fortitude nearly

failed. Then, remembering what she believed to be her duty, she descended after them and entered at last the burial-place.

There, between the arches of the vault, she saw the corpse laid beside an open grave, and near it stood a priest, whom she had not observed till he began in a low solemn voice the service for the dead. By the torchlight his venerable figure, pale face, and grey hair were strongly contrasted with the savage forms of the condottieri bending over the grave. When the body was lowered, Emily leaned on Annette and stood as one turned to stone by grief. Afterward the monk looked at her with such pity that she felt at once comforted and saddened, though he spoke not in the presence of those men. Several days then passed in seclusion and sorrow, till Montoni sent for her; and when she went, she found him with Orsino and another officer beside a table covered with papers.

"I sent for you, Emily," Montoni said, "that you may witness some business between my friend Orsino and myself. Nothing is required of you except to sign your name here." He laid a paper before her and gave her a pen. She had almost written when his design flashed upon her mind, and she dropped the pen, refusing to sign what she had not read. He laughed at first, then changed his manner and led her to another room, where he told her plainly that if she would surrender her claim to the French estates, she should soon be allowed to return to France; but if she persisted in what he called an unjust claim, she should remain his prisoner. Emily answered calmly, "The law gives me those estates, and my own hand shall never betray my right." Montoni threatened, and she resisted; then, remembering that she suffered now in part for Valancourt's future peace, she bore his menace with a strength she had not known before. Later, after recovering the hidden papers and replacing them in their secret spot, she returned to her chamber and, looking from the casement, was astonished to see Signora Livona walking on the terrace below with several ladies and gentlemen newly arrived from Venice.

Part 21

Annette had no sooner entered the room than Emily asked who the strangers

were and why they had come to Udolpho. The girl, glad to tell all she knew, began at once. “They have just arrived, ma’amselle,” she said, “with two signors from Venice; and I was glad enough to see such Christian faces again. But what can they mean by coming here? They must be mad to come freely to such a place, and yet they seem merry enough.” Emily said, “Perhaps they are prisoners.” Annette shook her head. “No, indeed. I remember one of the ladies at Venice, and there was talk then that the Signor liked her better than he ought.”

This last remark struck Emily painfully, because it seemed to throw a dark light at once on Signora Livona and on Montoni himself. Yet she could scarcely believe it. The sweetness, ease, and graceful kindness of Livona’s manner had won her regard too strongly. “You may have misunderstood idle gossip,” Emily said. “Do not judge too quickly.” Annette answered, “I would be glad to be mistaken, ma’amselle, but there is little good ever said or done in this castle.”

The talk then turned, as it often did, to France and to the name Annette knew so well would always touch her mistress’s heart. “Ah, ma’amselle,” the girl said, almost crying, “we shall never see our own country again. I must come on my travels, forsooth! And you too, to be brought among mountains and robbers, and to leave Monsieur Valancourt besides!” Emily tried to smile and answered gently, “You speak as if France itself belonged to him.” “And if it did not,” said Annette, sobbing more openly, “I am sure it belonged more to him than this dreadful place does to any Christian creature.” Emily soothed her as well as she could, though her own tears rose while she spoke.

During the next days the contrast within the castle became still more strange. Below stairs there was sometimes music, laughter, and all the appearance of careless pleasure among the new guests from Venice. Above and beyond these lighter scenes, the old air of fear, secrecy, and armed preparation remained unchanged. Montoni saw Emily rarely, and when he did, his mind was evidently occupied by interests more pressing than her displeasure or resistance. Men passed continually over the courts and ramparts; signals were exchanged; and though the visitors below affected gaiety, the whole fortress seemed waiting for some event which all expected and none named.

Emily kept as much as possible to her chamber, preferring solitude even to the company of Signora Livona, whom she now no longer knew how to trust. She sometimes heard the voices of the strangers on the terrace below and recognized Livona's soft laugh among the rest. Instead of comforting her, that sound made her more sad than silence itself. "If she is innocent," Emily thought, "how can she be easy here? If she is not innocent, how dreadful is the power of manner over the heart." She had little leisure, however, to pursue the thought far, for a new change soon came.

One morning she was told abruptly that she must prepare for a journey. Montoni sent no explanation, but only an order that her little package should be made ready without delay. Emily went to him at once and asked where she was to go. "To a cottage in Tuscany," he replied. "Why am I sent there?" she said. "That is no concern of yours," he answered. "You will be conducted safely. Ask no further questions." When she begged that Annette might go with her, he refused, and added only that Bertrand and Ugo would attend her.

The refusal alarmed her more than the journey itself. To be removed secretly, under the care of two such men, from a fortress where she was already almost a prisoner, appeared an evil rather than a deliverance. Yet she was compelled to submit. Annette wept bitterly at the separation and clung to her hand till the last moment. "Do not let them take you where nobody can ever find you again," she whispered. Emily embraced her and answered, "Do not increase my fear, dear Annette. If we are to meet again, we must part with courage." Then, with a heart full of foreboding, she left the chamber.

It was afternoon when they quitted Udolpho. Emily rode on a mule between Bertrand and Ugo, who answered her questions with short and doubtful words. When she asked again where she was going, they said only, "To a cottage in Tuscany." When she tried to learn why she was sent there, they either professed ignorance or exchanged looks which increased her dread. The road led away from the castle through long tracts of solitude where even the faint thunder of cannon, which once or twice she thought she heard from afar, was soon lost among the mountains. The farther they advanced, the more savage and desolate the country

became.

Toward evening they wound down dark precipices, black with cypress, pine, and cedar, into a glen so secluded that it seemed made for violence and concealment. Here the men proposed to halt and take food. Bertrand said, “Night will be on us presently, and the wolves make it dangerous to stop late.” This brought Emily a new alarm, though it was small beside the fear she felt of the men themselves and of the purpose for which Montoni might have sent her hither. She sat upon the grass beneath an overhanging rock while they drew rough fare from their wallet, and tried to eat a little only that they might not see how much terror had weakened her. The purple light faded from the hills, the woods grew darker every moment, and the low murmur of evening among the trees no longer soothed her as it once would have done.

Suspense now made one thought stronger than the rest. Since she believed more firmly than ever that the unknown prisoner at Udolpho had some connection with herself, perhaps even with Valancourt, she could not help questioning her conductors on that subject. “Tell me at least,” she said, “who is the person confined in the castle.” Ugo answered at once, “I know nothing of prisoners, lady.” Bertrand shrugged his shoulders and added, “If there be prisoners, they are no affair of mine.” Emily was silent after this, but their manner convinced rather than reassured her. “They know more than they choose to say,” she thought.

After a short and gloomy rest they resumed the journey. The last colour had now died from the west, and the path before them was often scarcely visible. Emily’s imagination peopled every cliff and thicket with banditti, and more than once, looking at Bertrand and Ugo in the uncertain dusk, she fancied she already saw in them the assassins she feared. Yet she had no choice except to proceed with them and commit herself to Providence. When at last the night had deepened into full darkness, the way grew less savage, and after many long hours they began to descend toward a softer country.

Morning showed her a scene wholly different from the one she had left. Instead of the black battlements of Udolpho and the stern mountain walls around it, she saw slopes rich with vines, a pleasant stream winding toward a bay of the

sea, and far away the faint purple of waters melting into the sky. The little cottage where they stopped stood half hidden among woods and vines, open chiefly to the evening light, and covered with jessamine, fig-trees, and clusters of grapes. At another time Emily would have found the place delightful. Even now the beauty of it touched her in spite of anxiety. “This looks like peace,” she said to herself, “but I have been taught too well how easily appearances may deceive.”

She soon learned enough to justify the thought. The peasant and his wife, who lived there, had faces in which cunning and cruelty were more plainly written than kindness. Their daughter Maddelina alone had a countenance of modesty and natural sweetness, and Emily felt drawn toward her at once. Breakfast was served at a separate table for Emily and the girl, while Ugo and Bertrand ate and drank coarsely at the door. Soon after, Ugo mounted and returned toward Udolpho, leaving Bertrand behind as Emily’s guard. This circumstance, though it did not surprise her, distressed her deeply, for it proved that her residence here was still a kind of imprisonment.

When the men were gone from the room, Maddelina talked with that simple openness which Emily found at once soothing and instructive. From her she learned that the cottage had long belonged to the family and had been purchased for them by Montoni in reward for an important service once rendered by Marco, the peasant, to whom Carlo the steward was nearly related. “My mother has often said,” Maddelina added, “that the cottage was the least he ought to have had.” Emily listened with painful attention. Since the reward came from Montoni, she could scarcely think the service innocent. When she asked how many years ago it had been done, Maddelina answered, “About eighteen.”

This period agreed too nearly with the old mystery of Signora Laurentini’s disappearance to leave Emily at peace. A frightful idea seized her. “If Marco served Montoni in some deed of violence then,” she thought, “why may he not serve him in another now? And if so, what am I doing under this roof?” The suspicion fixed her for some time in silent horror. Yet when the first violence of it had passed, the calm beauty round the cottage gradually softened her mind into a gentler melancholy. She seated herself by her little casement, looked upon the

stream, the grove of orange and lemon trees beyond it, and the distant bay opening to the sea, and, while the landscape soothed her, her thoughts stole back to Valancourt.

Then, as twilight gathered, her remembrance turned once more toward Udolpho and toward the strange music she had heard there in the night. The more she reflected, the more firmly she believed that the imprisoned voice had been his. The belief, though uncertain, bound her heart again to that dreadful castle by a chain stronger than terror. “If he is there,” she whispered, looking back toward the far blue line of mountains, “I have not escaped. Part of my soul is still in those walls.” She remained long at the window after the sun had set, watching the valley sink slowly into shade, till only the great outline of the hills remained against the evening sky.

Part 22

Emily remained for some time in that deep reverie into which Maddelina’s last words had thrown her. The date of Marco’s service agreed too nearly with the old mystery of Signora Laurentini’s disappearance to leave her any peace. “If he served Montoni then,” she said to herself, “why may he not serve him now? And if so, what purpose brought me to this lonely cottage?” The beauty around her only made the suspicion more terrible, because it seemed to cover danger with a mask of gentleness. At last she rose and went to the window, but even the quiet stream, the bay, and the evening light could not at once restore her mind. “I am not safe because I am far from Udolpho,” she whispered. “A prison may stand among flowers as well as among rocks.”

Yet days passed, and no open violence followed. Bertrand watched her constantly, but he did not insult or threaten her, and Marco himself, though harsh and cunning in appearance, behaved with a kind of rough respect. Emily gradually recovered so much tranquillity that she could walk with Maddelina in the little valley, listen to the waves along the shore, and even feel again that tender pleasure which the loveliness of nature always gave her. “You look less sad today, signora,”

Maddelina said one morning as they gathered figs beneath the trees. Emily answered with a faint smile, “The place is very beautiful, and beauty is kind to sorrow. It cannot remove it, but it can soften it.” Maddelina, who understood feeling better than thought, pressed her hand gently and said no more.

One evening the peasants of the neighbourhood assembled near the shore to celebrate the eve of a festival. Emily and Maddelina, passing at a little distance, heard first the sound of flutes and tambourines, then voices singing together in a chorus so wild and sweet that Emily stopped involuntarily to listen. A garland of flowers was thrown into the sea at the close of the song, and the chant died away over the water with a melancholy softness that deeply affected her. “What does this mean, Maddelina?” she asked. “Why do they sing to the sea as if it were alive?” Maddelina smiled and answered, “It is only an old custom, signora. Our songs tell of sea-nymphs and spirits of the wave, and on festival nights the young people love to remember them.”

Emily, who had been taught from childhood to connect Italy with poetry, fable, and beauty, was struck by the grace with which even these peasants seemed to wear the colours of ancient imagination. The girls came forward presently and invited her to sit among them, offering grapes and figs with a courtesy perfectly natural and without servility. Their light green petticoats, white bodices, flowers, and little straw hats gave them an air at once simple and elegant. “Come, signora,” said one of them to Maddelina, “you know the dance. Will you not join us?” Maddelina laughed, and in another moment was among the dancers, tripping with an ease and gaiety that delighted Emily, though she herself could take no part in such mirth.

She sat somewhat apart, listening to the music and watching the moon steal over the waves and over the woody tops of the cliffs. For a little while she forgot her danger in the innocent happiness of those around her. Bertrand, meanwhile, had been invited by one of the peasants to drink, and the invitation was one he was never very bold in refusing. “Let the young lady stay a little longer,” said the peasant, raising a flask. “She is safer among honest dancers than on a dark road.” Bertrand laughed and emptied the flask. Then another was produced, and he

attacked it with equal goodwill, so that it was late before Emily, not without some uneasiness, returned to the cottage.

After this evening she was more frequently allowed to walk with Maddelina, though Bertrand always followed at some distance. Her mind became, by degrees, as calm as the circumstances of her condition would permit. Since no immediate evil appeared, she began sometimes to hope that Montoni had sent her hither less from design against her than from some wish to place her beyond the reach of those who might inquire after her. Yet this hope never long remained, because it explained neither his secrecy nor the character of the people into whose hands she had been given. “No,” she thought, “if he had wished only my safety, he would not have hidden me thus from every friend. There is some motive still concealed.”

It was during this interval of comparative quiet that another recollection suddenly distressed her more than any fear for herself. In the haste and confusion of leaving Udolpho, she had forgotten the papers committed to her by the late Madame Montoni, papers which concerned the estates in Languedoc and which Montoni had so eagerly desired to obtain. She started as the thought came back in full force. “Good Heaven!” she cried aloud. “Those papers are still in the castle.” Maddelina, who was near her, looked up in alarm and asked what had happened. Emily, unwilling to betray the importance of the secret, answered only, “I have remembered something that I ought not to have forgotten.” Yet for the rest of the day she could think of little else.

She had, it is true, one comfort. The place in which the papers were concealed was obscure and not likely to be discovered except by a search more minute than Montoni, in the hurry of danger and defence, might have leisure to make. This reflection relieved her in some degree, but not enough to restore her former composure. She spent the evening at the window looking toward the remote blue line of mountains behind which Udolpho stood hidden, and with the thought of those papers there returned once more the thought of Valancourt. “If he was indeed the prisoner whose voice I heard,” she said inwardly, “then all I love and all I fear are still gathered in that dreadful place.” The sea-breeze moved among the vines outside, and the low murmur of it seemed almost like a reply from the far hills.

While Emily thus remained in sorrowful uncertainty on the Tuscan coast, Count Morano, who had returned wounded and humiliated to Venice, was overtaken there by a change of fortune as sudden as it was severe. Soon after his arrival he was arrested by order of the senate and conveyed, without explanation, to a place of confinement which his friends were unable to discover. At first he believed this only some temporary precaution connected with his former excesses, but as days passed and no release came, he began to suspect that deeper causes were at work. “Of what am I accused?” he demanded of those who guarded him. “Ask the senate,” was all they answered. “We know only that you are to remain.”

This imprisonment was the more dreadful to him because he knew too well how much there was in his conduct which could, if fully brought to light, ruin not only his liberty but his honour and perhaps his life. His connection with Montoni, his knowledge of certain violent enterprises, and above all his own share in the late designs upon Emily now rose before him in a shape far darker than when passion had urged him on. Deprived at once of freedom, company, and information, he passed from rage to fear, and from fear to that gloomy resentment which had long formed a chief part of his character. “I am betrayed,” he said more than once to himself. “Montoni knows too much, and others know enough.” Yet even in that hour he thought less of repentance than of vengeance, and if he remembered Emily, it was with the bitter sense that she had become the occasion, though not the cause, of many of his misfortunes.

Thus, while one captive sat in a hidden prison at Venice and another waited in doubtful safety among the groves of Tuscany, the consequences of Montoni’s crimes were gathering around him from different quarters. Emily knew nothing of Morano’s arrest, nor of the movements already preparing new changes in her own fate. She only felt that the quiet of the cottage was too uncertain to be trusted, and that every sunset might perhaps be the last she would see there in peace. Yet because the heart cannot always remain at the same point of suffering, she continued to walk with Maddelina beneath the fig-trees, to listen to the sea at evening, and to look with pensive gratitude upon scenes which, if they did not give her happiness, at least gave her moments of gentler sorrow than those she

had left behind within the walls of Udolpho.

Part 23

After that evening at the window, Emily passed several days in a quieter state than she had known for a long time. The beauty of the valley, the soft air from the sea, and Maddelina's gentle company did not make her happy, but they lessened the sharpness of fear. She often sat by her casement with a small book open in her hand, though her eyes would wander from the page to the stream, the lemon grove, and the distant water shining under the sun. "This place has given me rest," she said once to Maddelina. "Yes, signora," the girl answered, "everybody who loves peace must love it here." Emily sighed a little and replied, "Peace is sweetest to those who have suffered much."

Yet even in this calm she could not forget the road by which she had come, nor the dreadful moment when Bertrand's dark purpose had almost shown itself too plainly to be doubted. The high Apennines, which looked so noble in morning light, brought back the memory of the savage passes, the storm, the torch, and the hard faces of the men who had led her through the night. To escape from these thoughts, she sometimes took refuge in writing. One afternoon, after long looking toward the mountains, she began to shape into simple lines the image of a lonely traveller betrayed and murdered on a wild road. The exercise relieved her. "At least," she said to herself, "I can turn fear into words, and words are less terrible than silence."

She dined as much apart as she was allowed, and Maddelina often waited on her there. From the girl's quiet talk Emily learned again how long the family had lived in the cottage and how strongly Montoni's name was joined with their fortune. This knowledge never left her mind. "Your father must once have done something very important for the Signor," she said one day, trying to speak lightly. Maddelina answered, "So my mother always says, though she never tells me more." Emily was silent for a while, then asked, "Did it happen many years ago?" "Before I was born," replied Maddelina, "and that is about eighteen years." Emily

turned pale at the number, for it agreed too well with old mysteries that still haunted her.

But after the first violence of that suspicion had passed, gentler feelings again returned. She sat at twilight by the open casement, watched the sun go down beyond the sea, and thought of Valancourt with a sadness softer than despair. She had now almost persuaded herself that the prisoner whose voice she had once believed she heard at Udolpho must indeed have been he. “If he is there,” she whispered, “I am not truly far from him, though mountains and walls stand between us.” At such hours she almost looked back toward Udolpho with regret, because all her grief and all her hope seemed still gathered there.

Sometimes, in the evening, she walked with Maddelina near the shore, while Bertrand followed unwillingly at a distance. The peasants, simple and courteous in their manners, pleased Emily more each day. Their songs, their little festivals, and the natural grace with which even common acts were done among them gave the whole valley an air at once cheerful and poetic. One evening the young people sang again near the water, and the low music mingled so sweetly with the murmur of the waves that Emily sat listening as if under a spell. Bertrand, meanwhile, forgot caution over a flask, and then over a second, till it was late before he thought of bringing her back to the cottage. Even then she returned with some apprehension, for she knew too well how little safety lay in his care.

Thus nearly a fortnight passed. It was not happiness, but it was the nearest thing to repose that misfortune had lately allowed her. Then, all at once, the quiet ended. One morning Ugo came back from Udolpho, dusty from hard riding and full of haste. Emily saw from his face, before he spoke, that some new change was at hand. “You must prepare to leave the cottage today,” he said. “The Signor orders it.” Emily started. “To leave it? And where am I to go?” “Back to the castle,” he replied shortly. “The danger there is over, and he will have you under his own roof again.”

The words struck her with mingled pain and relief. To return to Udolpho was terrible; yet the thought that Valancourt might still be there softened the blow in spite of all fear. “Must I go immediately?” she asked. “As soon as you can be

ready," said Ugo. "We have far to travel." Maddelina heard this in tears. "So soon, signora?" she cried. Emily took her hand and answered, "Yes, I must go. I did not expect kindness in this place, and yet I have found it in you." The girl wept openly then, and even Emily, though long practised in sorrow, felt the pain of leaving one gentle heart among so many harsh ones.

The farewell at the cottage was more affecting than so short an acquaintance seemed to promise. Maddelina embraced her with the simplicity of true feeling. Even the old peasant's wife, coarse and cunning as she was, put on for a moment something like pity, perhaps because parting is sometimes stronger than habit. Emily looked once more at the stream, the grove of lemon trees, the bay, and the blue distance of sea melting into sky. "I shall remember this place," she said. "It has not made me happy, but it has been kinder than Udolpho." Then she mounted, and the little party began once more to ascend the Apennines.

At first the morning was bright, and from the higher paths she could still see the rich low country at her feet and the Mediterranean shining far away. More than once she turned to look back upon it, and each time her heart grew heavier. "Farewell," she thought, "to this brief interval of peace." As the road rose, the air became sharper, the slopes more bare, and the valleys more gloomy. Ugo and Bertrand talked chiefly of cannon, walls, and watches, from which Emily gathered that Udolpho had lately been in real danger from attack. "Then he sent me away for safety," she said inwardly, and that thought, though it did not excuse Montoni, altered one dark suspicion.

The day declined before they came near the neighbourhood of the castle. There was a moon, but clouds often crossed it, and Ugo carried a torch whose light made the woods and broken road look wilder than darkness itself. Emily heard at length the far sound of the old castle clock rolling among the mountains, and the solemn notes seemed to her like a warning. "There is the old voice again," said Bertrand with rude cheerfulness. "The enemy could not silence him." Ugo laughed and answered, "No. He roared through the hottest fire of all." Emily listened in silence, while grief and dread grew stronger together.

Soon after, as the road bent round the base of a mountain, she saw Udolpho

again. For one moment the moon shone out and showed the vast outline of walls and towers above the black woods. Then all was shadow once more. The sight went to her heart. Those gloomy battlements spoke to her of imprisonment, terror, and suffering; yet the thought that Valancourt might be within them gave a strange comfort even then. “If he is there,” she said to herself, “I am going back not only to misery, but to the nearest place to him that fate now allows.” That poor hope remained with her as they drew nearer.

The road now entered the ravaged ground below the fortress. Great fragments of stone had rolled among the trees, many of which were shattered or wholly torn down by the late siege. Broken weapons lay here and there in the path, and now and then the torch showed pieces of armour among the earth and roots. Emily shuddered whenever the light fell on such signs. “Let us go on,” she said more than once. But Bertrand and Ugo, rough soldiers as they were, stopped to look at the marks of battle and to talk of shots, breaches, and the skill of the defence. At last, after a shrill signal answered from the walls above, they moved forward again and emerged from the woods onto the broken road that climbed immediately toward the gates. Then Emily saw the whole mass of Udolpho rising dark above her, and all the quiet of Tuscany seemed to vanish like a dream.

Part 24

When they reached the first gate of Udolpho, it opened with a sound more heavy and mournful than Emily remembered, and the torchlight showed a place changed by violence. Stones torn from the walls lay scattered in the courts, part of the battlements was broken, and the weeds that had once made the ruin only gloomy now seemed stained by real suffering. The men on guard no longer wore the same careless fierceness as before. They looked worn, suspicious, and eager only for orders. As Emily passed beneath the arch, she said inwardly, “This castle has ceased to threaten in pride; it now threatens in despair.”

Old Carlo received her in the hall with more kindness than surprise. “Dear lady,” he said, taking the lamp from Bertrand’s hand, “I am glad you are come

safely back, though I wish the times were happier." Emily looked earnestly at him and asked at once, "Is the Signor here? And is all danger over?" Carlo shook his head before he answered. "The Signor is within the castle, but danger is not over. We have had hard days, and I know not what may come next." He would say no more, and when she asked whether the rooms above were safe and whether Annette still remained at Udolpho, he only replied, "You shall see your chamber prepared, signora, and tomorrow perhaps you will know more."

The apartment assigned to her was not the same she had once occupied. Carlo led her by shorter passages to a room overlooking an inner court half ruined by shot, where the moonlight lay on broken stones and shattered beams. The fire was burning, and supper had been placed there with unusual care. Emily noticed this and said, "Who remembered me in the midst of such confusion?" The old servant hesitated. "Some still remember what is due to innocence and misfortune," he answered. "Rest tonight, dear lady, and do not ask many questions. The walls have ears in times like these." His words, meant to comfort, only deepened her uneasiness.

After he had left her, she went to the casement and looked into the court below. The whole castle seemed to listen rather than sleep. Once or twice she heard steps pass rapidly under the arch, then a low challenge from some remote post, then silence again more heavy than before. The recollection of Tuscany, with its soft sea-air and its gentle valleys, came over her like the memory of a dream. Yet there was one thought stronger even than dread. "If Valancourt ever was within these walls," she said, "perhaps I am nearer now to some trace of him than I have been for many weeks." That hope, weak and uncertain as it was, kept her long at the window.

On the following morning she saw Annette, who ran to her with tears, laughter, and questions all together. "O ma'amselle," cried the poor girl, "how many times I thought I should never see you again! And here you are among guns and broken walls as if that were the most natural thing in the world." Emily embraced her warmly and asked whether she knew anything of the late events. Annette answered in whispers and fragments. "Only that there was fighting, then

more fighting, then less food, then more oaths than prayers, and that everybody expects something dreadful still. Ludovico says the Signor trusts nobody now except men who are as bad as himself." Emily tried to smile at Annette's confusion, but her heart grew heavier at every word.

Later in the day Carlo came again, and then Emily perceived that the old man's manner was even more anxious than before. He stood a moment near the hearth as if uncertain whether to speak, then said softly, "If you value quiet, signora, keep within doors tonight. There may be noise in the castle." Emily answered, "There has long been noise in my life, Carlo. Tell me rather whether there is danger." He looked toward the door and replied, "There is always danger where men have too much guilt and too many swords. But be of courage. What is done may perhaps end sooner than many think." She would have pressed him further, but he departed at once.

The evening closed dark and still. No moon appeared, and a mist had gathered among the mountains, so that the towers of Udolpho seemed to rise out of cloud rather than air. Emily and Annette remained together longer than usual, speaking low whenever they spoke at all. At length the great clock of the hall sounded midnight, and soon after there came from far below a murmur unlike the common watch of the castle. "Did you hear that?" said Annette, catching Emily's arm. "It was only men changing guard," Emily replied, though she did not believe it. A little later the murmur swelled suddenly into cries, the clash of arms, running steps, and the sharp report of a pistol within the very courts.

Annette shrieked and would have fallen, but Emily drew her toward the inner wall and said, "Be silent if you can. We must hear what this means." They listened in terror. The uproar, dreadful as it was, did not last long. There was no continued battle, but rather a short violent struggle in one part of the castle, then the loud opening of a gate, then voices calling in tones of command not before heard there. One cry rose higher than all the rest, fierce and broken, and Emily thought she recognized in it the voice of Montoni. "He is taken!" exclaimed Annette in a whisper of horror. Emily did not answer, but her whole frame trembled so that she was forced to lean against the wall for support.

Long after the noise had sunk, neither of them could seek rest. At dawn Carlo entered with a face in which fear and relief were strangely mixed. “The business is over,” he said. “The Signor and several of his officers are prisoners.” Emily stared at him in silence. “Prisoners!” she repeated at last. “By whose power?” “By that of wiser heads than ours,” answered Carlo. “There was treachery among his own men, and justice came in by the gate before he knew she stood at the threshold. Ask no more now. You are safe for the present, and that is enough.” Then, softening as he looked at her, he added, “Whatever evil the Signor meant, it is no longer in his hands to finish it.”

The change that followed was almost as confusing as the danger itself. Men who had swaggered like masters the day before now moved with the obedience of the conquered, while others, strangers to Emily, passed through the castle as those who had a right there. Some rooms were searched, papers seized, orders written, guards replaced. Amid all this, Emily felt less joy than one might have expected, for release coming after long terror leaves the heart exhausted rather than light. More than once she asked herself whether she ought to rejoice at seeing even Montoni brought low. “No,” she said at last, “I rejoice only that he can no longer oppress.”

Before noon an officer of grave and courteous manner requested permission to see her. He spoke with respect, said that the senate’s orders would secure her safety, and asked only what country she wished to return to. “To France, if it is possible,” Emily answered. “To Languedoc first, and afterward where duty may require.” The officer bowed. “It shall be done as speedily as the roads will allow. You have suffered too much already from these walls.” At these words, spoken with simple humanity, Emily felt gratitude almost as keenly as if it had been bestowed by a friend. Annette, when she heard that they were to quit Udolpho, wept again, but this time with joy.

Two days later they left the castle forever. As Emily descended the last court and passed once more beneath the black arch of the gate, she paused a moment and turned back. The old towers, scarred by war and dark against the mountain, no longer seemed to hold the same power over her imagination. Terror remained

in the memory of them, but not in the sight. “Farewell,” she said inwardly. “You have contained my worst fears, but you shall not contain my future.” Then, with Annette beside her and a small escort before and behind, she went down from the mountains toward France.

The journey was long and often melancholy, yet every mile seemed to remove some weight from her heart. When at last the scenes of Languedoc opened again before her, with gentler woods, wider plains, and the mild light of the Mediterranean coast, she breathed more freely than she had done for many months. It was arranged that, before any final plan could be made for her return to Gascony, she should for a time accept the protection of Count De Villefort at Château-le-Blanc, an old estate on that coast newly come into his possession. “There,” said the officer who delivered her to his care, “you will at least be among honourable people.” Emily thanked him and entered the château with a heart weary still, but softened by the first real sense of safety she had known since leaving her father’s home.

Part 25

Before Emily’s life at Château-le-Blanc can be understood, it is necessary to go back a little and look at the family into whose care she had now come. Count De Villefort had inherited that old estate near the coast of Languedoc after the death of the Marquis de Villeroi. The place had long stood almost deserted, and its name had already touched Emily’s curiosity in former days, when she and her father heard it spoken of with strange reserve. The Count had known it many years before, in his youth, when the house was still cheerful and inhabited. The memory of those early days, softened by time and coloured by imagination, at last made him wish to visit it again and to pass an autumn there with his family.

Count De Villefort was not a cruel or foolish man, but he had lived much in public life and had lost some part of that freshness of feeling which belongs to happier years. Still, he preserved better sense and better taste than many of those around him. He had two children by a former marriage, Henri and Blanche. Henri

was about twenty and already in the French service, quick, proud, and full of the eager expectations of youth. Blanche was not yet eighteen and had been kept in a convent almost ever since her father's second marriage, because the present Countess neither wished nor was fit to guide her education.

The Countess had long preferred Blanche's absence to her company. She feared the young girl's beauty, disliked her innocence, and found it easier to praise retirement than to bear comparison. For some time she had persuaded the Count to leave his daughter in the convent, but he had at last resolved otherwise. "Blanche has been buried alive long enough," he said one day. "She shall now come with us." The Countess hid her disappointment as well as she could and answered with politeness, but in secret she was deeply vexed. Her only comfort was that the country would keep Blanche from the public eye for a while longer.

On the morning when the journey began, the carriage stopped at the convent to take up the young lady who had been dreaming of this hour for many months. Blanche had scarcely slept all night, so eagerly had she counted every passing hour till freedom should begin. When morning light entered her room and the bell sounded through the house, she sprang up with a heart full of joy. "Today I begin to live," she said to herself. "The world must be beautiful, and I am going into it at last." Her imagination, uncorrected by experience, had filled that world with nothing but goodness, delight, and brilliant novelty.

When the great bell rang below and the carriage wheels were heard in the court, her heart beat so fast that she could hardly stand still. She ran first to the lattice, then along the gallery, and in another moment was called to the parlour where the abbess waited with the Countess. To Blanche, the Countess then seemed almost like a bright messenger who had come to lead her into happiness. But the Countess, when she saw the girl, was far from sharing her joy. Blanche had never looked more lovely than on that morning, when pleasure and hope gave light to every feature and made even simplicity splendid.

Yet the very moment so long desired brought with it tears as well as smiles. Blanche turned to bid farewell to the young companions of her convent life and found herself more deeply moved than she had believed possible. She even

embraced the stately abbess with real regret, and when she passed out through the gate, she wept. “Why do I cry now?” she thought in surprise. “I am going where I have always wished to go.” But such is often the heart, which clings for a moment even to what it leaves gladly when it knows the parting is complete.

The presence of her father soon comforted her, and the road itself quickly became a delight. Every village, grove, hill, and changing cloud seemed new to eyes that had so long looked only on convent walls and ordered gardens. Blanche sat often silent, but it was the silence of happy wonder, while her fancy filled itself with one bright image after another. She scarcely heard the conversation of the Countess and Mademoiselle Bearn, who travelled with them as a friend and companion. “Everything is beautiful,” Blanche said at last to her father. He smiled and answered, “May you always find the world as kind as you now expect it to be.”

On the evening of the seventh day, the party came within sight of Château-le-Blanc. Its situation struck Blanche at once with deep admiration. Before her rose the Pyrenees, solemn and vast in the evening light, their higher points touched with a tender rose-colour from the setting sun, while their deep recesses lay in blue shadow. On one side spread the rich plains of Languedoc, glowing with vines, olives, and woods. On the other appeared the Mediterranean, clear and blue, with white sails shining upon it. High above the shore, partly hidden among dark woods, stood the old château on its promontory.

As they drew nearer, the place revealed itself slowly and with great effect. First a turret rose above the trees, then the broken arch of a large gateway, then more of the ancient walls behind the woods. Blanche had read a few romances in the convent library, and now she almost fancied herself approaching one of those old castles where knights rode by moonlight and ladies waited in lonely towers. When the carriage stopped at the outer gate, which had to be opened by a servant climbing over part of the ruined wall, the whole scene seemed to her touched with poetry. The twilight, the sound of the sea, the woods, and the silence all worked together upon her imagination.

While they waited, Blanche leaned from the carriage window and gave

herself up to the sweet sadness of the hour. The sun had gone down, but a soft colour still remained in the west and lay reflected upon the sea. She heard the low murmur of the waves and now and then the distant beat of oars. The Countess, however, felt nothing of this charm. She looked with displeasure on the woods, the old walls, and the solitude. “What a dismal place this is!” she exclaimed. “My lord, you surely do not mean to spend the whole autumn buried alive in this barbarous corner?”

“I shall be guided by circumstances, madam,” replied the Count. “This barbarous place, as you call it, belonged to my ancestors.” The Countess answered with a little laugh. “Then your ancestors had strange taste. One should bring the waters of forgetfulness here, that one may not remember Paris.” Henri, though less openly ill-humoured, was also far from delighted. He sighed more than once for the life he had left behind and for a lady in Paris who had, at least for the moment, taken hold of his imagination. Blanche alone received every new object with delight.

At last the gates were opened, and the carriage passed slowly under chestnut trees that almost shut out the last remains of day. The road, half lost under grass and neglected growth, wound for a long distance through the woods before reaching the house. The Countess, looking round at the dark avenue, repeated in fresh displeasure, “This is not a road, but an entrance to exile.” The Count, already annoyed, answered more coldly than before, “It is at least an entrance to my own house.” Blanche, hearing them, was sorry to find discord where she had expected only happiness, but the place itself still held her imagination too strongly to let the moment lose all its charm.

When they reached the château, old servants stood waiting to receive their master. Blanche now saw more clearly that the building was partly gothic and partly of later date. The great hall, however, was wholly ancient, with dark tapestry on the walls, high pointed windows, and an air at once grand and melancholy. One immense window, overgrown with flowering plants, opened toward the south and gave a noble view of woods, sea, and the distant coast. Blanche stopped to look. “How lovely it is!” she said softly. But the Countess,

impatient for food and rest, hurried on and declared the whole place gloomy.

In the parlour where they next sat, nothing pleased her. The room was large, dark with cedar wood, and furnished in a style once rich but now worn by time. When the old housekeeper, Dorothée, spoke simply of former days and of the late lady's love for the château, the Countess heard her with concealed offence. "And how could you live here so long?" she asked. Dorothée answered honestly, "We were almost lost in the house for want of company, madam, and so we lived in a cottage near the woods and came now and then to look after the château. Ah, it is not what it once was." The Countess disliked both the old woman's freedom and the praise given to earlier times.

The Count returned before the talk could go farther and said that the house would need repairs before it could be fully comfortable. "I am sorry for it, my lord," replied the Countess. "Why sorry?" he asked. "Because the place can never repay the trouble. And were it even a paradise, it lies too far from Paris." The Count made no answer at first, but walked toward the window. "There are windows, indeed," continued the Countess, "but they open only upon savage nature." He turned then and said with some colour in his face, "I do not know what you mean by savage nature. Those plains, those woods, and that noble sea deserve a better name." The Countess pointed toward the mountains and replied, "Those at least are savage enough, and this château is savage art." Then, because the place had been built by his ancestors, he answered more sharply than before, and Blanche, shocked by the beginning of open quarrel on the very first evening of her freedom, sat silent and disappointed while the shadows gathered round Château-le-Blanc.

Part 26

Blanche, deeply shocked by the quarrel between her father and the Countess, was glad to escape from the parlour before the disagreement grew still more open. It was not yet quite dark, and her curiosity, always lively where anything old or singular was to be seen, led her at once into the wide gallery beyond the hall. The

marble pilasters, the arched roof of rich mosaic, and the solemn twilight that lay at the farther end all delighted her imagination. “This is a place for history and secrets,” she said softly to herself. “One might almost believe the walls remember everything that has ever happened here.”

The gallery ended in a large saloon, partly modern in taste and once evidently designed for splendour, though now half neglected and touched everywhere by decay. Blanche could distinguish only the chief forms of the room, for the evening had deepened quickly, but even that imperfect view pleased her more than the bright apartments of Paris would have done. She passed slowly to the window and looked out upon the landscape now melted into one vast grey mass, with the sea beyond and the faintest line of distant light still lingering in the west. The stillness of the place soothed the uneasiness left by the scene below. “If people would let such a house be itself,” she thought, “it would make them gentler.”

A servant soon came to summon her to supper, and when the meal was ended, little more was seen of the family that night. The Count was silent and abstracted, the Countess cold and displeased, and Blanche, disappointed in the happiness she had so long imagined, retired earlier than usual. Yet before she slept, the charm of the château returned strongly upon her fancy. Through the open lattice of her room came the sound of the sea and the low murmur of trees stirred by the night air. The old walls, the dark woods, and the moonlight beyond made her almost forget domestic discomfort in the romance of the scene. “Tomorrow,” she said, “I will see everything.”

She was as good as her word. On the following day, and on many days after, Blanche gave herself up with eager delight to the exploration of the château and the grounds about it. The modern part of the house, though handsome in design, interested her less than the ancient. She preferred the great staircase, the oak gallery, the long suites of cedar chambers, the old portraits darkened by time, the spacious fireplaces where no cheerful blaze had lately burned, and the deserted air that made it seem as if the persons in the pictures had been the last real inhabitants of the place. There was melancholy in all this, but it was a melancholy that pleased her imagination more than it oppressed her spirits.

One day, after examining several of these rooms, she found herself in a long gallery that ended at one side in a back staircase and at the other in a door fastened against her. Puzzled, but not discouraged, she descended the stairs and opened a little door a few steps below. It led into a square turret-room with three windows, each giving a different and beautiful view. One looked northward over Languedoc, another westward toward hills rising to the Pyrenees, and the third southward upon the Mediterranean and the wild shore of Rousillon. Blanche was delighted with this little retreat. “I have found my own tower at last,” she cried. “If I lived here long, I should come every morning to these windows.”

From the turret she went down again by a narrow stair and presently lost her way among dusky passages. At first she laughed at the mistake, then grew impatient, and at last a little alarmed. The passages turned so often, and the doors were so alike, that she could no longer guess in what part of the house she wandered. The silence, too, was profound. “This is not amusing any longer,” she said, and called aloud. After a short pause she heard steps and saw a light glimmer through a door at the far end of the passage. The door opened cautiously, and Dorothée, the old housekeeper, appeared with a lamp.

“Dear mademoiselle!” cried the old woman. “How came you here alone? I thought no one but spirits wandered this passage after sunset.” Blanche laughed and answered, “Then I am glad to prove myself flesh and blood. But indeed, good Dorothée, your château is a labyrinth.” The old woman shook her head. “It is large enough to lose happier people than ourselves,” she said. “Come, my lady, I will show you the safer way.” Blanche, whose curiosity was only sharpened by this accident, walked back with her more slowly than necessity required, questioning her at every step about the different parts of the house.

Dorothée answered simply where she could, but on some points she became reserved. When Blanche reached the door at the end of the upper gallery and found it fastened, she begged that it might be opened and that she might see the rooms beyond. The housekeeper looked distressed at once. “Pray, my lady, do not ask it,” she said. “I have never entered those rooms since my dear lady died. I could not bear to see them now.” Blanche, struck by the earnestness of this answer,

withdrew the request immediately. “Then I will not press you,” she said kindly. “If grief closes the door, curiosity has no right to force it.”

They walked on together, and Dorothée, encouraged perhaps by Blanche’s gentleness, began to speak more freely of former times. “The late Marchioness,” she said, “loved this château dearly. Ah, how different it was then! There were lights, company, music, and servants everywhere. When she came here first as a bride, no one in the world could have been more gay.” Blanche listened with lively interest. “And was she happy afterwards?” she asked. Dorothée shook her head slowly. “No, my lady,” she replied. “Not long. I have seen many changes in this house, but none so sad as hers.”

The words made a deep impression on Blanche, who drew nearer and said in a lower voice, “Tell me more, if it is not too painful. I should like to know what happened in this château before we came to it.” Dorothée looked round the empty gallery as if even there she feared listeners from the past. “No, my lady,” she answered, “if I were to begin, I should see too much again. Some things are as plain to me now as they were many years ago, and they are dreadful things. I can see the late lady on her death-bed; I can hear what she said; and I almost think, at times, that the sound remains in these walls.” Blanche, whose imagination needed little to excite it, felt at once awe and pity. “Was her death so terrible?” she asked. “Is not death always terrible?” replied the old woman, and then was silent.

The silence that followed was not one Blanche wished immediately to break. They had reached the farther end of the gallery, where a great window overlooked woods falling toward the sea, now glowing in late afternoon light. The sight calmed her a little. “Perhaps,” she said, wishing to lead Dorothée back more gently, “the place itself makes sad stories seem still sadder. One cannot walk these galleries and not expect something strange.” Dorothée sighed. “Every old house has its history, my lady; but some histories do not stay in books. They stay in rooms that are shut, and in memories that cannot be shut.”

Blanche, though still eager, saw that she could gain nothing more at that moment. She therefore turned the conversation and led Dorothée to speak of ordinary things: the repairs needed in the house, the woods, the chapel, the little

paths above the shore, and the best places from which to view the sea at sunset. Yet even while she listened, the image of a cheerful bride growing into an unhappy mistress of a lonely château remained before her mind. More than once she glanced back toward the closed door at the end of the gallery and wondered what rooms lay beyond it and what scene had last been witnessed there. “I shall never be easy till I know,” she thought.

In the days that followed she resumed her wanderings through the house with renewed eagerness, though never again without some companion. The old chambers, the long windows opening on solitary prospects, and the little turret room became more dear to her every hour. But the part of the château that most governed her imagination was still the closed suite beyond the fastened door and the memory of Dorothée’s broken hints. Sometimes she fancied she heard distant sounds in that direction when the rest of the house was still. Sometimes she believed the whole mystery existed only because no one had courage enough to explain it plainly. “There is always less in a secret than people fear,” she said once to herself. Yet she was not wholly convinced by her own philosophy.

Thus Château-le-Blanc, which had at first seemed only a romantic retreat, gradually became to Blanche a place of stronger and darker interest. Her father valued it for the grandeur of its scene and the quiet it promised. The Countess disliked it for the same reasons. But to Blanche it had already become something more than a residence. It was a world by itself, full of beauty, silence, old sorrow, and half-hidden recollections. Even before any new event had broken the calm, she felt that the château held some history not yet ended, and that her own curiosity, innocent as it was, had already brought her nearer to it than prudence might approve.

Part 27

The life of the family at Château-le-Blanc soon settled into a form that pleased Blanche far more than it pleased the Countess. The Count rode, hunted, or walked over his grounds with that grave satisfaction which old possession gives

to a reflective mind. Blanche explored the woods, the shore, the ruined parts of the château, and every terrace from which the sea or mountains could be seen. Henri, when not occupied with letters or his own restless thoughts, sometimes attended her, but he was too much absorbed by distant hopes and by the memory of Paris to enter long into her innocent delight. “You can be happy anywhere,” he said once. “No,” answered Blanche smiling, “only where there is beauty, air, and freedom.”

Among the visitors who now came more frequently to the château was Mons. St. Foix, a young nobleman of the neighbourhood, handsome, ardent, and accomplished. He had all the quick admiration of youth, and from the first moment he saw Blanche, admiration ripened into a more serious feeling. Blanche, who had known so little of the world, was at first pleased only by his grace, his conversation, and his taste for the scenes she loved. But gradually his attentions, so respectful and so delicate, became more dear to her than she understood. The Count observed this with some concern, not because he disliked St. Foix, but because he wished his daughter to know more of life before her heart should be given away. The Countess, on the contrary, saw the growing attachment with secret pleasure, because any event that might remove Blanche from the house seemed a relief to her selfish vanity.

St. Foix was not admitted there without reserve. The Count received him courteously, yet watched him. More than once, when Blanche had spoken with unusual warmth of his conversation, or had listened too silently when his name was mentioned, her father looked thoughtful and changed the subject. Blanche herself only felt that an unknown delicacy had entered her conduct. She was no longer so perfectly free and thoughtless in his presence as at first. If he praised a prospect, she wished it had struck her before. If he approved a sentiment, she treasured it. “Why should I remember his words so exactly?” she asked herself one evening. But she did not pursue the question.

The autumn advanced, and with it came one of those excursions into the mountains which the Count particularly loved. A small party was formed for a day among the higher regions toward the Pyrenees. The Count, Blanche, the Countess,

Mademoiselle Bearn, St. Foix, and a few attendants set out early, expecting to return by evening; but the grandeur of the scenes and the slowness of the roads led them farther than they had intended. Blanche was delighted beyond expression. Every valley, every torrent, every dark grove opening suddenly upon a distant chain of mountains seemed to enlarge her very being. “I begin to understand now,” she said to St. Foix, “why solitude among mountains makes people think of great things.”

Before sunset the weather changed. Long lines of cloud gathered among the heights, and thunder, first distant, then nearer, rolled through the passes. The guides advised that the party should seek shelter for the night in a ruined hunting-lodge or little mountain fortress known to them at no great distance. There was no better choice, and the Count consented. They reached the place with difficulty in the growing dusk. It stood upon a savage height, half among rocks and woods, and looked less like a house than a refuge left by violence and forgotten by peace. Blanche shuddered as she entered, though she tried to laugh at her own fear.

Several rough-looking men were already there, who said they had come from hunting among the mountains and offered the travellers a place by their fire. Their civility, though outwardly sufficient, had something forced and watchful in it which did not escape the Count. One among them especially fixed his eyes first on St. Foix and then on Blanche with a steady attention that seemed less curiosity than design. The Count concealed his distrust, because storm and darkness made departure impossible, and because open suspicion would only have placed his small party more completely in the power of strangers who might be dangerous. Supper was spread before the fire in a rude stone gallery, and all tried to appear at ease. Blanche, however, drew closer to St. Foix whenever one of the men approached.

After supper the hunters proposed that the company should remove to another apartment, warmer than the hall they then occupied. The Count hesitated, but their manner was so pressing and apparently obliging that he did not think it prudent to refuse. A lamp was taken up, the guides led on, and the family followed through a series of long, ruinous passages, where thunder shook the building and

the wind moaned among broken windows. Blanche walked near St. Foix, but, at a turn of the passage, part of her dress caught on a nail or splinter in the wall. She stopped to release it. The Count and St. Foix, not observing the delay in the darkness and confusion, went on after the men, and before Blanche had freed herself, they had disappeared.

Hearing voices at some distance, she hurried on in what she believed to be the same direction. A light shining through an open door confirmed her mistake, and she approached, expecting to rejoin her friends. But on reaching the threshold she saw only four men sitting round a table in earnest talk. The face of one of them was that of the very hunter whose fixed looks had alarmed her before. Blanche started back, but too late. The men turned, rose at once, and before she could retreat fully, one had seized her arm. “Let me go!” she cried. “My father is near.” The man smiled and answered with a coarse insolence that froze her blood.

Her terror increased when she saw that none of the persons before her were the Count or St. Foix. She tried first entreaty, then firmness, then the offer of her purse, promising silence if they would but let her return. One of the ruffians laughed at this. Another said, “The young lady’s company is worth more than her gold.” At that moment a distant noise interrupted them. They listened. There came first a discharge of firearms, then the clash of swords, cries of men in struggle, and a shrill horn sounded somewhere without the ruined fortress. “We are betrayed,” cried one of the robbers. Three rushed out, leaving Blanche in the hands of the fourth.

In the midst of her despair she heard, above the tumult, the voice of St. Foix calling her name. The next instant he himself burst into the chamber, bleeding and pursued by armed men. Blanche saw him, heard him, and then her senses failed. When she recovered, the first thing she knew was the dim light of the same room and a dreadful loneliness about her. For a few moments she could not remember where she was or what had happened. Then memory returned in one overwhelming rush. She rose suddenly, called for her father, for St. Foix, for anyone who could answer, but only a low groan reached her from the farther side of the chamber.

Guided by that sound, she crossed the room and found St. Foix lying on the pavement, pale, motionless, and so covered with blood that she believed him dying. She knelt beside him, took his cold hand, called his name again and again, and, receiving no answer, thought the last moment had come indeed. While she was still bending over him in anguish, steps approached. The door opened, and a man entered with a light. Blanche, turning toward him in desperate hope, saw, not her father, but a face she knew with astonishment. It was Ludovico.

For one instant she could scarcely trust her eyes. “Ludovico!” she cried. He, no less surprised, advanced quickly and said, “Lady Blanche! Then I am not too late.” She could ask no questions, so urgent was the danger of St. Foix. Ludovico examined the wound, declared that life still remained, and called loudly for assistance. “Where is my father?” Blanche said at last, struggling to command herself. “Safe, I trust,” replied Ludovico. “There has been hard fighting in the passages, but some of our friends have mastered the worst of these villains. Courage, madam. The danger is not over, but it has changed sides.” Blanche, though still trembling in every limb, felt at those words the first return of hope since she had been separated from her party.

Part 28

At Ludovico’s words Blanche felt hope return almost with violence, though fear still shook her so much that she could scarcely stand. He knelt by St. Foix, examined the wound with quick attention, and then called loudly for water and spirits. “He lives,” he said. “Courage, my lady, he lives still.” Blanche, who had sunk beside the wounded man, answered only by tears and by a look of gratitude too strong for speech. In a few moments Ludovico came back with what he had asked, and while he bathed the temples and lips of St. Foix, Blanche held his hand and repeated his name in a low trembling voice.

At length St. Foix opened his eyes and looked round with the bewilderment of one returning from a deep and dreadful dream. The first word he uttered was Blanche’s name. She bent over him instantly and said, “I am safe. Do not try to

rise." He made an effort to obey, but pain overcame him, and he fell back again. Ludovico, after a rapid glance toward the door, said, "My lord, there is no time to lose. The banditti that are absent were expected home an hour ago, and the horn that has sounded will bring them from every path among the mountains. We must remove you this instant."

The Count, who now entered with several of his servants, was himself wounded in the left arm, though less severely than St. Foix. Blanche saw this for the first time and uttered a cry of fresh alarm. "It is nothing," he said, forcing a smile. "Think only of Monsieur St. Foix." The servants, assisted by Ludovico, had already brought what was needed for the removal. It was a rough kind of litter made from a bear's skin fastened to long poles, with goats' skins spread upon it for greater softness. "It has served wounded men before," said Ludovico. "Tonight it must serve an honest one."

St. Foix, though weak from loss of blood, was by this time sensible enough to understand the danger of delay and to submit without resistance. He was lifted very gently to the litter, and the guides took the poles upon their shoulders. At that moment a loud tumult burst again from the lower part of the fortress. "Those villains in the dungeon are forcing the door," cried one of the Count's men. "Then let us begone before their comrades join them," said the Count. Blanche, almost fainting anew at the thought of another struggle, drew close beside her father and followed as quickly as she could.

The little party passed through the hall, then by a broken archway to the great gate, where two servants still watched. Outside lay darkness, wind, and the mountain road, but even those terrors were welcome compared with the danger behind them. The Count would have supported Blanche himself, but his wounded arm and St. Foix's condition made it impossible. Ludovico therefore kept near her, and she felt safer under that faithful care than she had thought possible in such a night. "Lean on me, my lady," he said. "The worst is behind us, if we can once gain the pass." Blanche answered, "Then Heaven reward you, for it seems that you came to save us all."

They moved on with as much speed as the wounded man allowed.

Sometimes the path was so narrow that the bearers of the litter could scarcely keep their footing. Sometimes loose stones rolled beneath them into abysses whose depth could only be guessed by the delay with which the sound returned. Blanche, though exhausted in body and shaken in spirits, found new courage in necessity. She would not complain, and more than once she forgot herself entirely while asking in a whisper whether St. Foix still breathed easily. “He does,” replied Ludovico. “He bears pain like a soldier and like a gentleman.”

Once or twice the Count halted to listen. The wind, the torrent below, and the distant muttering of thunder among the mountains made every pause terrible, because each sound might hide another more dangerous. At last Ludovico said, “I think I hear mules in the glen below, but the water confuses me.” The Count looked anxious. “If they are the banditti, we are too late,” he said. “If not, we may yet be safe.” Blanche remained silent, but clasped her hands together beneath her cloak and prayed rather than hoped.

By slow degrees the path widened and descended from the wildest heights into a valley more sheltered and less savage. The stars were paling, and the first light of morning began to show the outlines of the hills. Soon they heard the tinkling of sheep-bells and the faint bleating of flocks, sounds that came upon Blanche’s heart almost like music from another world. “There must be dwellings near,” said the Count. Ludovico answered, “Yes, my lord. If we can only reach the town beyond this rise, we shall find shelter.” At those words every step seemed to gain strength from hope.

The town at last appeared upon the brow of a hill, dimly seen under the opening light of dawn. Never had Blanche welcomed walls and roofs so thankfully. An inn was soon found, and there St. Foix was carried to a chamber where help could at last be given with less hurry and fear. A surgeon, summoned as quickly as possible, examined the wounds of both the Count and St. Foix. The Count’s proved slight, but the Chevalier’s, though not immediately mortal, was serious enough to require long care and complete rest. When Blanche heard this, she turned pale again, though now from grief rather than terror. “He will recover?” she said. “If fever does not follow,” replied the surgeon. “Nature is strong in him,

and he is young."

Blanche herself, after so many hours of terror, fatigue, and suspense, sank into a state of weakness which for a time alarmed her father almost as much as the wound of St. Foix. She was persuaded to lie down, and for several hours remained incapable of connected thought. When at length she revived more fully, the first thing she asked was whether St. Foix still lived. The answer being favourable, she became calmer, though still unable to rise. The Count then came to her bedside, took her hand, and said with great tenderness, "My dear child, you have suffered too much for one night. Thank Heaven that it is over." Blanche, looking at his wounded arm, replied, "And you too, sir, have suffered." He smiled sadly and said, "My wound is a trifle compared with what I might have endured had I lost you."

During the day they learned more clearly how the rescue had happened. Ludovico, in the course of those strange adventures which had followed his disappearance from Château-le-Blanc, had fallen among the very banditti whose ruined refuge had become that night the prison of Blanche. By courage, address, and fidelity to better feelings than theirs, he had won such trust among them as their brutal mode of life could bestow. Yet he had never ceased to detest their ways, and when chance threw the Count's party into their power, he seized the first means of aiding the innocent against the guilty. "I owed much to Signora Emily and to Annette," he said simply. "And when I saw the Lady Blanche in danger, I had no need to think twice what part I should take."

The Count thanked him warmly and with more emotion than he often allowed himself to show. "You have preserved my daughter," he said. "That debt I can never forget." Ludovico, embarrassed by praise, bowed and answered, "My lord, I only did what any honest man ought to have done." Blanche, who heard this, gave him a look of gratitude which he valued more than reward. "If courage and good heart are not enough to make a gentleman," she said afterward to her father, "then I do not know what can." The Count replied, "They are enough, my child, to make a man better than many gentlemen."

Several days were passed at the inn among the Pyrenees, because St. Foix

could not yet be moved without danger and Blanche herself remained indisposed from the effects of the late shock. During this time the Baron St. Foix arrived to attend his son and to carry him, when possible, to his own château. The arrival of the father brought relief as well as pain, for it made separation necessary. Blanche, though she scarcely acknowledged even to herself how dear St. Foix had become, felt the coming parting with secret sorrow. Still, there was comfort in knowing that he would be watched over by his own family and by every care that affection could provide.

Before these arrangements were complete, the Count and Blanche thought of Emily, who must soon hear of their danger from some uncertain report, or perhaps hear nothing and remain in cruel suspense. They therefore wrote to her immediately. The Count's letter spoke with warm esteem and invited her, with all the kindness of friendship, to be present at the marriage that was now expected between Blanche and St. Foix when his recovery should permit it. Blanche wrote more tenderly still. She described their late adventure only in part, begged Emily to be ready in a few days to come to Château-le-Blanc, and referred her to Ludovico for the fuller account. "She must know from him," she said, folding the letter, "how much we owe him—and how near I was to losing everything."

It was then settled that Ludovico himself should carry the letters to La Vallée. He accepted the commission gladly, not only because it served the wishes of those he respected, but because it promised him also a meeting with Annette, whom danger and absence had not made him forget. When he was ready to set out, Blanche thanked him once more with unaffected warmth. "You go to one who will rejoice to see you," she said, smiling through a shade of sadness. Ludovico's whole face brightened at the words. "Then I shall ride the faster, my lady," he replied. With that he mounted and departed, bearing to Emily the first tidings of her friends' safety and the invitation that was to draw her once more toward Château-le-Blanc.

Part 29

Some time after the escape from Udolpho and after the first quiet days at La Vallée, Emily was still far from peace. The return to her old home, though full of tender recollections, had not yet restored her mind. Every grove, every terrace, every room spoke to her of her parents, and, instead of soothing sorrow, often deepened it. Besides this sacred grief, another anxiety had lately seized her with almost equal force. A stranger had more than once appeared near the gardens at evening, and one rash servant, believing him a robber, had fired upon him and seen blood upon the ground. Since that time Emily, without daring to name her suspicion, had secretly believed the wounded stranger to be Valancourt.

This belief, though supported by no proof, gained strength every day from her heart itself. She remembered how often he had loved to wander in those scenes, and how naturally disappointment and melancholy might have drawn him back to the place where his happiness had once begun. “If it was he,” she said again and again, “then perhaps he came only to look once more upon La Vallée—and perhaps he has been left to perish through our cruelty.” Annette, who had concealed the event as long as she could, now regretted her silence every hour, and all attempts to discover what had become of the stranger ended only in uncertainty. Under this suspense Emily drooped visibly and fell into a slow fever, which the physicians could do little to relieve.

At length, finding that neither sickness nor solitude brought certainty, she resolved to leave Toulouse and return fully to La Vallée, where Count De Villefort and Blanche had promised soon to visit her on their way home. The movement itself and the duties connected with the estate gave some occupation to her thoughts, though not enough to calm them. She rode often among the cottages of her tenants, distributed such little comforts as she could, and tried to remember her father by imitating his benevolence. Yet every evening, when she returned to the old château and twilight gathered upon the lawns and woods, the image of the unknown sufferer came back upon her with redoubled force. “If he still lives,” she thought, “he may yet appear again.”

One morning, while she sat in the parlour with letters and accounts before her, a servant entered and said that a stranger desired to speak with her. Emily’s

heart beat so violently that for a moment she could not answer. It immediately occurred to her that this stranger was Valancourt, and all the agitation of former days returned in one instant. At length, mastering herself enough to speak, she said, “Tell him that I am engaged and cannot see any person.” The servant withdrew. Annette, who had been sitting silent and wondering, looked at her mistress with eager pity, but did not yet dare to ask a question.

In a few minutes the servant returned, saying that the stranger pressed his request and declared he had something of consequence to communicate. At these words Annette suddenly sprang from her chair. “It is Ludovico!” she cried. “It is Ludovico, I know it must be!” She ran toward the door without waiting for permission, and Emily, now trembling from hope as much as from fear, bade the servant follow Annette and, if it were indeed Ludovico, show him instantly into the parlour. She then rose from her seat and stood waiting, unable either to remain still or to command her thoughts.

The next moment Ludovico appeared, accompanied by Annette, whose joy made her for some time forget all decorum and almost all sense. She laughed, cried, questioned, and answered at once, till Emily herself, though agitated beyond expression, was forced to smile. “Dear Ludovico,” she said at last, “I rejoice indeed to see you safe. But tell me quickly—how came you here, and what news do you bring?” Ludovico then delivered letters from Count De Villefort and from Blanche, informing her of their late adventure among the Pyrenees, of St. Foix’s wound, of Blanche’s slight illness from the shock she had suffered, and of the Baron’s arrival to conduct his son home. Blanche added that she and her father hoped to be at La Vallée on the following day, and that Emily’s presence would be expected at the approaching marriage at Château-le-Blanc.

Emily read the letters more than once with tears of gratitude and tenderness. The expressions of esteem and kindness they contained were, at that moment, among the few comforts capable of reaching her heart. “These friends have remembered me in the midst of all their own distress,” she said softly. “I have not lost every claim upon affection.” The invitation to Château-le-Blanc was urged with so much warmth, and the occasion of it was so dear to Blanche, that Emily

felt she could scarcely refuse. Besides, though she loved the quiet shades of her native home, she could not but perceive the impropriety of remaining there wholly alone, especially now that Valancourt might once more be in the neighbourhood. “Perhaps change of scene may restore me more than solitude,” she thought, though without much confidence in the hope.

When she had again folded the letters, she turned to Ludovico and said, “You have done me one service already by bringing these; but another still remains. Tell me now, I entreat you, what happened to you in the north apartments of Château-le-Blanc, and by what strange chance you became the companion of those banditti among the mountains.” Ludovico, after receiving some refreshment and suffering Annette’s joy to spend itself a little, began his story with all the simple eagerness of one who loves to relate what he has both suffered and escaped. Emily listened with deep attention, following every step by which he had fallen among the robbers and had at last been enabled to save Blanche and St. Foix from them.

But even this narrative, interesting as it was, did not long satisfy all the questions struggling in her mind. There was another subject on which she scarcely dared to speak and yet could not remain silent. At last she said in a low voice, “And did you, while at Udolpho, learn who the prisoner was whose voice was once heard in the castle?” Ludovico looked surprised. “Lady,” he replied, “I did. The prisoner was a young chevalier, and though he did not then entrust me with his name, when I mentioned yours he seemed overwhelmed with joy.” Emily, unable to breathe freely, whispered, “Was it Valancourt?” Annette clasped her hands and cried, “It is Monsieur Valancourt! I knew it would be Monsieur Valancourt!”

Ludovico, encouraged by this, continued more openly. “Yes, signora, it was indeed the Chevalier Valancourt. He asked how you came to know he was in the castle, and whether you had ordered me to speak with him. The first question I could not answer, but to the second I said yes. At that he seemed transported with joy, so much so that I feared his feelings would betray him to the sentinel at the door.” Emily, forgetting now all command of herself, asked question after question. “How did he look? Was he ill? Was he melancholy from long

confinement?" Ludovico replied, "As to melancholy, I saw little sign of it while I was with him, for he seemed in such spirits as joy alone can give. His face was all animation; and if one may judge from that, he was very well."

"Did he send me no message?" Emily said. "O yes, signora," replied Ludovico, searching in his bosom. "He said he would have written if he had had pen and ink, and he was beginning a long message when the sentinel came in. But not before he had given me this." He then drew forth a miniature, which Emily received with trembling hands and instantly recognized. It was the very portrait of herself which her mother had so strangely lost in the fishing-house at La Vallée. Tears of mingled tenderness and joy filled her eyes while Ludovico repeated Valancourt's words. "'Tell your lady,' he said, 'that this has been my companion and only solace in all my misfortunes. Tell her I have worn it next my heart, and that I send it back only in the hope of soon receiving it again from her own hands.'"

Emily could scarcely support the emotion these words occasioned. She pressed the little portrait to her lips, then hid it for a moment in her bosom, as if even Ludovico's faithful eyes should not witness so sacred a movement of feeling. At length she said, "How shall I ever repay your zeal? But tell me when you may see him again." Ludovico answered that this depended wholly on the guards, among whom there were not more than one or two from whom he would dare ask admittance to the prison-chamber. "Still," he added, "if I can get to him, I will do it. He bade me return with your answer, and said that then he would tell me more than he had courage to do in my first visit."

Emily struggled a little with herself, but love and pity were now stronger than hesitation. "Then you must tell him," she said, "that I have received the picture—and with the feelings he wished. Tell him that I have suffered much, and still suffer." She paused, then added more steadily, "Tell him that my heart is unchanged." Annette, who had listened in silent delight, now broke out at once. "And tell him, Ludovico, that if he wants to see my lady, there is no safe place in the castle except the corridor by her chamber, and no safe hour except when all the signors are asleep—which I dare say is never!" Emily checked the freedom of this speech, but not its substance. "You may mention those circumstances," she

said to Ludovico, blushing deeply, “and leave the place and hour to his own judgment and opportunity.”

When Ludovico withdrew, carrying this answer, Emily remained for a long time unable either to read or to think connectedly. Joy had come too suddenly after despair. Valancourt lived; he had remembered her through all misfortunes; he had preserved the lost miniature next his heart; and there was now at least a possibility that they might meet again. These reflections rose and fell within her like waves of light over a troubled sea. Yet with them came fear in equal measure—fear for the danger of his confinement, fear for the rashness of any interview, fear lest hope itself might only sharpen future sorrow. Still, for the first time in many weary months, the future no longer appeared wholly dark before her.

Part 30

On the following morning, before Ludovico finally departed with Emily’s message, she desired him to remain a little longer and relate the adventure from which Blanche and her father had so lately escaped. Annette, whose joy in seeing him safe had scarcely yet spent itself, declared that she would hear every word from the beginning to the end, and that no person living knew better than herself that Château-le-Blanc had long been haunted. Emily, blushing a little at this reminder of former terrors, answered, “If your spirits can be proved by plain facts, Annette, Ludovico has perhaps done more than all philosophers to establish them.” Ludovico smiled, bowed, and then began his story with that honest simplicity which gave even common things an air of truth.

“You remember, madam,” he said, “the night when I sat up in the north chamber. While my lord and Monsieur Henri remained there with me, nothing happened to alarm us, and when they were gone, I made up the fire, took a book, and tried to keep my mind easy. Yet I will confess this much—I did not wholly forget the old tales. More than once, when the wind shook the casements and the tapestry stirred, I looked round me with something less than perfect courage. ‘There is nothing here but stone and old cloth,’ I said; but my heart did not always

believe what my tongue said."

He paused a moment, and Annette cried eagerly, "I knew it! I knew you were frightened all the while, and only wished to look brave before the Count." Ludovico laughed and answered, "Well, mistress Annette, if I was frightened, I had reason enough before the night was over. Toward midnight, while I still sat by the hearth, I heard a noise behind the arras, then another, and before I could draw my sword fairly, two men sprang upon me from a hidden door. I fought as well as I might, but a third came behind, and in a moment they had overpowered me." Emily listened with fixed attention, and even Annette was too much interested to interrupt again.

"They carried me," continued Ludovico, "through a secret passage and down to the vaults beneath the castle, where several others of the same gang were waiting. There I found that the ghosts of Château-le-Blanc were plain flesh and blood, though bad enough to be devils in another sense. They bound me at first, but when they saw I had some spirit and could keep counsel where it suited me, they changed their manner. One of them said, 'Serve with us, and you may yet live well. Refuse, and you shall be thrown where no one will hear you again.' I answered little, because I wished first to understand what sort of men I had fallen among."

"I soon found," he went on, "that they were pirates, who for many years had hidden their spoil in the vaults of the château, the place being near the sea and admirably fitted for secrecy. To keep all curious people away, they had laboured to spread the report that the north apartments were haunted, and, having discovered the private way into those chambers after the death of the old Marchioness, they did this without much difficulty. Strange sounds, lights at midnight, steps where no human foot was supposed to pass—these were enough for country people, especially when once they had begun to fear. The old servants left the house, the tale grew, and the rogues were as safe in the vaults as if the walls had been built for them." Emily said, "Then the terrible mystery had no spirit in it after all." "No spirit but villainy, madam," replied Ludovico.

He then explained why the pirates had not been content with the cave alone.

“A cave,” he said, “might be searched by chance, but the vaults under a haunted château were secure so long as nobody dared approach them. There they brought in the spoil taken on the sea, and there it remained till it could be sold through smugglers and mountain banditti, with whom they trafficked in every desperate way. Among such men I lived till my lord arrived. The hardest part of that time was not danger, but silence; for I could not reveal myself without ruining all.” He added this with such feeling that Emily saw how much fidelity as well as courage his conduct had required.

“When at last I discovered that the Count and his family had fallen into the very place, and almost into the very snare, of these villains,” said he, “my blood ran cold. Had I shown myself too soon, they would have murdered us all to preserve their secret. I therefore watched their motions narrowly, and the moment I overheard a plan laid for plundering and killing the whole party, I found means to warn some of my lord’s attendants. Soon after, when the Lady Blanche disappeared, my lord demanded her in such a tone that concealment became impossible. Then I rushed forward, called out, ‘Treachery, my lord! Defend yourself!’ and from that moment there was nothing but swords, pistols, confusion, and cries till we had mastered the chief of them.” Annette clasped her hands. “And all this while,” she said, “we thought you either dead or turned into a robber yourself!”

Ludovico smiled again, then grew more serious. “I would rather have died than become one of them,” he said. “Yet I will own they made the choice plain enough. It was either seem to join them, or perish before help could ever come. If I deceived them, I deceived only that I might save better people than they.” Emily answered warmly, “And much praise is due to you, Ludovico, for both prudence and courage. My friends owe their lives in great measure to your conduct.” At this he coloured like a man more ashamed of praise than proud of it, and said only, “I did what honesty required.”

When the tale was ended, Emily thanked him once more and begged that, if opportunity allowed, he would not fail to carry her answer safely to Valancourt. “I will watch for the occasion as if my own life depended on it,” he replied.

Annette then drew him aside for a few moments, partly to ask a hundred small questions, partly to rejoice over him in her own lively way; and when at length he mounted to depart, she looked after him with tears that did not prevent smiling. Emily herself followed him with anxious eyes from the window till he disappeared among the trees. “There goes,” she said softly, “one who has served love and friendship better than many who speak of them finely.”

On the following day Count De Villefort and Blanche arrived at La Vallée, according to their promise, and their presence brought with it that mixture of comfort and sadness which affectionate society gives to an oppressed mind. Blanche embraced Emily with the tenderness of a sister and soon perceived, though without remarking too plainly, that suffering had softened but not restored her friend. “You must come back with us,” she said, taking her hand. “You must not stay here alone with memory. At Château-le-Blanc we will try to make you at least less sorrowful.” Emily answered, “I know your kindness, dear Blanche, and it would be ungrateful to resist it long.”

The Count seconded the invitation with grave and paternal warmth. He spoke of the approaching marriage of Blanche and St. Foix, of the Baron’s wish to see the celebration take place at Château-le-Blanc, and of the satisfaction which Emily’s presence would give to everyone concerned. Even the Countess sent messages of civility more pressing than sincere, yet not improper to accept. Emily, though still attached by a thousand tender recollections to La Vallée, now felt more strongly than before the impropriety of remaining there quite alone, especially when Valancourt might again appear in the neighbourhood and when uncertainty still hung over his fate. “Perhaps change of place may do for me,” she said at last, “what solitude cannot.”

It was therefore settled that she should accompany her friends in a few days to Château-le-Blanc. During the short interval that followed, she walked often with Blanche among the groves and along the river, speaking sometimes of old sorrows, sometimes of future hopes, and sometimes sitting long together in a silence more healing than speech. Yet even amid this tender intercourse, Emily’s heart often turned away to one object only. At every sound of a horse upon the

road, at every message brought to the house, she started involuntarily, thinking of Ludovico and of Valancourt. “If no news comes before I leave La Vallée,” she thought, as evening fell upon the terrace, “I shall carry both hope and fear with me to Château-le-Blanc.”

Part 31

A few mornings later Emily left La Vallée with Count De Villefort, Blanche, and the Countess for Château-le-Blanc. The road led once more through scenes that would once have delighted her without effort, but now delight came only in broken moments. Blanche, whose own happiness was returning with every mile that brought her nearer to St. Foix, tried by gentle conversation to draw her friend out of sorrow. “You will like the sea again when you see it from the terraces,” she said. Emily answered with a faint smile, “Perhaps. Beauty has often done more for me than reason.” The Count, hearing this, looked at her with that grave kindness which had already begun to win her confidence.

When they reached the château, the place appeared less terrible than when Blanche had first described it, yet full of that deep and pensive grandeur which always touched Emily’s mind. The old woods, the sound of the distant sea, the terraces opening toward the south, and the ruins half mingled with newer parts of the building, all suited her melancholy rather than oppressed it. “This house has suffered as well as endured,” she said inwardly, while she looked up at the walls. The Count, observing the expression of her face, said kindly, “I hope, my dear Emily, you will not find our old dwelling too sad.” She replied, “No, sir. Sadness is not always painful. Sometimes it is the only companion that understands us.”

As they crossed the gardens, the Count met them with a warmth that at once dispelled much of Emily’s embarrassment. He advanced to receive her in a manner so benign that it recalled most powerfully the memory of her father, and for a moment gratitude overcame every other feeling. “You are welcome,” he said, taking her hand. “This house will be honoured if it can give you even a short refuge from uneasiness.” Before she could fully thank him, the Countess

approached with one of those fascinating smiles which her caprice sometimes allowed her to assume. “You must forgive our solitude,” she said. “We can offer you only woods, sea-air, and a little friendship.” Emily bowed and answered, “Those are gifts, madam, which many splendid houses cannot offer together.”

Emily had intended to ask leave to go almost immediately to the convent, where the abbess and the nuns had once shown her so much maternal care. But the invitation to remain a few days at the château was urged by the Count and even supported by the Countess with such an appearance of sincerity that refusal would have seemed almost ungrateful. She therefore consented, though not without inward reluctance, and that very day wrote to the abbess, informing her of her arrival in Languedoc and of her wish to be received once more as a boarder when propriety should allow her to retire thither. She also wrote to Monsieur Quesnel and to Valancourt, merely mentioning that she had returned to France. Since she knew not where the latter might then be stationed, she directed the letter to his brother’s seat in Gascony. “If it ever reaches him,” she thought, sealing it, “he will at least know that I am alive and near the scenes where we first were happy.”

In the evening Blanche and Monsieur Du Pont walked with Emily to the cottage of La Voisin. The path and the approach touched her deeply, for though time had softened the first violence of grief, it had not weakened the tenderness of recollection. La Voisin still sat at his door, with grandchildren playing before him on the grass, and with the same placid cheerfulness that had once soothed St. Aubert in his last hours. The old man recognized Emily immediately and rose with honest pleasure. “Ma’amselle!” he cried. “Then God has brought you safe again at last.” Emily took his hand and answered, “And has also been good to you, I see, for He has left your family still around you.”

“Yes, ma’amselle,” said La Voisin, smiling over the little group at his feet, “we all live merrily together yet, thank God, and I believe there is not a happier family in Languedoc than ours.” The simple words went to Emily’s heart. She could not trust herself to enter the chamber where her father had died, and after some little while passed in gentle conversation with the old man and his family,

she withdrew. As she left the cottage, Du Pont walked beside her in unusual silence. Blanche, who observed little beyond the sweetness of the evening, spoke cheerfully of the sea and the gardens; but Emily noticed with concern the deep, though restrained, dejection which often stole over the countenance of their companion.

During these first days of her stay at Château-le-Blanc, that silent melancholy of Du Pont became more and more evident. He avoided speaking of himself, yet his whole manner spoke for him more clearly than words could have done. Emily, who knew too well the danger of hopeless attachment, pitied the very self-delusion that kept him near her. “If he would only go,” she thought, “absence might do for him what reason cannot.” The Count also observed his friend closely, and at length Du Pont confessed to him the secret of his hopeless affection. The Count could only pity him, though he secretly began to hope that, in time, he might still become successful.

Emily, however, saw more truly what the case required. She determined that, as soon as gratitude and respect would permit, she would withdraw herself from a situation which could neither benefit Du Pont nor leave her own peace untouched. His departure was fortunately resolved on by himself before she was forced openly to shorten her stay for that reason alone. He announced that he would go on the following day to his family seat in Gascony. “I have remained too long already,” he said to the Count, with a smile more sad than composed. “The château is too hospitable, and I am too weak.” When he took leave of Emily, his countenance expressed so much love and grief together that she was touched with deeper gratitude and compassion than she could well conceal. “May you find all the happiness you deserve,” she said gently. “You have my sincere esteem always.” He bowed over her hand without trusting himself to reply fully.

In a few days Emily herself left the château, but not before the Count and Countess had obtained from her a promise to repeat her visit very soon. The Count pressed her hand at parting and said, “Remember that our friendship does not end because our roof ceases for a time to shelter you.” Blanche embraced her affectionately and added, “And remember too that I shall claim you for more than

one visit." Emily answered with warmth that was far from formal. "I shall remember everything you have made me feel here." Then, accompanied by proper attendants, she returned to the convent.

She was welcomed there with the same maternal kindness of the abbess and the same affectionate attentions of the nuns which she had formerly experienced. The well-known scenes awakened many melancholy recollections, yet with these came also gratitude for having escaped the dangers that had pursued her since she last quitted those peaceful walls. When she again knelt by her father's grave, her tears were those of tender affection rather than of the first wild anguish. "I am still sorrowful," she murmured, "but not wholly desolate." The quiet of the convent soothed her, though it did not restore her.

On the first evening after her return, the late extraordinary events at Château-le-Blanc became the subject of conversation in the parlour, and the nuns begged her to relate something of Ludovico's disappearance and of the hidden banditti. Emily spoke with caution and said only so much as truth and prudence allowed. Yet several of her hearers persisted in believing that no merely human agency could have carried him from the north apartments. "The château has long had an evil name," said Sister Frances. Emily answered calmly, "Its evil has been real enough, but it came from men, not spirits." Still, when she retired that night to her chamber, and the silence of the convent settled round her, she could not wholly keep her thoughts from returning both to the dark vaults of Château-le-Blanc and to the still darker uncertainties that yet remained unsolved in her own life.

Part 32

The quiet of the convent did not long remain without interruption, though the interruption came from friendship and not from danger. Blanche visited Emily often, sometimes with her father, sometimes alone, and always with that tender eagerness which seemed to make separation impossible for her affectionate heart. On one of these evenings the two friends walked together beyond the usual limits of the garden and then, as the hour drew on, turned again toward the monastery

buildings. Blanche, who loved the place for its peace but not for its strict retirement, said, “When I come here, I almost understand why some people give up the world. Yet, if I stayed long, I think my heart would begin to beat against the walls.” Emily answered, “Mine once desired this refuge only because I had known so much sorrow outside it.”

The evening was already deepening when they entered the outer grounds near the parlour. The monks had withdrawn toward the chapel at the sound of the vesper-bell, and the whole place wore an air of solemn repose. Through the dark branches of an old chestnut they could still see part of the sea, dim and wide, with one or two late sails gliding over it in the fading light. Blanche paused a moment to look. “This calm is almost too beautiful,” she said. Emily replied, “Yes, it is one of those hours that make us think more of what is gone than of what is to come.”

They found the parlour empty and sat down there for a little while before returning. The silence of the room, after the sound of the bell, seemed even deeper than before. They had not remained long when a nun entered hastily, looking for the abbess, and would have passed without noticing Emily if the latter had not spoken. The sister then stopped, recognized her, and, with visible concern, told her that a mass was being prepared for Sister Agnes, who had been declining for some time and was now believed to be dying. “She is in great misery,” said the nun. “Her body is weak, but her mind has suffered more. Even prayer hardly reaches her.”

Emily listened with painful interest, for the strange manners and broken confessions of Agnes had never wholly faded from her memory. “Is she conscious?” she asked. The sister answered, “At moments; but her thoughts pass quickly from sense into horror. She starts, listens, fixes her eyes on empty corners, and speaks as if she saw dreadful objects before her.” Blanche shuddered a little and drew closer to Emily. “Must we remain here to hear more of such misery?” she whispered. But Emily, moved by compassion as much as by curiosity, said, “If there is anything I can do, I ought not to leave yet.”

Soon after, the abbess herself appeared and, seeing Emily there, spoke to her

apart in a low voice. “Agnes has asked again for you,” she said. “I know not in what state you may find her, but, if your courage will permit, perhaps your presence may either soothe or explain something.” Emily hesitated only a moment. “I will come,” she replied. Blanche would have gone too, but the abbess, though kindly, desired that she should remain in the parlour. “What may now pass,” she said, “is not fit for many witnesses.” Blanche therefore yielded, though not without anxiety, and Emily followed the abbess through a silent corridor to the chamber of the dying nun.

The room was dimly lighted, and the air of sickness, prayer, and approaching death lay heavily over it. Agnes sat half raised among pillows, her face worn almost to a shadow, yet her eyes still burning with that strange inward fire which had once made her terror more dreadful than frenzy itself. When Emily entered, the nun fixed those eyes upon her with eager uncertainty, and then held out a trembling hand. “Come nearer,” she said. “I have seen your face in my thoughts till I thought it would rise from the grave against me. Come nearer, and let me know whether I dream.” Emily approached, and the abbess remained by the bed, grave and watchful.

After looking long at Emily, Agnes desired that a casket should be brought. One of the sisters obeyed, and the dying woman pointed to a little miniature within it. “Take it,” she said. “Look well, and then look in the mirror. You will see why I have feared you.” Emily received the picture and immediately perceived in it the likeness of the very portrait she had once found among her father’s papers. Her heart beat violently. “Whose face is this?” she asked. Agnes answered, “The face of one whom you resemble too nearly for chance. Keep it. It is yours by a claim stronger than I can bear to name.”

Before Emily could recover from the first shock of surprise, Agnes ordered that another miniature should be taken from a secret drawer in the casket. “Look now,” she said, with a mournful sternness, “and learn what guilt can make of beauty.” Emily obeyed and almost let the picture fall from her hand. It was the likeness of Signora Laurentini as she had seen it at Udolpho, the very face whose disappearance had once been followed by dark reports of murder. She gazed

alternately at the miniature and at the dying nun, trying in vain to trace the resemblance that time, suffering, and despair had nearly destroyed. “Then you are Laurentini,” she said at last. Agnes answered, “I was Laurentini. Look at me now, and remember what passion becomes when it is left to rule.”

Emily, breathless with wonder, asked by what means she had discovered the truth. “By the portrait at Udolpho,” she said, “and by the resemblance between that face and this.” At the word Udolpho the nun started violently. “Udolpho!” she cried. “And you have been there?” Emily answered that she had. “Then you know me indeed,” said Agnes. “And you are the daughter of the Marchioness.” Emily drew back, amazed and wounded at once. “No,” she replied firmly. “I am the daughter of Monsieur St. Aubert, and no stain rests on his honour or on that of my mother.” Agnes looked at her with a wild mixture of anguish and doubt. “At least,” she murmured, “I believed it possible. The likeness—her attachment before marriage—your father’s country—everything misled me.”

Emily, though shocked by the assertion, could not believe what it implied for a moment against her parents. Yet the mention of the Marchioness, joined to recollections of her father’s strange emotion when that lady had once been named, awakened a thousand painful questions. She begged Agnes to explain further. The nun answered only by groans and broken words. Then Emily, driven on by horror as much as by curiosity, spoke of Udolpho, of Laurentini’s sudden disappearance, of the west chamber, the black veil, and the dreadful object concealed behind it. At these words Agnes uttered a piercing shriek, half raised herself on the bed, and stretched her hands before her as if some bloody shape stood visible in the room. “There again!” she cried. “Come from the grave! Blood too! No—there was no blood—you shall not say there was blood!”

The violence of this agitation threw her at once into convulsions. Emily, unable any longer to support the scene, hurried from the chamber and sent the sisters in to the assistance of the abbess. When she returned to the parlour, Blanche and the boarders gathered anxiously round her, alarmed by her pale face and trembling voice. She avoided all direct explanation and said only that Sister Agnes seemed near death and had suffered another terrible attack. Blanche made her sit

down and supported her with real tenderness. “You must not remain here longer tonight,” she said. “Whatever this unhappy woman has told you, it has done enough already.”

They waited nevertheless till word came that the convulsions had ceased and that the dying nun had revived a little. Emily wished still to know whether she would live till morning, though she now dreaded any further interview. As she and Blanche were at last leaving the convent, the abbess appeared once more and drew Emily aside. “I have something of consequence to say to you,” she said, “something that ought no longer to be delayed. But it is now too late for such a subject. Come to me tomorrow, and I will tell you what duty has long kept hidden.” Emily promised obedience, though with a heart oppressed by expectation, and then went out with Blanche into the deepening woods.

The shades were already thick beneath the trees, and Blanche, less occupied than her friend by inward horror, felt the loneliness of the path more keenly. “I wish the evening were not so far gone,” she said. “These woods are beautiful by day, but at night they leave too much to the fancy.” Emily scarcely heard her. The words of Agnes, the pictures, the name of Laurentini, and the dark hint connected with the Marchioness de Villeroi all moved together through her mind in dreadful confusion. At length Blanche touched her arm and pointed forward along the dusky path. Two persons were slowly advancing there. Emily looked up, and, almost with relief, soon distinguished the voice of Monsieur Du Pont. His companion, when they came nearer, proved to be Monsieur Bonnac, whose grave and benevolent countenance Emily recognized with surprise, though not yet with full understanding of all that his presence near the convent might one day explain.

Part 33

During the night that followed her last interview with Sister Agnes, Emily scarcely slept at all. When she closed her eyes, she saw again the wasted face of the dying nun, the two miniatures laid together in her trembling hands, and the wild horror with which the name of Laurentini had returned from the grave of

memory. Her father's image too came often before her, but now surrounded by strange new lights and shadows. "What history have I touched at last?" she asked herself. "And why did he hide so much from me?" Yet, even in the midst of these agitating thoughts, no real doubt of his honour remained with her for a moment.

Early on the following morning a message from the abbess summoned her to the parlour. Emily obeyed immediately, though with a heart oppressed by expectation. The good lady received her with unusual solemnity and affection, and after making her sit beside her, remained for some moments silent, as if considering how she might best begin a painful duty. At length she said, "My dear Emily, circumstances which I have long been bound to conceal can now no longer be kept from you. Signora Laurentini's last declarations, and the contents of her will, have made silence itself a kind of wrong." Emily answered only, "Tell me all, madam. Uncertainty is now more dreadful than knowledge."

The abbess then informed her that Laurentini's will had just been opened before the superiors and Monsieur Bonnac, and that a large part of her personal property had been left to the nearest surviving relative of the late Marchioness de Villeroi. "That relative," she added gently, "is yourself." Emily looked at her in silent astonishment, scarcely understanding the words. "Myself!" she repeated at last. "Then I am connected with that unhappy lady?" The abbess bowed her head and replied, "You are. The late Marchioness was the sister of Monsieur St. Aubert."

This disclosure moved Emily more deeply than she could at first express. Many little circumstances, long remembered without explanation, now returned upon her mind in one clear light. She understood at once why her father had wept over a portrait she had once surprised him caressing, why he had started at La Voisin's mention of the Marchioness, and why he had wished to be buried near the monument of the Villerois. "And he concealed all this from me?" she said in a trembling voice. "Yes," replied the abbess, "from tenderness, not from distrust. The friar who attended him in his last hours recognized him as the brother of the Marchioness, and at his earnest request I also kept the secret."

The abbess then explained that some hints dropped by Laurentini in her dying hours, together with a confession of a most extraordinary nature, had made

further silence impossible. Emily listened in breathless attention, but the lady, though willing to tell all she knew, admitted that her knowledge was imperfect. “I can show you the connection,” she said, “but the whole story must be gathered from many fragments. Some part of it belongs to the past history of the Marchioness, and some to that miserable woman whom you knew as Sister Agnes.” Emily, whose mind was now strongly excited beyond even the first shock of surprise, answered, “Then let no part be hidden. I can bear truth better than darkness.”

The history that followed began in Italy, and with the name Laurentini di Udolpho. She had been the only child of noble parents and the heiress of the ancient house of Udolpho, near Venice. But she had received from her family no steady guidance, no firm rule, and no wise correction of her passions. Her wishes had been indulged when indulgence was easiest, and opposed violently when they interfered with the humour of others. “Thus,” said the abbess, “she learned not obedience, but victory. She was made passionate by resistance and reckless by success.”

After the death of both her parents in the same year, Laurentini was left almost wholly to herself, still young, admired for beauty, and mistress of a large fortune. She loved admiration, company, and display, yet had too little principle to value the esteem on which true reputation rests. She could be brilliant, charming, and fascinating when she wished to please, and her natural wit only made her more dangerous where her heart was not right. “She had every gift,” said the abbess sadly, “except self-command.” Emily, hearing this, remembered too painfully how often her own father had warned her against the dominion of uncontrolled feeling.

Among Laurentini’s many admirers at Venice was the Marquis de Villeroi, one of the most distinguished noblemen of France, then travelling in Italy. He saw her in the full splendour of youth and beauty and was quickly captivated. Laurentini, on her side, was no less struck by his figure, rank, and accomplishments. With all the art of which she was mistress, she concealed from him the darker traits of her character and persuaded him that beauty and brilliance

were joined in her with truth and delicacy. Before long he solicited her hand, and all around them believed the marriage certain.

Before the nuptials were completed, Laurentini retired for a while to the castle of Udolpho, and the Marquis followed her there. Removed from the restraints of public observation, her conduct became less guarded than before, and Villeroi began to suspect that he had judged too hastily. A closer inquiry soon convinced him that he had indeed been deceived, and that the woman he had designed for his wife possessed neither the innocence nor the steadiness which could make marriage honourable or secure. Yet he was still powerfully fascinated by her beauty and arts, and, though he delayed the marriage on various pretences, he did not at once renounce her. “He drew back from the precipice,” said the abbess, “but he still stood upon its edge.”

In this dangerous state of attachment he was suddenly called to France by affairs which admitted of no delay. Laurentini, alarmed at the change she perceived in him and fearful that absence would complete what doubt had begun, opposed his departure with all the passion of a violent heart. But he soothed her by repeated promises of return and even renewed, with fatal weakness, the hope of marriage at some future time. “I shall come back,” he told her. “I am forced away now, not changed.” Laurentini, though not satisfied, was compelled to submit, and he departed from Udolpho.

But when Villeroi reached France, another attachment, more pure and more deserving, soon determined his fate. The lady who became his wife was the sister of Monsieur St. Aubert. She possessed neither Laurentini’s dazzling powers nor her arts of fascination, but she had what Laurentini never had—gentleness, truth, and a heart fitted to inspire esteem as well as love. The Marquis, recovered at length from his illusion, married her, and his marriage was no sooner known in Italy than the intelligence struck Laurentini like a sentence of madness. “She had loved him as passion loves,” said the abbess, “with jealousy, pride, and desire of possession, not with that humility which belongs to tenderness.”

Her first transports were such as bordered on frenzy. She shut herself up for days, refused consolation, and then burst out into schemes of revenge or desperate

reconciliation which changed almost with every hour. Sometimes she vowed she would forget him. The next moment she swore that, if he would not return to her freely, she would pursue him even into France and force him at least to hear her misery. At last passion triumphed wholly over pride. “I will see him once more,” she cried. “He shall not think himself safe because he has crossed mountains and seas. He shall answer to me.” And with this fatal resolution Laurentini prepared to leave Italy and follow the Marquis into France.

Part 34

Laurentini travelled into France with all the impatience of a mind that mistakes violence for strength. She concealed her name, her family, and the true nature of her connection with the Marquis, for she knew that secrecy would best serve both revenge and hope. When she reached Languedoc, she soon learned that Villeroi was already married. The intelligence struck her at first with a kind of disbelief too proud to confess itself, and then with the full madness of jealousy. “He has deceived me,” she said. “He shall not deceive me and be happy too.”

Yet even then she did not abandon him. Passion, once become desperate, often clings more fiercely where it can no longer hope. Laurentini resolved to see him, if not as a lover, then as a destroyer of the peace he had taken from her. She found means to remain near the château of the Villerois without disclosing who she was, and by degrees she contrived interviews with the Marquis himself. His heart, though no longer pure, was still weak, and weakness is often more dangerous than vice because it yields where a firmer nature would struggle. He had married a woman worthy of the highest love, but his wife’s mild virtues could not at once break the memory of a passion that had begun in illusion and had been fed by concealment.

The Marchioness de Villeroi deserved a better fate than life had given her. In obedience to her father, she had married the Marquis, though her affections had once leaned elsewhere, and had entered his house with the sincere purpose of making duty supply what inclination had denied. She was gentle, pious,

affectionate, and entirely without art. But the very softness of her manner, which in a generous husband would have awakened constant tenderness, left her defenceless against suspicion in one whose vanity and jealousy were touched. She perceived with grief, not with anger, the change in Villeroi's conduct, and while she suffered from it, she sought only to recover his esteem.

Laurentini soon discovered enough of the Marchioness's earlier attachment to turn a possibility into a weapon. She read every look of uneasiness in the Marquis, encouraged every doubt, and added to both the most dangerous force of all—that of seeming proof. She conducted her plan with long patience and profound dissimulation. First she won again the confidence of Villeroi, or rather that fascination which survived his better judgment. Then, when she felt her power secure, she used it not to soften but to inflame him. "You are deceived in your own house," she would imply, or almost say. "The woman you call your wife has given her heart elsewhere."

The jealousy she awakened was no longer the jealousy of love, but of pride, wounded honour, and furious self-love. That made it more terrible. Before she fully trusted the Marquis with the false evidence she had gathered and shaped, Laurentini exacted from him a solemn promise that he would attempt no vengeance against the supposed rival. She knew his character too well. "Spare him," she urged in effect, "if only because he is not the chief offender." But in truth she spoke so only because she meant to drive all the force of his rage toward the innocent Marchioness. If the husband's hand did not strike the imagined lover, it would fall more certainly upon the wife.

The unhappy lady, meanwhile, knew nothing of the snare forming around her except by its effect in the altered manner of her husband. He became cold, abstracted, and often harsh in her presence. Sometimes he left her alone for many hours, and she wept in secret over his unkindness, forming humble little plans by which she might recover his affection. Her very innocence made suspicion easier to a mind already poisoned. She did not know how to defend what she had never imagined could be questioned. "If he is unhappy," she thought, "I must be more tender." Thus she bent more and more toward the very heart that was hardening

against her.

At last Laurentini brought her long design to its dreadful point. She showed Villeroi what she called proofs of his wife's infidelity and interpreted every former circumstance of the Marchioness's life by the light of that cruel lie. The Marquis, weakened already by passion, pride, and the subtle influence of the woman who had regained her hold upon him, yielded where horror should have made him recoil. He consented to a crime from which even then his soul must often have turned away in secret terror. A slow poison was administered to the Marchioness, and she fell gradually under its effect, ignorant almost to the last of the true cause of her suffering.

But if Laurentini believed that the death of her rival would secure her own triumph, she learned too late how vengeance punishes itself. The passion that had driven her onward died almost at the very moment it was gratified, and in its place rose pity, remorse, and horror too deep for relief. The Marquis, even before the victim was wholly gone, ceased to regard Laurentini as the object for whom he had destroyed his peace. He saw in her rather the minister and image of his guilt. The same arts which had once fascinated him now appeared infernal. Instead of making her his wife, he shrank from her presence. Thus the success for which she had sacrificed everything became the beginning of a misery that never afterwards left her.

The Marchioness died, and died under circumstances of sorrow which made her fate more moving still. She had entered marriage under obedience rather than love, had endeavoured honestly to fulfil all its duties, and had suffered in silence the loss of affection she had once hoped to gain. Her last letters, full of tenderness, submission, and grief, were afterwards preserved by her brother, Monsieur St. Aubert. It was over these letters that Emily had once seen him weeping. It was the portrait of this unfortunate sister that he had pressed to his lips in secret. And it was because of that sacred and disastrous history that he had desired to rest near the monument of the Villerois.

Villeroi himself did not long survive the inward ruin of his crime, though he was not buried with his wife. His end, however, belongs less to this part of the

story than the condition of Laurentini after the deed. Remorse seized her with such violence that reason itself seemed shaken. At one time she imagined she still saw the Marchioness alive and accusing her. At another she fancied the dead returning in blood before her eyes. Fits of frenzy alternated with long intervals of heavy, hopeless melancholy. Yet because she still loved the Marquis after her own manner, disappointed passion joined itself to remorse and made each madness worse.

In this state she withdrew at length into the convent where Emily had known her under the name of Sister Agnes. To disguise both her real history and the true cause of her retirement, she caused a false story to be spread concerning herself, and because the abbess then presiding had not known her in earlier days, the disguise was successful. Even there, however, peace did not return. Her conscience was too active, and the image of the Marchioness too deeply fixed in her mind. Though outwardly she submitted to the convent rule, inwardly she remained the prey of memory. Prayer itself could not wholly quiet what crime had armed against her.

After the first violence of despair had passed, one strange indulgence was allowed her by the physician who attended her. He believed that the only means of soothing her disturbed spirits was to let her walk at night in the woods near the monastery, attended by the servant who had come with her from Italy, and to play upon an instrument she loved. Sometimes she added to it the melody of her own voice, singing the most solemn and mournful airs of her country. Thus those midnight sounds, heard only at intervals and always with secrecy, joined themselves to old rumours and to the neglected state of the neighbouring château, till people believed not only the house but even the woods around it to be haunted. What had been guilt became legend, and legend increased terror.

Before her mind had wholly sunk into settled derangement, Laurentini made a will. In it she left a part of her jewels and property to the convent, another part to the wife of Monsieur Bonnac, who was an Italian relation of her own, and another to the nearest surviving relative of the late Marchioness de Villeroi. That relative, as the abbess now knew and Emily had just learned, was Emily herself.

This also explained why Laurentini, in her final frenzy, had fixed on Emily's face with so much horror. The resemblance between niece and aunt had often struck her before; but in the last broken state of her mind, when conscience kept the Marchioness always before her, she no longer saw resemblance only. She thought the injured woman herself had returned.

Hence too arose that terrible assertion that Emily was the daughter of the Marchioness. Laurentini knew that, before marriage, her rival had loved another man; and because guilt is quick to suspect in innocence what it has known in itself, she almost believed that the Marchioness had secretly sacrificed honour to passion as Laurentini herself had done. Yet in this she was wholly wrong. Emily was indeed related to the Marchioness, but only as the daughter of her brother. St. Aubert had hidden the truth from tenderness, fearing to awaken in his child a dangerous sensibility toward so disastrous a history. Thus at last many mysteries were explained, yet one still remained—the object behind the black veil at Udolpho, and the crime whose horror had made Laurentini herself believe, for a time, that she was guilty of murder there also.

Part 35

The abbess, who had resumed her narrative after a pause of much emotion, then removed the last terror that still hung over Laurentini's name. Of the crime which Emily, from the nun's frenzied confessions and from the dreadful spectacle in the west chamber of Udolpho, had so long suspected her to have committed, Laurentini was innocent. She had herself been deceived by appearances and by a conscience prepared to turn every horror into an accusation against itself. "She believed," said the abbess, "that she saw the dead return, because she had already raised them in her own mind. But the object that alarmed you had another origin."

Emily listened with a breathless eagerness almost equal to that with which she had first heard the name of the Marchioness de Villeroi connected with her own family. The abbess then explained the mystery of the black veil. What Emily had seen behind it was not a human corpse, but an artificial image, prepared with

dreadful skill in wax and coloured to imitate all the ghastliness of death and decay. Time, damp, and neglect had made the deception more horrible still. “Thus,” the abbess added, “a work of art, intended perhaps only for some secret purpose of fear or penance, became the instrument of superstitious terror to many minds more innocent than its maker’s.”

This explanation, though relieving one part of Emily’s horror, left her for a time almost as deeply agitated as before. The picture of her unfortunate aunt, the guilt of Laurentini, the innocence of the Marchioness, and the remembrance of her father’s concealed sorrow all pressed at once upon her heart. Yet the more she considered the whole, the more firmly she felt her confidence in St. Aubert justified and even exalted. “He suffered, and he was silent,” she said to herself. “He bore the memory of all this alone, rather than darken my youth with the shadow of such a story.” Tears came then, but they were tears of filial tenderness and reverence.

During the following days Emily remained more than ever within the quiet of the convent. Blanche visited her often, and Monsieur Bonnac also came several times, drawn not only by the affairs connected with Laurentini’s will, but by sincere interest in her peace. He was grave, benevolent, and unobtrusive, and his presence gave that sort of comfort which comes less from words than from a sense of integrity in the person who speaks them. More than once he conversed long with the abbess and afterwards with Count De Villefort, who listened to him with increasing respect. Emily, though she knew not yet what subject most engaged them, observed enough to feel that something important was passing.

Monsieur Du Pont, meanwhile, continued to suffer in that hopeless attachment which Emily could pity, but could never encourage. His manner toward her was more subdued than formerly, and the sorrow of it touched her more because it was restrained. One evening, after meeting Bonnac at the château, he seemed more than usually thoughtful. The next morning he asked a private interview with the Count, and from that interview came a change which Emily soon perceived, though she did not at first understand it. His tenderness remained, but it had now in it something of resignation and of recovered self-command.

The truth was, that Bonnac, in the course of a conversation which began upon Laurentini and ended upon very different subjects, had revealed what he knew of Valancourt's later life in Paris. He showed that the young man's errors, though serious and deeply to be lamented, had been exaggerated by malice and distorted by rumour. Valancourt had indeed been drawn into gaming and into dissipated company, but less by corruption of heart than by rashness, inexperience, wounded spirits, and the snares spread for him by others. "He was betrayed by his passions," said Bonnac, "but not abandoned by his conscience."

Du Pont heard this account with the justice of a generous mind and with the pain of one who feels that justice is a sacrifice. Bonnac told him further that Valancourt, after his imprisonment and after severe self-reproach, had recovered both clearer judgment and stronger command over himself. He described, too, that striking act of humanity by which Valancourt, with money scarcely enough for his own liberty, had ventured his last resource to restore Bonnac to freedom and to his afflicted family. "Such conduct," said Bonnac warmly, "belongs not to a depraved heart, but to one noble in its very errors." Du Pont could not deny the force of this testimony.

The same conversation deeply affected Count De Villefort. He remembered the unfavourable impressions made upon him in Paris, the reports he had too hastily believed, and the injury thus unconsciously done to a young man whom he had once sincerely esteemed. When Bonnac added that Valancourt's affection for Emily had survived all misfortune, all folly, and all humiliation, the Count's better feelings prevailed completely. "I have judged too much by appearances," he said. "The least reparation I can now make him is to hear him fairly and to let Emily hear him too." Bonnac answered that no man could ask a more honourable justice.

Yet delicacy made the Count resolve not to alarm Emily by uncertain hopes. He therefore wrote privately to Valancourt, asked his forgiveness for past injustice, and invited him to Château-le-Blanc. No hint of this was given to Emily. "Let certainty come before expectation," he said to Bonnac. "She has suffered enough already from suspense." Even Blanche, who guessed part of the truth from her

father's altered manner, was desired to preserve silence. Thus, while Emily believed herself still wholly abandoned to uncertainty, measures were already taking effect to restore her at once to truth and to happiness.

Du Pont, having learned all that honour required him to learn, now determined upon the only course left to a mind at once delicate and upright. He relinquished without bitterness the pursuit of Emily and prepared to withdraw from scenes where every look and every remembrance must keep alive a hopeless passion. When he took leave of her, his grief was softened by the generosity of his purpose. "May you know all the happiness you deserve," he said, and though Emily could answer only with tears and gratitude, he felt that he had not lost her esteem in losing every dearer hope. It was one of those sacrifices which wound deeply, yet leave dignity untouched.

Emily, ignorant of the fuller cause of these changes, only felt that some burden seemed to have been silently lifted from the house. The Count's manner toward her became, if possible, still more paternal; Blanche's affection more animated; and even the Countess, perceiving that attention and kindness were expected from her, laid aside for a time much of her ordinary coldness. Yet Emily's own heart remained divided between solemn recollection and tremulous hope. "Something is moving around me," she thought. "I do not know whether it belongs to sorrow or to joy, but I feel that my destiny is not yet at rest."

Part 36

During the day that followed these silent changes, Emily's mind was withdrawn from every other thought by one only. She now knew, though not fully by what means the knowledge had come, that some explanation was near; and yet that very nearness made her fear more than hope. If Valancourt had indeed been unjustly accused, why had he delayed so long to clear himself? If he had been guilty in part, how much of what she had believed must still remain true? Sometimes she reproached herself for wishing to hear him. The next moment she felt that, unless she did hear him, there could be no peace either for him or for

herself.

Toward evening a note was brought from Valancourt, written in visible disorder of mind and entreating that, if she would permit the interview at all, it might take place that very night instead of on the following morning. The lines were broken, hurried, and yet full of that tenderness which she knew too well how to understand. Emily, after reading them once, could scarcely support herself. She wished to see him, and yet feared the sight more than absence itself. At length, unable to decide by her own strength, she sought Count De Villefort in the library and placed the note silently in his hands.

The Count read it with attention, and then looked at her with grave compassion. “If you are able to support the meeting,” he said, “my opinion is that it should take place this evening. His affection for you is unquestionably sincere, and he appears to suffer as much suspense as yourself. The sooner this painful uncertainty ends, the better for both.” Emily heard him in silence, then bowed her head and answered, “If you think it right, sir, I will obey.” The Count pressed her hand kindly. “Courage, my dear Emily,” he said. “Truth, however severe, is still kinder than suspense.”

When she returned to her room, she attempted all those efforts of self-command which her father had once taught her, but never had she felt more how difficult such command becomes where the heart is most deeply interested. She walked to and fro, tried to read, tried to pray, sat down, rose again, and still no firmness came. Every object in the chamber seemed to remind her of former scenes, of Valancourt’s early love, of the mountains where she had first believed herself beloved, and of all that had since been lost in darkness and doubt. “If he is innocent,” she said, “why should I fear to see him? If he is guilty, why should I wish it?” Yet she knew that innocence and guilt were not now the only words by which human conduct could be measured, and that weakness itself might have become ruin.

At length a servant informed her that the Count desired to see her. Emily understood at once that Valancourt must be below. She rose, summoned all her remaining courage, and went slowly toward the library. But when she reached the

door, she felt her whole frame shaken so violently that she could not trust herself to enter. Fearing lest the first sight of him should overcome every power of speech and recollection, she turned back into the great hall and remained there for some minutes, leaning against one of the pillars in silent agitation. The sound of her own heart seemed louder to her than all else in the house.

While she still struggled there, the Count himself came out, not with surprise, but with that delicate humanity which knew how to spare shame while it relieved it. “He is with me,” said the Count in a low voice, “and he waits only your permission to speak. If you are unable to support the interview now, it shall be deferred.” Emily made an effort and answered, “No, sir. It must not be deferred. I have feared this hour too long already.” The Count then offered her his arm and led her gently into the room.

Valancourt was standing near the farther end of the library. At the sound of the opening door he turned, and for one instant neither he nor Emily seemed capable of motion. The change which suffering and repentance had wrought in him was visible even at that first glance. He was thinner, paler, and more subdued in expression than when she had last seen him, but the look with which he regarded her contained the same ardent sincerity, now chastened by sorrow, that had once won all her heart. Emily, on her side, appeared to him not less altered, though in another manner. The freshness of youth was softened into a graver tenderness, and grief had given to her whole countenance something at once more spiritual and more affecting.

Count De Villefort, after observing them for a moment with true concern, withdrew to a distant part of the room. Valancourt then advanced slowly and said, in a voice whose emotion could scarcely support the words, “You have consented to see me, then. There is already more mercy in that than I deserve.” Emily answered only by a slight motion of assent and sank into a chair near the table, for she had no strength to stand. He remained before her, but at some distance, as if even sorrow had not taught him to forget respect. “I come,” he added, “not to complain, not even to excuse myself fully, but to tell you the truth and to leave you free after hearing it to condemn me forever if you think I deserve it.”

“Speak plainly, then,” said Emily, after a long pause. “I have suffered much from uncertainty. Whatever pain truth may bring, it cannot be worse than ignorance.” Valancourt bowed his head. “You shall have truth,” he replied. “The reports you heard of me were not without foundation. I did go too often into bad company. I did game. I did waste time, fortune, and character in scenes unworthy of me and hateful now even to my memory. I was not false to my love, but I was false to myself.” Emily shuddered slightly, though she did not withdraw her eyes from his face.

Encouraged by the justice and not by the softness of that look, he continued. He described the first loneliness of Paris, the wounded pride and despondency with which he had entered a world already formed against him, the subtle arts by which idle companions had drawn him first into brilliant parties and then into gaming-houses, and the fatal mixture of vanity, grief, and restlessness which had made him easy to tempt. “I had lost you,” he said, “or thought I had. Everything that ought to have guided me seemed gone with that belief. I threw myself among men who praised what I should have despised, because praise from any quarter is dangerous to a weak spirit. But even then, Emily, even then, I never ceased to think of you with reverence. I degraded myself, but not the image I had of you.”

He then confessed more particularly the extent of his folly, the debts into which it had plunged him, the imprisonment that followed, and the severe but salutary remorse of those lonely months. His account was broken often by self-reproach and once by a silence during which Emily believed he could not proceed. At length he resumed with more steadiness, describing how, in that confinement, his former life returned upon him, not as a dream but as a sentence, and how every recollection of her served at once to humble and to save him. “I began there,” he said, “to understand what I had sacrificed, and how poor all those pleasures were that had helped to conceal my misery from me for an hour and then left it heavier than before.”

He next related the circumstance already in part known through Bonnac: the affecting meeting of that unhappy officer with his wife, the impression it made upon everyone who witnessed it, and the rash generosity by which he had

ventured his last resource to free his fellow-prisoner. “That act,” he said, “was perhaps the first done for many months in which I recognised myself again. It restored to me at least the hope that I was not wholly fallen. From that hour I made a vow that I have never since broken, and never shall. If I had nothing else to plead before you, I could still say this—that I have not returned to ask your esteem till I believed I had, in some degree, recovered my own.”

Emily had listened throughout with a conflict of feelings almost too severe for endurance. His confession wounded her, because she saw in it the truth of reports she had once tried wholly to reject; but his remorse, his openness, and that noble action toward Bonnac touched her more and more deeply as he went on. At length she said, not without tears, “Why did you not write this sooner? Why let me believe you wholly lost?” Valancourt answered with deep emotion, “Because I could not write till I had done something better than lament. Because I would not seek to move your pity before I had regained some right even to your esteem. And because shame—yes, Emily, shame—made me dread your judgment more than suffering itself.”

“And after all this,” she said, “what do you now expect from me?” He was silent for a moment and then replied, “Nothing that you cannot give without self-reproach. If you can forgive me, I shall bless Heaven though you still refuse me. If you can believe that my heart, in all its errors, was never false to you, I shall not have lived in vain. But if, after hearing all, you think me unworthy, speak it. I will not complain. I have taught myself long enough to fear your justice more than my own pain.” As he spoke these last words, the humility of his manner affected Emily perhaps even more than the tenderness of them.

She tried to answer, but for some moments her voice failed her. At length she said, “I cannot think lightly of what you have confessed. I should dishonour both myself and the lessons of my father if I did. But I see also that you accuse yourself more severely than I could wish to do, and that the faults which have afflicted me most were faults of weakness, not of a hardened heart.” Valancourt looked at her as if he scarcely dared understand what he heard. She went on, though with difficulty. “You have suffered. You have repented. You have acted generously

where you might have thought only of yourself. If I refused ever to trust those who have once erred, I should set severity above charity."

At these words all the long restraint of Valancourt's feeling gave way. He would have thrown himself at her feet, but she checked him by a gesture at once gentle and firm. "No," she said, blushing deeply through her tears, "not so. Let us both be calm if we can. I do not yet promise what my friends must hear and approve. But I say this—I do not withdraw my esteem, and I do not deny my affection." The effect of this avowal, so moderate in form and yet so full in meaning, overcame him more completely than any warmer declaration could have done. He covered his face for a moment with one hand, then said in a voice broken by gratitude, "You have given me more happiness than I deserve, and more than I hoped ever again to know."

Count De Villefort, who had long withdrawn his eyes from the scene from delicacy rather than indifference, now came forward. His own emotion was visible, though controlled. He asked Valancourt's forgiveness for the injustice he had unconsciously done him by believing evil too hastily, and he received in return an answer no less generous than sincere. "You judged," said Valancourt, "as many better men than I would have judged from the appearances against me. Let the remembrance of that error remain only as a warning to us both." The Count then turned to Emily and, laying a hand upon her shoulder with paternal kindness, said, "My dear child, I think your father himself would approve the spirit in which you have heard and forgiven."

The evening ended in a tranquillity more sweet because it had risen out of suffering. No formal engagement was yet renewed in words, but the understanding of every heart present was one and the same. Blanche, when she saw Emily afterwards, wept for joy, embraced her again and again, and declared that now the sea, the woods, the château, and the world itself seemed all restored to their proper beauty. Emily smiled, though still with tears. "Perhaps," she said, "they are only the same things seen with a lighter heart." Yet in that lighter heart there was now peace where there had long been only alternation between hope and anguish, and before she slept that night, she thanked God more humbly and

more gratefully than she had done for many months.

Part 37

The days that followed Emily's reconciliation with Valancourt were among the sweetest she had ever known, not because they were free from all seriousness, but because peace had at last succeeded to long and cruel agitation. Their intercourse, though now sanctioned by the Count and watched with kindness instead of suspicion, retained a tenderness chastened by remembrance of all they had suffered. Blanche rejoiced in their happiness scarcely less than in her own, and the whole château seemed changed by the influence of returning confidence and affection. "It is strange," said Emily one evening, as she stood with Valancourt upon the terrace above the sea, "that the same world which lately looked so dark can now appear almost beautiful again." He answered softly, "Perhaps it is not the world, but the heart that changes the light."

Count De Villefort, pleased alike by justice and by benevolence, now urged that no unnecessary delay should be thrown in the way of two unions which promised so much happiness to all concerned. The Baron St. Foix, whose gratitude for Blanche's tenderness and whose esteem for Emily had become stronger every day, entered warmly into this plan. Even the Countess, whose caprice was often governed by what looked most graceful in society, assumed upon this occasion an air of cheerful interest that, if not wholly sincere, was at least decorous and useful. Thus all external obstacles were removed, and preparations were soon made for celebrating at Château-le-Blanc the marriage of Blanche with St. Foix, and, at the same time, the long-delayed union of Emily with Valancourt.

During this interval Valancourt's whole conduct justified the confidence now restored to him. There was in his manner no longer the impetuous eagerness of early hope, nor the restless sorrow of doubtful affection, but a gentleness at once more manly and more touching. He seemed to value happiness the more because he had nearly lost it forever and to consider Emily not as the reward of passion,

but as the companion of a better life. More than once Count De Villefort observed him in silence and afterward said to Bonnac, “Suffering has corrected him where prosperity might only have flattered him. He is now what one could wish a young man to be, not because he has never erred, but because he has learned from error without bitterness.”

Emily herself, though deeply happy, did not surrender her mind to joy alone. The lessons of her father, the recollection of her mother, and the solemn history lately disclosed to her all remained present even in these bright days. She often visited the little turret room, the sea-terrace, or some quiet walk among the woods, where she could mingle gratitude with meditation. “I have not returned to the innocence of my first youth,” she said to Blanche, “because I now know too much of sorrow. But perhaps there is another kind of happiness, less light, yet safer and more lasting.” Blanche, whose own heart was too full of immediate joy for such reflections, kissed her affectionately and replied, “Then let us be content with both if we can.”

The morning fixed for the ceremonies rose calm and beautiful. A clear autumn light lay upon the sea and the woods, while the higher summits of the Pyrenees shone in a purer air than usual, as if even nature had put on serenity for the occasion. The chapel of the château, long neglected, had been prepared with simple elegance; flowers from the gardens were arranged there, and the old painted windows, touched by the sun, filled the place with softened colours. When Emily entered leaning on Count De Villefort’s arm, her dress, modest rather than splendid, suited well the quiet dignity of her beauty. Blanche, whose happiness gave a brighter bloom to every feature, looked almost like some youthful spirit of morning.

The ceremonies were performed with that union of solemnity and tenderness which makes the highest joy of life almost religious in its character. St. Foix, still somewhat pale from his late wound, but animated by deep feeling, could scarcely support the moment when Blanche’s hand was placed in his. Valancourt, more collected but not less moved, trembled only when he turned to look upon Emily and met in her eyes that full and gentle confidence which told him that forgiveness

and affection were now alike complete. Count De Villefort, though master of himself, was visibly affected during the service, and when it ended, he embraced both his daughter and Emily with tears he did not attempt wholly to conceal. “Be as happy,” he said, “as you deserve to be; that is all a father can wish, and almost more than he can dare to hope.”

The remainder of the day passed in that quiet festivity which belonged better to the place and to the characters of those assembled than any louder magnificence could have done. There was music in the saloon, but of a kind more tender than gay. There was cheerful society, but not that noisy mirth which mocks real feeling instead of accompanying it. The sea, visible through the windows, the old woods, the terraces, and the evening sky gave a grandeur and peace to the whole scene which no splendour of cities could have bestowed. Even the Countess, charmed by the universal satisfaction around her and pleased perhaps to appear amiable where no effort contradicted her vanity, forgot for a few hours her usual discontents.

When twilight came, Emily and Valancourt withdrew for a short time from the company and walked together upon the south terrace, where the last light still trembled over the distant water. Neither spoke for some moments. Their silence was one of those which language rather disturbs than relieves. At length Emily said, “How often have I thought that if ever happiness returned, I should scarcely know how to trust it.” Valancourt pressed her hand and answered, “We shall trust it best by deserving it. Let the remembrance of all we have suffered not darken our peace, but preserve it.” She looked at him with affectionate seriousness and replied, “Yes. Sorrow, if it has taught us wisdom, need not be an enemy even in happier days.”

Blanche and St. Foix, meanwhile, wandered with no less delight, though with a lighter gaiety, in another part of the grounds. The freshness of their happiness belonged more to hope than to recollection, yet even they had suffered enough to value the calm now granted them. Blanche, turning toward the old château, said smiling, “When I first came here, I thought only of romance and mystery. I did not know that real happiness would one day make the place dearer to me than all

its secrets." St. Foix answered, "Then let the mysteries remain only in the old rooms, and let us keep the sunshine." Her smile, her blush, and the look she gave him completed the reply more fully than words.

Before the evening was closed, Count De Villefort assembled the small family party once more in the cedar parlour, where so many painful as well as pleasing scenes had formerly passed. There, after some cheerful conversation, he spoke with more gravity than before of the future residence and plans of the young couples. It was agreed that Blanche and St. Foix should pass some time between the Baron's estate and Château-le-Blanc, while Emily and Valancourt, after a short interval, should return to La Vallée. At that name Emily's eyes filled instantly with tears, not of sorrow only, but of filial tenderness and grateful anticipation. "There," she said softly, "if peace may be found anywhere on earth, I think it will be found."

The Count, observing her emotion, replied with kindness, "And there, my dear Emily, I trust you will recover not only tranquillity but that cheerful pleasure which memory itself may at last allow. Your father's home should not be a place of grief forever." Valancourt added, "If I can help to make it once more what it was designed to be, I shall feel that my life has indeed begun anew." Emily answered him only by a look, but it expressed all that affection and gratitude could say. Thus the evening closed in calm felicity, and while the winds moved gently through the woods of Château-le-Blanc and the sea gave back its low eternal murmur, those who had so long been tried by fear, separation, injustice, and remorse at last resigned themselves without dread to the quiet happiness of hope fulfilled.

Part 38

After the first festivities at Château-le-Blanc had passed, Emily and Valancourt remained there only a few days longer, that they might not seem to fly too hastily even from happiness itself. Those days were spent in the calm society of friends who had known their sufferings and could therefore value their peace. Count De Villefort, Blanche, St. Foix, and Bonnac seemed to regard their union

not merely as a private joy, but as the right close of many trials that had touched them all. At length the hour of departure came, and Emily, though grateful to the château for sheltering so many dear scenes, turned toward La Vallée with a deeper and more home-like affection than she had ever felt for any other place on earth.

Theresa received them there with tears of unfeigned joy, and the old house, the grove, the river, and the familiar mountains seemed to welcome them with a thousand tender remembrances. Emily led Valancourt through the scenes most sacred to her memory and pointed out, with pensive love, the walks and little retreats her parents had preferred above all others. The present happiness of both was heightened rather than saddened by such recollections, because they felt that the peace now granted them would have had the full approbation of those whose goodness had first formed their minds. “If my father could see us here,” Emily said softly, “I think he would not sorrow that I have loved so faithfully.” Valancourt answered only by pressing her hand, for the place itself made all common language seem poor.

They went together at last to the plane-tree on the terrace, beneath whose branches he had first dared to declare his love, and where so many hopes and fears had since gathered round a single remembrance. There, with the river below, the evening light upon the distant land, and St. Aubert’s spirit present to both in every feature of the scene, they renewed to each other a promise more serious and more thoughtful than that of youthful passion. They resolved not merely to be happy, but to deserve happiness; not merely to enjoy the peace restored to them, but to use it well. “Let us remember always,” said Emily, “that sorrow has taught us what prosperity owes to others.” “Yes,” replied Valancourt, “and that superior blessings bring superior duties.”

Soon after their return, the brother of Valancourt came to congratulate them and to pay his respects to Emily. He was so much pleased both with her and with the rational prospect of happiness now opening before Valancourt that he immediately resigned to his brother a part of his rich domain, the whole of which, having no family of his own, would one day have descended to him in any case. This generosity relieved every former anxiety as to fortune and gave to their union

that secure ease which leaves the heart more free for the duties and charities of life. Emily, however, valued this accession less for splendour than because it removed from Valancourt every possible recollection of dependence or humiliation. “I would not have your peace,” she told him, “troubled by one thought that I had become rich while you remained poor.”

The estate at Thoulouse was then disposed of, and Emily purchased from Monsieur Quesnel the ancient domain of her father, the loss of which St. Aubert had never remembered without regret. Since she had no strong attachment to the estate of her aunt, and since the older domain was endeared to her by his birth, his childhood, and all the tender history of his family, she felt the purchase rather as a restoration than as an acquisition. To complete the pleasure of this act, she gave Annette a marriage portion and settled her as housekeeper there, while Ludovico was established as steward. Yet neither Emily nor Valancourt preferred that ampler property to the beloved shades of La Vallée, and they continued chiefly to reside there, passing only a few months of the year at the recovered domain in respectful remembrance of St. Aubert.

The legacy left to Emily by Laurentini she begged Valancourt to allow her to resign to Monsieur Bonnac, and he felt all the delicacy and generosity implied in the request. The castle of Udolpho itself descended to the wife of Bonnac, as the nearest surviving relation of that ancient house, and thus affluence restored to him both tranquillity and domestic comfort after long oppression. As for Emily and Valancourt, they had now no wish beyond what they possessed: the landscapes of their native country, the secure and enlightened pleasures of friendship, the means of relieving distress, and the quiet ambition of becoming daily more worthy of the blessings placed within their reach. Under their care the bowers of La Vallée became once more the retreat of goodness, wisdom, and domestic blessedness; and if suffering had once entered there, it remained only in memory as a lesson of patience, gratitude, and benevolence.

Thus it was shown, that though the vicious may, for a time, pour affliction upon the innocent, their power is transient and their punishment certain; while innocence, supported by patience, truth, and self-command, at last triumphs over

misfortune. The peace of Emily and Valancourt was not the mere delight of passion prospered, but the deeper felicity of minds refined by trial and united in esteem as much as in love. If they remembered sorrow, it was not to darken joy, but to render it more humble, more thoughtful, and more compassionate to others. And so, among the woods, the river, and the evening skies of La Vallée, where love first trembled and later endured so much, their long-tried hearts found at last a home, a duty, and a happiness that time itself seemed formed rather to deepen than destroy.