

ANN RADCLIFFE

THE
MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO

A Gothic Romance

READER'S EDITION

Edited by Sandra K. Williams

IDLE SPIDER BOOKS
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

THE MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO: A GOTHIC ROMANCE
(Reader's Edition) by Ann Radcliffe

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This edition has been copyedited to current American practice in respect to punctuation. Spelling has been standardized throughout using the author's preferred spelling when it could be determined. In some places words and phrases have been reordered—and in a few cases altered or removed—to flow more smoothly to modern ears and to improve ease of comprehension. Long passages of verse that aren't related to the story have been excised, the chapters have been renumbered, and the parts named and redistributed. However, no scenes, no events, and no descriptions have been removed: the work stands as Ann Radcliffe wrote it, polished for today's readers.

If you need an exact reproduction of the original text or extensive footnotes, you may prefer one of the many other editions that are available. This is the *reader's* edition, intended for whiling away a solitary evening, when of course those hollow sighings and those shapes flitting past your curtains are merely the sounds and shadows of nearby branches twisting in the wind . . .

ANN RADCLIFFE

THE
MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO

*Fate sits on these dark battlements, and frowns,
And, as the portals open to receive me,
Her voice, in sullen echoes through the courts,
Tells of a nameless deed.*



1

*Home is the resort
Of love, of joy, of peace and plenty; where,
Supporting and supported, polished friends
And dear relations mingle into bliss.*

JAMES THOMSON, *The Seasons*, "Autumn"

On the pleasant banks of the Garonne in the province of Gascony stood, in the year 1584, the château of Monsieur St. Aubert. From its windows were seen stretching along the river the pastoral landscapes of Guienne and Gascony, gay with luxuriant woods and vines, and plantations of olives. To the south the view was bounded by the majestic Pyrenees, whose summits, veiled in clouds or exhibiting awful forms seen and lost again as the vapours rolled along, were sometimes barren and gleamed through the blue tinge of air, and sometimes frowned with forests of gloomy pine that swept downward to their base. These tremendous precipices contrasted with the soft green of the pastures and woods that hung upon their skirts, among whose flocks and herds and simple cottages the eye, after having scaled the cliffs above, delighted to repose. To the north and to the east, the plains of Guienne and Languedoc were lost in the mist of distance; on the west, Gascony was bounded by the waters of Biscay.

Monsieur St. Aubert loved to wander with his wife and daughter on the margin of the Garonne, and to listen to the music that floated on its waves. He had known life in other forms than those of pastoral simplicity, having mingled in the gay and in the busy scenes of the world; but the flattering portrait of humankind which his heart had delineated in early youth, his experience had too sorrowfully corrected. Yet amidst the changing visions of life, his principles remained unshaken, his benevolence unchilled; and he retired from the multitude "more in *pity* than in anger"¹ to scenes of simple nature, to the pure delights of literature, and to the exercise of domestic virtues.

He was a descendant from the younger branch of an illustrious family, and it was designed that the deficiency of his patrimonial wealth should be supplied either by a splendid alliance in marriage, or by success in the intrigues

1. Reworded from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, "more in sorrow than in anger."

of public affairs. But St. Aubert had too nice a sense of honour to fulfil the latter hope, and too small a portion of ambition to sacrifice what he called happiness to the attainment of wealth. After the death of his father he married a very amiable woman, his equal in birth and not his superior in fortune. The late Monsieur St. Aubert's liberality, or extravagance, had so much involved his affairs that his son found it necessary to dispose of a part of the family domain, and some years after his marriage, he sold it to Monsieur Quesnel, the brother of his wife, and retired to a small estate in Gascony, where conjugal felicity and parental duties divided his attention with the treasures of knowledge and the illuminations of genius.

To this spot he had been attached from his infancy. He had often made excursions to it when a boy, and the impressions of delight given to his mind by the homely kindness of the grey-headed peasant to whom it was entrusted, and whose fruit and cream never failed, had not been obliterated by succeeding circumstances. The green pastures along which he had so often bounded in the exultation of health and youthful freedom, the woods under whose refreshing shade he had first indulged that pensive melancholy which afterwards made a strong feature of his character, the wild walks of the mountains, the river on whose waves he had floated, and the distant plains which seemed boundless as his early hopes—these were never after remembered by St. Aubert but with enthusiasm and regret. At length he disengaged himself from the world, and retired hither to realize the wishes of many years.

The building as it then stood was merely a summer cottage, rendered interesting to a stranger by its neat simplicity or the beauty of the surrounding scene; and considerable additions were necessary to make it a comfortable family residence. St. Aubert felt a kind of affection for every part of the fabric, which he remembered from his youth, and would not suffer a stone of it to be removed, so that the new building, adapted to the style of the old one, formed with it only a simple and elegant residence. The taste of Madame St. Aubert was conspicuous in its internal finishing, where the same chaste simplicity that characterized the manners of its inhabitants was observable in the furniture and in the few ornaments of the apartments.

The library occupied the west side of the château, and was enriched by a collection of the best books in the ancient and modern languages. This room opened upon a grove which stood on the brow of a gentle declivity that fell towards the river, and the tall trees gave it a melancholy and pleasing shade; while from the windows the eye caught beneath the spreading branches the gay and luxuriant landscape stretching to the west, overlooked on the left by the bold precipices of the Pyrenees. Adjoining the library was a greenhouse stored with scarce and beautiful plants; for one of the amusements of St. Aubert was the study of botany, and he often passed the day in the pursuit of his favourite science among the neighbouring mountains, which afforded a luxurious feast

to the mind of the naturalist. He was sometimes accompanied in these little excursions by Madame St. Aubert and frequently by his daughter when, with a small willow basket to receive plants and another filled with cold refreshments, they wandered away among the most romantic and magnificent scenes. When weary of sauntering among cliffs that seemed scarcely accessible but to the steps of the enthusiast, and where no track appeared on the vegetation but what the foot of the goatlike izard² had left, they would seek one of those green recesses which so beautifully adorn the bosom of these mountains, where under the shade of the lofty larch or cedar they enjoyed their simple repast, made sweeter by the waters of the cool stream that crept along the turf and by the breath of wildflowers and aromatic plants that fringed the rocks.

Adjoining the eastern side of the greenhouse, looking towards the plains of Languedoc, was a room which Emily called hers and which contained her books, her drawings, her musical instruments, and some favourite plants. Here she usually exercised herself in elegant arts cultivated only because they were congenial to her taste and in which native genius, assisted by the instructions of Monsieur and Madame St. Aubert, made her an early proficient. The windows of this room were particularly pleasant; they descended to the floor, opening upon the little lawn that surrounded the house, and the eye was led between groves of almond, palm, flowering ash, and myrtle to the distant landscape where the Garonne wandered. There the peasants of this gay climate were often seen on an evening when the day's labour was done, dancing in groups on the margin of the river. Their sprightly melodies and debonaire steps, and the fanciful figure of their dances gave a character to the scene entirely French.

The front of the château, which opened upon the grandeur of the mountains to the south, was occupied on the ground floor by a rustic hall and two excellent sitting rooms. The first floor, for the cottage had no second story, was laid out in bedchambers, except one apartment that opened to a balcony and which was generally used for a breakfast room.

In the surrounding ground, St. Aubert had made very tasteful improvements; yet such was his attachment to objects he had remembered from his boyish days, he had in some instances sacrificed taste to sentiment. There were two old larches that shaded the building and interrupted the prospect; St. Aubert had sometimes declared that he believed he should have been weak enough to have wept at their fall. In addition to these larches he planted a little grove of beech, pine, and mountain ash. On a lofty terrace formed by the swelling bank of the river rose a plantation of orange, lemon, and palm trees, whose fruit in the coolness of evening breathed delicious fragrance. With these were mingled a few trees of other species. Here, under the ample shade of a plane

2. A type of goat antelope also known as the Pyrenean chamois.

tree that spread its majestic canopy towards the river, St. Aubert loved to sit in the fine evenings of summer with his wife and children, watching beneath its foliage the setting sun, the mild splendour of its light fading from the distant landscape till the shadows of twilight melted its various features into one tint of sober grey. Here, too, he loved to read, and to converse with Madame St. Aubert, or to play with his children, resigning himself to the influence of those sweet affections which are ever attendant on simplicity and nature. He often said, while tears of pleasure trembled in his eyes, that these were moments infinitely more delightful than any passed amid the brilliant and tumultuous scenes that are courted by the world. His heart was occupied; it had what can be so rarely said: no wish for a happiness beyond what it experienced. The consciousness of acting right diffused a serenity over his manners which nothing else could impart to a man of moral perceptions like his.

The deepest shade of twilight did not send him from his favourite plane tree. He loved the soothing hour when the last tints of light die away; when the stars, one by one, tremble through aether and are reflected on the dark mirror of the waters; that hour which, of all others, inspires the mind with pensive tenderness and often elevates it to sublime contemplation. When the moon shed her soft rays among the foliage, he still lingered, and his pastoral supper of cream and fruits was often spread beneath it. Then, on the stillness of night, came the song of the nightingale, breathing sweetness and awakening melancholy.

The first interruptions to the happiness he had known since his retirement were occasioned by the death of his two sons. He lost them at that age when infantine simplicity is so fascinating, and though, in consideration of Madame St. Aubert's distress, he restrained the expression of his own and endeavoured to bear it with philosophy, he had in truth no philosophy that could render him calm to such losses. One daughter was now his only surviving child; while he watched the unfolding of her infant character with anxious fondness, he endeavoured with unremitting effort to counteract those traits in her disposition which might hereafter lead her from happiness. She had discovered in her early years uncommon delicacy of mind, warm affections, and ready benevolence; but with these was observable a degree of susceptibility too exquisite to admit of lasting peace. As she advanced in youth, this sensibility gave a pensive tone to her spirits and a softness to her manner which added grace to beauty and rendered her a very interesting object to persons of a congenial disposition.

But St. Aubert had too much good sense to prefer a charm to a virtue, and had penetration enough to see that this charm was too dangerous to its possessor to be allowed the character of a blessing. He endeavoured, therefore, to strengthen her mind, to inure her to habits of self-command, to teach her to reject the first impulse of her feelings, and to look with cool examination upon the disappointments he sometimes threw in her way. While he instructed her to resist first impressions and to acquire that steady dignity of mind that

can alone counterbalance the passions and, as far as is compatible with our nature, bear us above the reach of circumstances, he taught himself a lesson of fortitude; for he was often obliged to witness with seeming indifference the tears and struggles which his caution occasioned her.

St. Aubert cultivated her understanding with the most scrupulous care. He gave her a general view of the sciences, and an exact acquaintance with every part of elegant literature. He taught her Latin and English, chiefly that she might understand the sublimity of their best poets. She discovered in her early years a taste for works of genius; and it was St. Aubert's principle, as well as his inclination, to promote every innocent means of happiness.

"A well-informed mind," he would say, "is the best security against the contagion of folly and of vice. The vacant mind is ever on the watch for escape from the languor of idleness. Store it with ideas, teach it the pleasure of thinking, and the temptations of the world without will be counteracted by the gratifications derived from the world within."

It was one of Emily's earliest pleasures to ramble among the scenes of nature. Nor was it in the soft and glowing landscape that she most delighted; she loved more the wild wood-walks that skirted the mountain, and still more the mountain's stupendous recesses, where the silence and grandeur of solitude impressed a sacred awe upon her heart and lifted her thoughts to the God of heaven and earth. In scenes like these she would often linger along, rapt in a melancholy charm, till the last gleam of day faded from the west, till the lonely sound of a sheep-bell or the distant bark of a watchdog were all that broke on the stillness of the evening. Then the gloom of the woods, the trembling of their leaves at intervals in the breeze, the bat flitting on the twilight, the cottage lights now seen and now lost—these were circumstances that awakened her mind into effort, and led to enthusiasm and poetry.

Her favourite walk was to a little fishing house belonging to St. Aubert. This structure lay in a woody glen on the margin of a rivulet that descended from the Pyrenees and, after foaming among their rocks, wound its silent way beneath the shades it reflected. Above the woods that screened this glen rose the lofty summits of the Pyrenees, which often burst boldly on the eye through the glades below. Sometimes only the shattered face of a rock crowned with wild shrubs was seen, or a shepherd's cabin seated on a cliff, overshadowed by dark cypress or waving ash. Emerging from the deep recesses of the woods, the glade opened to the distant landscape, where the rich pastures and vine-covered slopes of Gascony gradually declined to the plains; and there, on the winding shores of the Garonne, groves and hamlets and villas, their outlines softened by distance, melted into one rich harmonious tint.

This fishing house was also the favourite retreat of St. Aubert, to which he frequently withdrew from the fervour of noon with his wife, his daughter, and his books; or came at the sweet evening hour to welcome the silent dusk or

to listen for the music of the nightingale. Sometimes, too, he brought music of his own, and awakened every fairy echo with the tender accents of his oboe; and often had the tones of Emily's voice drawn sweetness from the waves over which they trembled.

It was in one of these excursions that she observed the following lines written with a pencil on a part of the wainscot near the window:

Go, pencil! faithful to thy master's sighs!
Go—tell the goddess of the fairy scene,
When next her light steps wind these wood-walks green,
Whence all his tears, his tender sorrows, rise;
Ah! paint her form, her soul-illumin'd eyes,
The sweet expression of her pensive face,
The lightning smile, the animated grace—
The portrait well the lover's voice supplies,
Speaks all his heart must feel, his tongue would say;
Yet ah! not all his heart must sadly feel!
How oft the flowret's silken leaves conceal
The drug that steals the vital spark away!
And who that gazes on that angel-smile,
Would fear its charm, or think it could beguile!

These lines were not inscribed to any person; Emily therefore could not apply them to herself, though she was undoubtedly the nymph of these shades. Having glanced round the little circle of her acquaintance without being detained by a suspicion as to whom the lines could be addressed, she was compelled to rest in uncertainty, an uncertainty which would have been more painful to an idle mind than it was to hers. The little vanity the sonnet had excited—for the incertitude which forbade her to presume upon having inspired the lines, forbade her also to disbelieve it—passed away, and the incident was dismissed from her thoughts amid her books, her studies, and the exercise of social charities.

Soon after this period, her anxiety was awakened by the indisposition of her father, who was attacked with a fever which gave a severe shock to his constitution. Madame St. Aubert and Emily attended him with unremitting care, but his recovery was very slow; and as he advanced towards health, Madame St. Aubert seemed to decline.

The first scene he visited after he was well enough to take the air was his favourite fishing house. A basket of provisions was sent thither, with books and Emily's lute; for fishing tackle he had no use, for he never could find amusement in torturing or destroying.

After employing himself for about an hour in botanizing, dinner was served.

It was a repast to which gratitude for being again permitted to visit this spot gave sweetness; and family happiness once more smiled beneath these shades. Monsieur St. Aubert conversed with unusual cheerfulness; every object delighted his senses. The refreshing pleasure from the first view of nature after the pain of illness and the confinement of a sick-chamber is above the conceptions, as well as the descriptions, of those in health. The green woods and pastures, the flowery turf, the blue concave of the heavens, the balmy air, the murmur of the limpid stream, and even the hum of every little insect of the shade seem to revivify the soul and make mere existence bliss.

Madame St. Aubert, reanimated by the cheerfulness and recovery of her husband, was no longer sensible of the indisposition which had lately oppressed her; and as she sauntered along the wood-walks of this romantic glen and conversed with him and with her daughter, she often looked at them alternately with a degree of tenderness that filled her eyes with tears. St. Aubert observed this more than once and gently reproved her for the emotion; but she could only smile, clasp his hand and that of Emily, and weep the more. He felt the tender enthusiasm stealing upon himself in a degree that became almost painful; his features assumed a serious air, and he could not forbear secretly sighing: *Perhaps I shall sometime with hopeless regret look back to these moments as the summit of my happiness. But let me not misuse them by useless anticipation; let me hope I shall not live to mourn the loss of those who are dearer to me than life.*

To relieve, or perhaps to indulge, the pensive temper of his mind, he bade Emily fetch the lute she knew how to touch with such sweet pathos. As she drew near the fishing house, she was surprised to hear the tones of the instrument utter a plaintive air whose exquisite melody engaged all her attention. She listened in profound silence, afraid to move from the spot lest the sound of her steps should disturb the musician or occasion her to lose a note of the music. Everything without the building was still, and no person appeared. She continued to listen till her surprise and delight was succeeded by timidity, a timidity increased by a remembrance of the pencilled lines she had formerly seen.

While she hesitated, the music ceased. After a momentary pause, she gathered courage to advance to the fishing house, which she entered with faltering steps and found unoccupied! Her lute lay on the table; everything seemed undisturbed, and she began to believe it was another instrument she had heard till she remembered that, when she followed Monsieur and Madame St. Aubert from this spot, her lute was left on a window seat. She felt alarmed yet knew not wherefore; the melancholy gloom of evening and the profound stillness of the place, interrupted only by the light trembling of leaves, heightened her fanciful apprehensions, and she was desirous of quitting the building, but perceived herself grow faint and sat. As she tried to recover herself, the pencilled lines on the wainscot met her eye. She started as if she had seen a stranger,

but endeavouring to conquer the tremor of her spirits, she rose and went to the window. To the lines before noticed she now perceived that others were added, in which her name appeared.

Though no longer suffered to doubt that they were addressed to herself, she was as ignorant as before by whom they could be written. While she mused, she thought she heard the sound of a step without the building, and again alarmed, she caught up her lute and hurried away. Monsieur and Madame St. Aubert she found on a little path that wound along the sides of the glen.

Having reached a green summit shadowed by palm trees and overlooking the valleys and plains of Gascony, they seated themselves on the turf; and while their gaze wandered over the glorious scene and they inhaled the sweet breath of flowers and herbs, Emily played and sang several of their favourite airs with the delicacy of expression in which she so much excelled.

Music and conversation detained them in this enchanting spot till the sun's last light slept upon the plains, till the white sails that glided upon the Garonne became dim, and the melancholy but not unpleasing gloom of evening stole over the landscape. St. Aubert and his family rose, and left the place with regret; alas! Madame St. Aubert knew not that she left it forever.

When they reached the fishing house, Madame St. Aubert missed her bracelet and recollected that she had taken it from her arm after dinner, and had left it on the table there in the fishing house when she went to walk. After a long search, she was compelled to resign herself to the loss of it. What made this bracelet valuable to her was that attached to it was a miniature of her daughter, which was esteemed a striking resemblance and had been painted only a few months before. When Emily was convinced that the bracelet was really gone, she blushed and became thoughtful. That some stranger had been in the fishing house during her absence, her lute and the additional lines of a pencil had already informed her; from the purport of these lines it was not unreasonable to believe that the musician, the poet, and the thief were the same person. But though the music she had heard, the written lines she had seen, and the disappearance of the picture formed a combination of circumstances very remarkable, she was irresistibly restrained from mentioning them—secretly determining, however, never again to visit the fishing house without Monsieur or Madame St. Aubert.

They returned pensively to the château, Emily musing on the incident which had just occurred, St. Aubert reflecting with placid gratitude on the blessings he possessed, and Madame St. Aubert somewhat disturbed and perplexed by the loss of her daughter's picture. As they drew near the house, they observed an unusual bustle about it; the sound of voices was distinctly heard, servants and horses were seen passing between the trees, and at length the wheels of a carriage rolled along. The front of the château came within view; on the little lawn before it was a landau, with steaming horses. St. Aubert perceived the

liveries of his brother-in-law, and in the parlour he found Monsieur and Madame Quesnel already entered. They had left Paris some days before and were on the way to their estate ten leagues distant from La Vallée, the same estate which Monsieur Quesnel had purchased several years before from St. Aubert.

Monsieur Quesnel was the only brother of Madame St. Aubert; but the ties of relationship having never been strengthened by congeniality of character, the intercourse between them had not been frequent. This gentleman had lived altogether in the world: his aim had been consequence; splendour was the object of his taste; and his address and knowledge of character had carried him forward to the attainment of almost all that he had courted. By a man of such a disposition, it is not surprising that the virtues of St. Aubert should be overlooked; or that St. Aubert's pure taste, simplicity, and moderated wishes were considered as marks of a weak intellect and confined views. The marriage of his sister with St. Aubert had been mortifying to his ambition, for Monsieur Quesnel had designed that the matrimonial connection she formed should assist him to attain the consequence which he so much desired, and some offers were made her by persons whose rank and fortune flattered his warmest hope.

But his sister, who was then addressed also by St. Aubert, perceived, or thought she perceived, that happiness and splendour were not the same, and she did not hesitate to forgo the last for the attainment of the former. Whether Monsieur Quesnel thought them the same or not, he would readily have sacrificed his sister's peace to the gratification of his own ambition, and on her marriage with St. Aubert, he expressed in private his contempt of her spiritless conduct and of the connection which it permitted. Madame St. Aubert, though she concealed this insult from her husband, felt perhaps for the first time resentment lighted in her heart; and though a regard for her own dignity united with considerations of prudence restrained her expression of this resentment, there was ever after a mild reserve in her manner towards Monsieur Quesnel, which he both understood and felt.

In his own marriage he did not follow his sister's example. His lady was an Italian and an heiress by birth, and was by nature and education a vain and frivolous woman.

They now determined to pass the night with St. Aubert and, as the château was not large enough to accommodate their servants, the latter were dismissed to the neighbouring village. When the first compliments were over and the arrangements for the night made, Monsieur Quesnel began the display of his intelligence and his connections while St. Aubert, who had been long enough in retirement to find these topics recommended by their novelty, listened with a degree of patience and attention which his guest mistook for the humility of wonder. Monsieur Quesnel, indeed, described the few festivities which the turbulence of that period permitted to the court of Henry the Third with a minuteness that somewhat recompensed for his ostentation, but when he came

to speak of the character of the Duke de Joyeuse, of a secret treaty which he knew to be in negotiation with the Ottoman Empire, and of the light in which Henry of Navarre was received, Monsieur St. Aubert recollected enough of his former experience to be assured that his guest could be only of an inferior class of politicians and that, from the importance of the subjects upon which he committed himself, he could not be of the rank to which he pretended to belong. The opinions delivered by Monsieur Quesnel were such as St. Aubert forbore to reply to, for he knew that his guest had neither humanity to feel, nor discernment to perceive, what is just.

Madame Quesnel, meanwhile, was expressing to Madame St. Aubert her astonishment that she could bear to pass her life in this remote corner of the world, as she called it, and describing, from a wish probably of exciting envy, the splendour of the balls, banquets, and processions which had just been given by the court in honour of the nuptials of the Duke de Joyeuse with Marguerite of Lorraine, the sister of the queen. She described with equal minuteness the magnificence she had seen and that from which she had been excluded, while Emily's vivid fancy as she listened with the ardent curiosity of youth heightened the scenes she heard of. Madame St. Aubert, looking on her family as a tear stole to her eye, felt that though splendour may grace happiness, virtue only can bestow it.

"It is now twelve years, St. Aubert," said Monsieur Quesnel, "since I purchased your family estate."

"Somewhere thereabout," replied St. Aubert, suppressing a sigh.

"It is near five years since I have been there," resumed Quesnel, "for Paris and its neighbourhood is the only place in the world to live in, and I am so immersed in politics and have so many affairs of moment on my hands that I find it difficult to steal away even for a month or two." St. Aubert remaining silent, Monsieur Quesnel proceeded, "I have sometimes wondered how you, who have lived in the capital and have been accustomed to company, can exist elsewhere; especially in so remote a country as this, where you can neither hear nor see anything, and can in short be scarcely conscious of life."

"I live for my family and myself," said St. Aubert. "I am now contented to know only happiness; formerly I knew life."

"I mean to expend thirty or forty thousand livres on improvements," said Monsieur Quesnel, without seeming to notice the words of St. Aubert, "for I design next summer to bring here my friends, the Duke de Durefort and the Marquis Ramont, to pass a month or two with me." To St. Aubert's enquiry as to these intended improvements, he replied that he should take down the whole east wing of the château and raise upon the site a set of stables. "Then I shall build," said he, "a *salle à manger*, a *salon*, a *salle au commune*,³ and

3. A dining room, a formal reception room, and a living room.

a number of rooms for servants; for at present there is not accommodation for a third part of my own people.”

“It accommodated our father’s household,” said St. Aubert, grieved that the old mansion was to be thus improved, “and that was not a small one.”

“Our notions are somewhat enlarged since those days,” said Monsieur Quesnel. “What was then thought a decent style of living would not now be endured.” Even the calm St. Aubert blushed at these words, but his anger soon yielded to contempt when Monsieur Quesnel continued, “The ground about the château is encumbered with trees; I mean to cut some of them down.”

“Cut down the trees too!” said St. Aubert.

“Certainly. Why should I not? They interrupt my prospects. There is a chestnut which spreads its branches before the whole south side of the château, and which is so ancient that they tell me the hollow of its trunk will hold a dozen men. Your enthusiasm will scarcely contend that there can be either use or beauty in such a sapless old tree as this.”

“Good God!” exclaimed St. Aubert. “You surely will not destroy that noble chestnut, which has flourished for centuries, the glory of the estate! It was in its maturity when the present mansion was built. How often in my youth have I climbed among its broad branches and sat embowered amidst a world of leaves, while the heavy shower has pattered above and not a raindrop reached me! How often I have sat with a book in my hand, sometimes reading, and sometimes looking out between the branches upon the wide landscape and the setting sun, till twilight came and brought the birds home to their little nests among the leaves! How often—but pardon me,” added St. Aubert, recollecting that he was speaking to a man who could neither comprehend nor allow his feelings, “I am talking of times and feelings as old-fashioned as the taste that would spare that venerable tree.”

“It will certainly come down,” said Monsieur Quesnel. “I believe I shall plant some Lombardy poplars among the clumps of chestnut that I shall leave along the avenue. Madame Quesnel is partial to the poplar, and tells me how much it adorns a villa of her uncle, not far from Venice.”

“On the banks of the Brenta, indeed,” said St. Aubert, “where its spiry form is intermingled with the pine and the cypress, and where it plays over light and elegant porticos and colonnades, it unquestionably adorns the scene; but among the giants of the forest, and near a heavy Gothic mansion—”

“Well, my good sir,” said Monsieur Quesnel, “I will not dispute with you. You must return to Paris before our ideas can at all agree. But apropos of Venice, I have some thoughts of going thither next summer; events may call me to take possession of that same villa, too, which they tell me is the most charming that can be imagined. In that case I shall leave the improvements I mention to another year, and I may, perhaps, be tempted to stay some time in Italy.”

Emily was somewhat surprised to hear him talk of being tempted to remain

abroad, after he had mentioned his presence to be so necessary at Paris that it was with difficulty he could steal away for a month or two, but St. Aubert understood the self-importance of the man too well to wonder at this trait, and the possibility that these projected improvements might be deferred gave him a hope that they might never take place.

Before they separated for the night, Monsieur Quesnel desired to speak with St. Aubert alone, and they retired to another room, where they remained a considerable time. The subject of this conversation was not made known to Emily and her mother; but whatever it might be, St. Aubert when he returned to the supper room seemed much disturbed, and a shade of sorrow that alarmed Madame St. Aubert sometimes fell upon his features. When they were alone she was tempted to enquire the occasion of it, but the delicacy of mind which had ever appeared in his conduct restrained her; she considered that, if St. Aubert wished her to be acquainted with the subject of his concern, he would not wait on her enquiries.

On the following day Monsieur Quesnel had a second conference with St. Aubert, and after dining at the château, the guests set out in the cool of the day for Epourville, whither they gave him and Madame St. Aubert a pressing invitation prompted rather by the vanity of displaying their splendour than by a wish to make their friends happy.

Emily returned with delight to the liberty which their presence had restrained, to her books, her walks, and the rational conversation of Monsieur and Madame St. Aubert, who seemed to rejoice no less that they were delivered from the shackles which arrogance and frivolity had imposed.

Madame St. Aubert excused herself from sharing their usual evening walk, complaining that she was not quite well, and St. Aubert and Emily went out together.

They chose a walk towards the mountains, intending to visit some old pensioners of St. Aubert, which from his very moderate income he contrived to support, though it is probable Monsieur Quesnel with his very large one could not have afforded this.

After distributing to his pensioners their weekly stipends, listening patiently to the complaints of some, redressing the grievances of others, and softening the discontents of all with the look of sympathy and the smile of benevolence, St. Aubert and Emily returned home through the woods, "where at fall of eve the fairy people throng."⁴

"The evening gloom of woods was always delightful to me," said St. Aubert, whose mind now experienced the sweet calm which results from the consciousness of having done a beneficent action, and which disposes it to receive pleasure from every surrounding object. "I remember that in my youth

4. James Thomson, *The Seasons*, "Summer."

this gloom used to call forth to my fancy a thousand fairy visions and romantic images; and I own, I am not yet wholly insensible of that high enthusiasm which wakes the poet's dream: I can linger with solemn steps under the deep shades, send forward a transforming eye into the distant obscurity, and listen with thrilling delight to the mystic murmuring of the woods."

"O my dear father," said Emily, while a sudden tear started to her eye, "how exactly you describe what I have felt so often, and which I thought nobody had ever felt but myself! But hark! here comes the sweeping sound over the wood-tops; now it dies away; how solemn the stillness that succeeds! Now the breeze swells again. It is like the voice of some supernatural being—the voice of the spirit of the woods, that watches over them by night. Ah! what light is yonder? But it is gone. And now it gleams again, near the root of that large chestnut. Look, sir!"

"Are you such an admirer of nature," said St. Aubert, "and so little acquainted with her appearances as not to know that for the glowworm? But come," added he gaily, "step a little further, and we shall see fairies, perhaps; they are often companions. The glowworm lends his light, and they in return charm him with music and the dance. Do you see nothing tripping yonder?"

Emily laughed. "Well, my dear sir," said she, "since you allow of this alliance, I may venture to own I have anticipated you, and almost dare venture to repeat some verses I made one evening in these very woods."

"Nay," replied St. Aubert, "dismiss the *almost*, and venture quite; let us hear what vagaries fancy has been playing in your mind. If she has given you one of her spells, you need not envy those of the fairies."

"If it is strong enough to enchant your judgment, sir," said Emily, "while I disclose her images, I need *not* envy them. The lines go in a sort of tripping measure, which I thought might suit the subject well enough, but I fear they are too irregular." Saying which, she recited several lines of verse in honor of the glowworm.

Whatever St. Aubert might think of the stanzas, he would not deny his daughter the pleasure of believing that he approved them; having given his commendation, he sank into a reverie, and they walked on in silence.

St. Aubert continued silent till he reached the château, where his wife had retired to her chamber. The languor and dejection that had lately oppressed her and which the exertion called forth by the arrival of her guests had suspended, now returned with increased effect. On the following day symptoms of fever appeared, and St. Aubert, having sent for medical advice, learned that her disorder was a fever of the same nature as that from which he had lately recovered. Indeed, she had taken the infection during her attendance upon him, and her constitution being too weak to throw out the disease immediately, it had lurked in her veins and occasioned the heavy languor of which she had complained.

St. Aubert, whose anxiety for his wife overcame every other consideration, detained the physician in his house. He remembered the feelings and the reflections that had called a momentary gloom upon his mind on the day when he had last visited the fishing house in company with Madame St. Aubert, and he now admitted a presentiment that this illness would be a fatal one. But he effectually concealed this from her and from his daughter, whom he endeavoured to reanimate with hopes that her constant assiduities would not be unavailing. The physician, when asked by St. Aubert for his opinion of the disorder, replied that the event of it depended upon circumstances which he could not ascertain.

Madame St. Aubert seemed to have formed a more decided opinion, but her eyes only gave hints of this. She frequently fixed them upon her anxious friends with an expression of pity and of tenderness, as if she anticipated the sorrow that awaited them; that seemed to say it was for their sakes only, for their sufferings, that she regretted life. On the seventh day, the disorder was at its crisis. The physician assumed a graver manner, which she observed, and she took occasion when her family had once quitted the chamber to tell him that she perceived her death was approaching.

“Do not attempt to deceive me,” said she, “I feel that I cannot long survive. I am prepared for the event; I have long, I hope, been preparing for it. Since I have not long to live, do not suffer a mistaken compassion to induce you to flatter my family with false hopes. If you do, their affliction will only be the heavier when it arrives. I will endeavour to teach them resignation by my example.”

The physician was affected; he promised to obey her, and told St. Aubert, somewhat abruptly, that there was nothing to expect. The latter was not philosopher enough to restrain his feelings when he received this information, but a consideration of the increased affliction which the observance of his grief would occasion his wife enabled him, after some time, to command himself in her presence. Emily was at first overwhelmed with the intelligence; then, deluded by the strength of her wishes, a hope sprang up in her mind that her mother would yet recover, and to this she pertinaciously adhered almost to the last hour.

The progress of this disorder was marked on the side of Madame St. Aubert by patient suffering. The composure with which she awaited her death could be derived only from the retrospect of a life governed, as far as human frailty permits, by a consciousness of being always in the presence of the Deity and by the hope of a higher world. But her piety could not entirely subdue the grief of parting from those whom she so dearly loved. During these her last hours, she conversed much with St. Aubert and Emily on the prospect of futurity and on other religious topics. The resignation she expressed, with the firm hope of meeting in a future world the friends she left in this, and the effort which sometimes appeared to conceal her sorrow at this temporary

separation, frequently affected St. Aubert so much as to oblige him to leave the room. Having indulged his tears awhile, he would dry them and return to the chamber with a countenance composed by an endeavour which did but increase his grief.

Never had Emily felt the importance of the lessons which had taught her to restrain her sensibility so much as in these moments, and never had she practised them with a triumph so complete. But when the last was over, she sank at once under the pressure of her sorrow, and then perceived that it was hope as well as fortitude which had hitherto supported her. St. Aubert was for a time too devoid of comfort himself to bestow any on his daughter.



2

*I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul.*

SHAKESPEARE, *Hamlet*

Madame St. Aubert was interred in the neighbouring village church; her husband and daughter attended her to the grave, followed by a long train of the peasantry who were sincere mourners of this excellent woman.

On his return from the funeral, St. Aubert shut himself in his chamber. When he came forth, it was with a serene countenance, though pale in sorrow. He gave orders that his household should attend him. Emily only was absent; she, overcome with the scene she had just witnessed, had retired to her closet to weep alone. St. Aubert followed her thither. He took her hand in silence while she continued to weep, and it was some moments before he could so far command his voice as to speak. It trembled while he said, "My Emily, I am going to prayers with my household; you will join us. We must ask support from above. Where else ought we to seek it—where else can we find it?"

Emily checked her tears and followed her father to the parlour, where, the servants being assembled, St. Aubert read in a low and solemn voice the evening service, and added a prayer for the soul of the departed. During this his voice often faltered, his tears fell upon the book, and at length he paused. But the sublime emotions of pure devotion gradually elevated his views above this world, and finally brought comfort to his heart.

When the service was ended and the servants were withdrawn, he tenderly kissed Emily and said, "I have endeavoured to teach you from your earliest youth the duty of self-command; I have pointed out to you the great importance

of it through life, not only as it preserves us in the various and dangerous temptations that call us from rectitude and virtue, but as it limits the indulgences which are termed virtuous, yet which, extended beyond a certain boundary, are vicious, for their consequence is evil. All excess is vicious; even that sorrow which is amiable in its origin becomes a selfish and unjust passion, if indulged at the expense of our duties—by our duties I mean what we owe to ourselves, as well as to others. The indulgence of excessive grief enervates the mind, and almost incapacitates it for again partaking of those various innocent enjoyments which a benevolent God designed to be the sunshine of our lives. My dear Emily, recollect and practise the precepts I have so often given you, and which your own experience has so often shewn you to be wise.

“Your sorrow is useless. Do not receive this as merely a commonplace remark, but let reason *therefore* restrain sorrow. I would not annihilate your feelings, my child, I would only teach you to command them; for whatever may be the evils resulting from a too-susceptible heart, nothing can be hoped from an insensible one; that, on the other hand, is all vice—vice, of which the deformity is not softened or the effect consoled for by any semblance or possibility of good. You know my sufferings and are, therefore, convinced that mine are not the light words which on these occasions are so often repeated to destroy even the sources of honest emotion, or which merely display the selfish ostentation of a false philosophy. I will shew my Emily that I can practise what I advise. I have said thus much because I cannot bear to see you wasting in useless sorrow for want of that resistance which is due from mind, and I have not said it till now because there is a period when all reasoning must yield to nature; that is past.”

Emily smiled through her tears. “Dear sir,” said she, and her voice trembled; she would have added, “I will shew myself worthy of being your daughter,” but a mingled emotion of gratitude, affection, and grief overcame her. St. Aubert suffered her to weep without interruption, and then began to talk on common topics.

The first person who came to condole with St. Aubert was a Monsieur Barreaux, an austere and seemingly unfeeling man. A taste for botany had introduced them to each other, for they had frequently met in their wanderings among the mountains. Monsieur Barreaux had retired from the world, and almost from society, to live in a pleasant château on the skirts of the woods near La Vallée. He also had been disappointed in his opinion of mankind, but he did not, like St. Aubert, pity and mourn for them; he felt more indignation at their vices than compassion for their weaknesses.

St. Aubert was somewhat surprised to see him for, though he had often pressed Monsieur Barreaux to come to the château, he had never till now accepted the invitation; and now he came without ceremony or reserve, entering the parlour as an old friend. The claims of misfortune appeared to have

softened down all the ruggedness and prejudices of his heart. St. Aubert unhappy seemed to be the sole idea that occupied his mind. It was in manners, more than in words, that he appeared to sympathize with his friends: he spoke little on the subject of their grief, but the minute attention he gave them, and the modulated voice and softened look that accompanied it, came from his heart and spoke to theirs.

At this melancholy period St. Aubert was likewise visited by Madame Cheron, his only surviving sister, who had been some years a widow and now resided on her own estate near Toulouse. In her condolences, words were not wanting; she understood not the magic of the look that speaks at once to the soul, or the voice that sinks like balm to the heart. But she assured St. Aubert that she sincerely sympathized with him, praised the virtues of his late wife, and then offered what she considered to be consolation. Emily wept unceasingly while she spoke; St. Aubert was tranquil, listened to what she said in silence, and then turned the discourse upon another subject.

At parting she pressed her brother and her niece to make her an early visit. "Change of place will amuse you," said she, "and it is wrong to give way to grief."

St. Aubert acknowledged the truth of these words, of course, but at the same time felt more reluctant than ever to quit the spot which his past happiness had consecrated. The presence of his wife had sanctified every surrounding scene, and each day, as time gradually softened the acuteness of his suffering, assisted the tender enchantment that bound him to home.

But there were calls which must be complied with, and of this kind was the visit he paid to his brother-in-law Monsieur Quesnel. An affair of an interesting nature made it necessary that he should delay this visit no longer, and wishing to rouse Emily from her dejection, he took her with him to Epourville.

As the carriage entered upon the forest that adjoined his paternal domain, his eyes once more caught the turreted corners of the château. He sighed to think of what had passed since he was last there, and that it was now the property of a man who neither revered nor valued it. At length he entered the chestnut avenue, whose lofty trees had so often delighted him when a boy and whose melancholy shade was now so congenial with the tone of his spirits. Every feature of the edifice, distinguished by an air of heavy grandeur, appeared successively between the branches of the trees—the broad turret, the arched gateway that led into the courts, the drawbridge, and the dry moat which surrounded the whole.

The sound of carriage wheels brought a troop of servants to the great gate, where St. Aubert alighted and from which he led Emily into the Gothic hall, now no longer hung with the arms and ancient banners of the family. These were displaced, and the oak wainscotting and beams that crossed the roof were painted white. The large table, too, that used to stretch along the upper end of the hall, where the master of the mansion loved to display his hospitality

and whence the peal of laughter and the song of conviviality had so often resounded, was now removed; even the benches that had surrounded the hall were no longer there. The heavy walls were hung with frivolous ornaments, and everything that appeared denoted the false taste and corrupted sentiments of the present owner.

St. Aubert followed a gay Parisian servant to a parlour, where sat Monsieur and Madame Quesnel, who received him with a stately politeness and, after a few formal words of condolence, seemed to have forgotten that they ever had a sister. Emily felt tears swell into her eyes, and then resentment checked them. St. Aubert, calm and deliberate, preserved his dignity without assuming importance, and Quesnel was depressed by his presence without exactly knowing wherefore.

After some general conversation, St. Aubert requested to speak with him alone; and Emily, being left with Madame Quesnel, soon learned that a large party was invited to dine at the château, and was compelled to hear that nothing which was past and irremediable ought to prevent the festivity of the present hour.

St. Aubert, when he was told that company were expected, felt a mixed emotion of disgust and indignation against the insensibility of Quesnel, which prompted him to return home immediately. But he was informed that Madame Cheron had been asked to meet him, and when he looked at Emily and considered that a time might come when the enmity of her uncle would be prejudicial to her, he determined not to incur it himself by conduct which would be resented as indecorous by the very persons who now shewed so little sense of decorum.

Among the visitors assembled at dinner were two Italian gentlemen, of whom one was named Montoni, a distant relation of Madame Quesnel, a man about forty, of an uncommonly handsome person, with features manly and expressive, but whose countenance exhibited upon the whole more of the haughtiness of command and the quickness of discernment than of any other character. Signor Cavigni, his friend, appeared to be about thirty—inferior in dignity, but equal to him in penetration of countenance, and superior in insinuation of manner.

Emily was shocked by the salutation with which Madame Cheron met her father. “Dear brother,” said she, “I am concerned to see you look so very ill; do, pray, have advice!”

St. Aubert answered with a melancholy smile that he felt himself much as usual; but Emily’s fears made her now fancy that her father looked worse than he really did.

Had her spirits been less oppressed, Emily would have been amused by the new characters she saw and the varied conversation that passed during dinner, which was served in a style of splendour she had seldom seen before.

Of the guests, Signor Montoni was lately come from Italy, and he spoke of the commotions which at that period agitated the country; talked of party differences with warmth, and then lamented the probable consequences of the tumults. His friend, Signor Cavigni, spoke with equal ardour of the politics of his country; praised the government and prosperity of Venice, and boasted of its decided superiority over all the other Italian states. He then turned to the ladies and talked with the same eloquence of Parisian fashions, the French opera, and French manners; and on the latter subject he did not fail to mingle what is so particularly agreeable to French taste. The flattery was not detected by those to whom it was addressed, though its effect in producing submissive attention did not escape his observation. When he could disengage himself from the assiduities of the other ladies, he sometimes addressed Emily; but she knew nothing of Parisian fashions or Parisian operas, and her modesty, simplicity, and correct manners formed a decided contrast to those of her female companions.

After dinner, St. Aubert stole from the room to view once more the old chestnut which Quesnel talked of cutting down. As he stood under its shade and looked up among its branches, still luxuriant, and saw here and there the blue sky trembling between them, the pursuits and events of his early days crowded fast to his mind, with the figures and characters of friends long since gone from the earth, and he now felt himself to be almost an insulated being, with nobody but his Emily for his heart to turn to. He stood lost amid the scenes of years which fancy called up, till the succession closed with the picture of his dying wife, and he started away, to forget his loss, if possible, at the social board.

St. Aubert ordered his carriage at an early hour, and Emily observed that he was more than usually silent and dejected on the way home; but she considered this to be the effect of his visit to a place which spoke so eloquently of former times, not suspecting that he had a cause of grief which he concealed from her. On entering the château she felt more depressed than ever, for she more than ever missed the presence of that dear parent who whenever she had been from home used to welcome her return with smiles and fondness; now, all was silent and forsaken.

But what reason and effort may fail to do, time effects. Week after week passed away, and each as it passed stole something from the harshness of her affliction, till it was mellowed to that tenderness which the feeling heart cherishes as sacred. St. Aubert, on the contrary, visibly declined in health, though Emily, who had been so constantly with him, was almost the last person who observed it. His constitution had never recovered from the late attack of the fever, and the succeeding shock it received from Madame St. Aubert's death had produced its present infirmity. His physician now ordered him to travel, for it was perceptible that sorrow had seized upon his nerves, weakened as

they had been by the preceding illness; and variety of scene, it was probable, would by amusing his mind restore them to their proper tone.

The physician prescribed the air of Languedoc and Provence; and St. Aubert determined, therefore, to travel leisurely along the shores of the Mediterranean towards Provence.

For some days Emily was occupied in preparations to attend him, and he, by endeavours to diminish his expenses at home during the journey—a purpose which determined him at length to dismiss his domestics. Emily seldom opposed her father's wishes by questions or remonstrances, or she would now have asked why he did not take a servant; indeed she might have represented that his infirm health made one almost necessary. But on the eve of their departure when she found that he had dismissed Jacques, Francis, and Mary, and detained only Theresa, the old housekeeper, she was extremely surprised and ventured to ask his reason for having done so.

"To save expenses, my dear," he replied. "We are going on an expensive excursion."

They retired early to their chambers on the night before their departure. Emily had a few books and other things to collect, and the clock had struck twelve before she had finished and remembered that some of her drawing instruments which she meant to take with her were in the parlour below. As she went to fetch these, she passed her father's room and, perceiving the door half open, concluded that he was in his study—for, since the death of Madame St. Aubert, it had been frequently his custom to rise from his restless bed and go thither to compose his mind. When she was below stairs she looked into this room without finding him, and as she returned to her chamber, she tapped at his door. Receiving no answer, she stepped softly in to be certain whether he was there.

The room was dark except for a light that glimmered through some panes of glass that were placed in the upper part of a closet door. Emily believed her father to be in the closet and, surprised that he was up at so late an hour, apprehended he was unwell and determined to enquire. Considering that her sudden appearance at this hour might alarm him, she removed her light to the staircase, and then approached the closet. On looking through the panes of glass, she saw him seated at a small table with papers before him, some of which he was reading with deep attention and interest, during which he often wept and sobbed aloud.

Emily, who had come to the door to learn whether her father was ill, was now detained there by a mixture of curiosity and tenderness. She could not witness his sorrow without being anxious to know the subject of it, and she therefore continued to observe him in silence, concluding that those papers were letters of her late mother. Presently he knelt down and, with a look so solemn as she had seldom seen him assume and which was mingled with a

certain wild expression that partook more of horror than of any other character, he prayed silently for a considerable time.

When he rose, a ghastly paleness was on his countenance. Emily meant to retire hastily, but she saw him turn again to the papers, and she stopped. He took from among them a small case, and from thence a miniature picture. The rays of light fell strongly upon it, and she perceived it to be that of a lady, but not of her mother.

St. Aubert gazed earnestly and tenderly upon this portrait, put it to his lips and then to his heart, and sighed with a convulsive force. Emily could scarcely believe what she saw to be real. She never knew till now that he had a picture of any lady other than her mother, much less that he had one which he evidently valued so highly; but having looked repeatedly to be certain that it was not the resemblance of Madame St. Aubert, she became entirely convinced that it was designed for that of some other person.

At length St. Aubert returned the picture to its case; and Emily, recollecting that she was intruding upon his private sorrows, softly withdrew from the chamber.



3

*O how canst thou renounce the boundless store
Of charms which nature to her vot'ry yields!
The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields;
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
And all that echoes to the song of even;
All that the mountain's sheltering bosom shields,
And all the dread magnificence of heaven,
O how canst thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven!*

*.....
These charms shall work thy soul's eternal health,
And love, and gentleness, and joy, impart.*

JAMES BEATTIE, *The Minstrel*

St. Aubert, instead of taking the more direct road that ran along the feet of the Pyrenees to Languedoc, chose one that, winding over the heights, afforded more extensive views and greater variety of romantic scenery. He turned a little out of his way to take leave of Monsieur Barreaux, whom he found botanizing

in the wood near his château, and who, when he was told the purpose of St. Aubert's visit, expressed a degree of concern such as his friend had thought it was scarcely possible for him to feel on any similar occasion. They parted with mutual regret.

"If anything could have tempted me from my retirement," said Monsieur Barreaux, "it would have been the pleasure of accompanying you on this little tour. I do not often offer compliments; you may, therefore, believe me when I say that I shall look for your return with impatience."

The travellers proceeded on their journey. As they ascended the heights, St. Aubert often looked back upon the château in the plain below. Tender images crowded to his mind; his melancholy imagination suggested that he should return no more; and though he checked this wandering thought, still he continued to look till the haziness of distance blended his home with the general landscape, and St. Aubert seemed to "drag at each remove a lengthening chain."⁵

He and Emily continued sunk in musing silence for some leagues, from which melancholy reverie Emily first awoke, and her young fancy, struck with the grandeur of the objects around, gradually yielded to delightful impressions. The road now descended into glens confined by stupendous walls of rock, grey and barren except where shrubs fringed their summits or patches of meagre vegetation tinted their recesses, in which the wild goat was frequently browsing. And now the way led to the lofty cliffs, whence the landscape was seen extending in all its magnificence.

Emily could not restrain her transport as she looked over the pine forests of the mountains upon the vast plains that, enriched with woods, towns, blushing vines, and plantations of almonds, palms, and olives, stretched along till their various colours melted in distance into one harmonious hue that seemed to unite earth with heaven. Through the whole of this glorious scene the majestic Garonne wandered, descending from its source among the Pyrenees and winding its blue waves towards the Bay of Biscay.

The ruggedness of the unfrequented road often obliged the wanderers to alight from their little carriage, but they thought themselves amply repaid for this inconvenience by the grandeur of the scenes. While the muleteer led his animals slowly over the broken ground, the travellers had leisure to linger amid these solitudes, and to indulge the sublime reflections which soften the heart while they elevate and fill it with the certainty of a present God! Still the enjoyment of St. Aubert was touched with that pensive melancholy which gives to every object a mellow tint, and breathes a sacred charm over all around.

They had provided against a want of convenient inns by carrying a stock of provisions in the carriage, so that they might take refreshment on any pleasant

5. Oliver Goldsmith, *The Traveller*.

spot in the open air and pass the nights wherever they should happen to meet with a comfortable cottage. For the mind, also, they had provided, with a work on botany written by Monsieur Barreaux and works by several of the Latin and Italian poets, while Emily's pencil enabled her to preserve some of those combinations of forms which charmed her at every step.

The loneliness of the road, where only now and then was seen a peasant driving his mule or some mountaineer children at play among the rocks, heightened the effect of the scenery. St. Aubert was so much struck with it that he determined, if he could hear of such a road, to penetrate further among the mountains and, bending his way rather more to the south, to emerge into Roussillon and follow the Mediterranean coast to Languedoc.

Soon after midday, they reached the summit of one of those cliffs which, bright with the verdure of palm trees, adorn like gems the tremendous walls of the rocks, and which overlooked the greater part of Gascony and part of Languedoc. Here was shade, and the fresh water of a spring that, gliding among the turf under the trees, thence precipitated itself from rock to rock till its dashing murmurs were lost in the abyss, though its white foam was long seen amid the darkness of the pines below.

This was a spot well suited for rest, and the travellers alighted to dine, while the mules were unharnessed to browse on the savoury herbs that enriched this summit.

Seated in the shade of the palms to partake of their little repast, St. Aubert and Emily could with difficulty withdraw their attention from the surrounding objects. St. Aubert pointed out the course of the rivers, the situation of great towns, and the boundaries of provinces which science, rather than the eye, enabled him to describe. Notwithstanding this occupation, when he had talked awhile he suddenly became silent and thoughtful. Tears often swelled to his eyes, which Emily observed, and the sympathy of her own heart told her their cause. The scene before them bore some resemblance, though it was on a much grander scale, to a favourite one of the late Madame St. Aubert within view of the fishing house. They both observed this and thought how delighted she would have been with the present landscape, while they knew that her eyes must never, never more open upon this world. St. Aubert remembered the last time of his visiting that spot in company with her, and also the mournfully presaging thoughts which had then arisen in his mind and were now, even thus soon, realized! The recollections subdued him, and he abruptly rose from his seat and walked away to where no eye could observe his grief.

When he returned, his countenance had recovered its usual serenity; he took Emily's hand, pressed it affectionately without speaking, and soon after called to the muleteer, who sat at a little distance, concerning a road among the mountains towards Roussillon. The muleteer, Michael, said there were several that way, but he did not know how far they extended or even whether

they were passable. St. Aubert, who did not intend to travel after sunset, asked what village they could reach about that time. The muleteer calculated that they could easily reach Mateau, which was on their present road, but that if they took a road that sloped more to the south, towards Roussillon, there was a hamlet which he thought they could gain before the evening shut in.

St. Aubert after some hesitation determined to take the latter course. Michael having finished his meal and harnessed his mules, they again set forward but soon stopped, and St. Aubert saw the muleteer doing homage to a cross that stood on a rock impending over their way. Having concluded his devotions, he smacked his whip in the air and, in spite of the rough road and the pain of his poor mules which he had been lately lamenting, rattled in a full gallop along the edge of a precipice which made one dizzy to look down. Emily was terrified almost to fainting, and St. Aubert, apprehending still greater danger from suddenly stopping the driver, was compelled to sit quietly and trust his fate to the strength and discretion of the mules, who seemed to possess a greater portion of the latter quality than their master, for they carried the travellers safely into the valley, and there stopped upon the brink of the rivulet that watered it.

Leaving the splendour of extensive prospects, they now entered this narrow valley screened by “rocks on rocks piled, as by magic spell, here scorch’d with lightning, there with ivy green.”⁶

The scene of barrenness was here and there interrupted by the spreading branches of the larch and cedar, which threw their gloom over the cliff or athwart the torrent that rolled in the vale. No living creature appeared except the izard, scrambling among the rocks and often hanging upon points so dangerous that fancy shrank from the view of them. This was such a scene as the painter Salvator Rosa would have chosen, had he then existed, for his canvas; St. Aubert, impressed by the romantic character of the place, almost expected to see banditti start from behind some projecting rock, and he kept his hand upon the arms with which he always travelled.

As they advanced, the valley opened; its savage features gradually softened, and towards evening they were among heathy mountains stretched in far perspective, along which was heard the solitary sheep-bell and the voice of the shepherd calling his wandering flocks to the nightly fold. The shepherd’s cabin, partly shadowed by the cork tree and the ilex, was all the human habitation that yet appeared. Along the bottom of this valley the most vivid verdure was spread, and in the little hollow recesses of the mountains, under the shade of the oak and chestnut, herds of cattle were grazing. Groups of them, too, were often seen reposing on the banks of the rivulet, or laving their sides in the cool stream and sipping from its flow.

6. James Beattie, *The Minstrel*.

The sun was now setting upon the valley; its last light gleamed upon the water and heightened the rich yellow and purple tints of the heath and broom that overspread the mountains. St. Aubert enquired of Michael the distance to the hamlet he had mentioned, but the man could not with certainty tell, and Emily began to fear that he had mistaken the road. Here was no human being to assist or direct them; they had left the shepherd and his cabin far behind, and the scene became so obscured in twilight that the eye could not follow the distant perspective of the valley in search of a cottage or a hamlet. A glow of the horizon still marked the west, and this was of some little use to the travellers. Michael seemed endeavouring to keep up his courage by singing. His music, however, was not of a kind to disperse melancholy; he sang in a sort of chant one of the most dismal ditties his present auditors had ever heard, and St. Aubert at length discovered it to be a vesper hymn to his favourite saint.

They travelled on, sunk in that thoughtful melancholy with which twilight and solitude impress the mind. Michael had now ended his ditty, and nothing was heard but the drowsy murmur of the breeze among the woods and its light flutter as it blew freshly into the carriage. They were at length roused by the sound of firearms. St. Aubert called to the muleteer to stop, and they listened. The noise was not repeated, but presently they heard a rustling among the bracken. St. Aubert drew forth a pistol, and ordered Michael to proceed as fast as possible; the muleteer had not long obeyed before a horn sounded that made the mountains ring. St. Aubert looked again from the window, and then saw a young man in hunter's dress spring from the bushes into the road, followed by a couple of dogs. The stranger's gun was slung across his shoulders, the hunter's horn hung from his belt, and in his hand was a small pike which, as he held it, added to the manly grace of his figure and assisted the agility of his steps.

After a moment's hesitation, St. Aubert again stopped the carriage, and waited till the stranger came up, that they might enquire concerning the hamlet they were in search of. The stranger informed him that it was only half a league distant and that he was going thither himself and would readily shew the way. St. Aubert thanked him for the offer and, pleased with his chevalier-like⁷ air and open countenance, asked him to take a seat in the carriage.

The stranger declined, adding that he would keep pace with the mules. "But I fear you will be wretchedly accommodated," said he. "The inhabitants of these mountains are a simple people who are not only without the luxuries of life but almost destitute of what in other places are held to be its necessaries."

"I perceive you are not one of its inhabitants, sir," said St. Aubert.

"No, sir, I am only a wanderer here."

The carriage drove on, and the increasing dusk made the travellers very

7. *Chevalier*, the French word for "knight."

thankful that they had a guide; the frequent glens that now opened among the mountains would likewise have added to their perplexity.

Emily, as she looked up one of these, saw something at a great distance like a bright cloud in the air. "What light is yonder, sir?" asked she.

St. Aubert looked, and perceived that it was the snowy summit of a mountain, so much higher than any around it that it still reflected the sun's rays while those below lay in deep shade.

At length the village lights were seen to twinkle through the dusk, and soon after some cottages were discovered in the valley, or rather were seen by reflection in the stream on whose margin they stood, and which still gleamed with the evening light.

The stranger now came up, and St. Aubert on further enquiry found that there was not only no inn in the place but also no sort of house of public reception. The stranger, however, offered to walk on and enquire for a cottage to accommodate them, for which further civility St. Aubert returned his thanks and said that as the village was so near, he would alight and walk with him. Emily followed slowly in the carriage.

On the way St. Aubert asked his companion what success he had in the chase.

"Not much, sir," he replied, "nor do I aim at it. I am pleased with the country and mean to saunter away a few weeks among its scenes. My dogs I take with me more for companionship than for game. This dress, too, gives me an ostensible business, and procures me that respect from the people which would, perhaps, be refused to a lonely stranger who had no visible motive for coming among them."

"I admire your taste," said St. Aubert, "and if I was a younger man, should like to pass a few weeks in your way exceedingly. I, too, am a wanderer, but neither my plan nor pursuits are exactly like yours—I go in search of health, as much as of amusement." St. Aubert sighed, and paused. Then, seeming to recollect himself, he resumed, "If I can hear of a tolerable road that shall afford decent accommodation, it is my intention to pass into Roussillon and along the seashore to Languedoc. You, sir, seem to be acquainted with the country and can perhaps give me information on the subject."

The stranger said that what information he could give was entirely at his service, and then mentioned a road rather more to the east which led to a town, whence it would be easy to proceed into Roussillon.

They now arrived at the village, and commenced their search for a cottage that would afford a night's lodging. In several homes they entered, ignorance, poverty, and mirth seemed equally to prevail, and the owners eyed St. Aubert with a mixture of curiosity and timidity. Nothing like a bed could be found, and he had ceased to enquire for one when Emily joined him. She observed the languor of her father's countenance and lamented that he had taken a road so ill-provided with the comforts necessary for an invalid.

Other cottages which they examined seemed somewhat less savage, consisting of two rooms, if such they could be called; the first of these occupied by mules and pigs, the second by the family, which generally consisted of six or eight children with their parents, who slept on beds of skins and dried beech leaves spread upon a mud floor. Here, light was admitted and smoke discharged through an aperture in the roof; and here the scent of spirits (for the travelling smugglers who haunted the Pyrenees had made this rude people familiar with the use of liquors) was generally perceptible enough.

Emily turned from such scenes and looked at her father with anxious tenderness, which the young stranger seemed to observe; for, drawing St. Aubert aside, he made him an offer of his own bed.

"It is a decent one," said he, "when compared with what we have just seen, yet such as in other circumstances I should be ashamed to offer you."

St. Aubert acknowledged how much he felt himself obliged by this kindness, but he refused to accept it till the young stranger would take no denial.

"Do not give me the pain of knowing, sir," said he, "that an invalid like you lies on hard skins while I sleep in a bed. Besides, sir, your refusal wounds my pride; I must believe you think my offer unworthy of your acceptance. Let me shew you the way. I have no doubt my landlady can accommodate this young lady also."

St. Aubert at length consented that if this could be done, he would accept his kindness, though he felt rather surprised that the stranger had proved himself so deficient in gallantry as to administer to the repose of an infirm man rather than to that of a very lovely young woman, for he had not once offered the room for Emily. But she thought not of herself, and the animated smile she gave him told how much she felt herself obliged for the preference of her father.

On their way the stranger, whose name was Valancourt, stepped on first to speak to his hostess, and she came out to welcome St. Aubert into a cottage much superior to any he had seen. This good woman seemed very willing to accommodate the strangers, who were soon compelled to accept the only two beds in the place. Eggs and milk were the only food the cottage afforded, but against scarcity of provisions St. Aubert had provided. He requested Valancourt to stay and partake with him of less homely fare, an invitation which was readily accepted, and they passed an hour in intelligent conversation. St. Aubert was much pleased with the manly frankness, simplicity, and keen susceptibility to the grandeur of nature which his new acquaintance discovered; indeed, he had often been heard to say that this taste could not exist in any strong degree without a certain simplicity of heart.

The conversation was interrupted by a violent uproar without, in which the voice of the muleteer was heard above every other sound. Valancourt started from his seat, and went to enquire the occasion; but the dispute continued so long afterwards that St. Aubert went himself, and found Michael quarrelling

with the hostess because she had refused to let his mules lie in a little room where he and three of her sons were to pass the night. The place was wretched enough, but there was no other for these people to sleep in; and with somewhat more of delicacy than was usual among the inhabitants of this wild tract of country, she persisted in refusing to let the animals have the same *bedchamber* with her children.

This was a tender point with the muleteer; his honour was wounded when his mules were treated with disrespect, and he would have received a blow, perhaps, with more meekness. He declared that his beasts were as honest beasts and as good beasts as any in the whole province, and that they had a right to be well-treated wherever they went.

“They are as harmless as lambs,” said he, “if people don’t affront them. I never knew them behave themselves amiss above once or twice in my life, and then they had good reason for doing so. Once, indeed, they kicked at a boy’s leg that lay asleep in the stable, and broke it; but I told them they were out there, and by St. Anthony! I believe they understood me, for they never did so again.”

He concluded this eloquent harangue by protesting that they should share with him, go where he would.

The dispute was at length settled by Valancourt, who drew the hostess aside and desired she would let the muleteer and his beasts have the place in question to themselves, while her sons should have the bed of skins designed for him, for he would wrap himself in his cloak and sleep on the bench by the cottage door. But this she thought it her duty to oppose, and she felt it to be her inclination to disappoint the muleteer. Valancourt, however, was positive, and the tedious affair was at length settled.

It was late when St. Aubert and Emily retired to their rooms and Valancourt to his station at the door, which at this mild season he preferred to a close cabin and a bed of skins. St. Aubert was somewhat surprised to find in his room volumes of Homer, Horace, and Petrarch; but the name of Valancourt written in them told him to whom they belonged.



4

*In truth he was a strange and wayward wight,
Fond of each gentle, and each dreadful scene,
In darkness, and in storm, he found delight;
Nor less, than when on ocean wave serene
The southern sun diffused his dazzling sheen.
Even sad vicissitude amused his soul;*

*And if a sigh would sometimes intervene,
And down his cheek a tear of pity roll,
A sigh, a tear, so sweet, he wish'd not to controul.*

JAMES BEATTIE, *The Minstrel*

St. Aubert awoke at an early hour, refreshed by sleep and desirous to set forward. He invited the stranger to breakfast with him; talking again of the road, Valancourt said that some months past he had travelled as far as Beaujeu, which was a town of some consequence on the way to Roussillon. He recommended it to St. Aubert to take that route, and the latter determined to do so.

“The road from this hamlet,” said Valancourt, “and that to Beaujeu, part at the distance of about a league and a half from hence; if you will give me leave, I will direct your muleteer so far. I must wander somewhere, and your company would make this a pleasanter ramble than any other I could take.”

St. Aubert thankfully accepted his offer, and they set out together, the young stranger on foot, for he refused the invitation of St. Aubert to take a seat in his little carriage.

The road wound along the feet of the mountains through a pastoral valley bright with verdure and varied with groves of dwarf oak, beech, and sycamore, under whose branches herds of cattle reposed. The mountain ash, too, and the weeping birch often threw their pendant foliage over the steeps above, where the scanty soil scarcely concealed their roots, and where their light branches waved to every breeze that fluttered from the mountains.

The travellers were frequently met at this early hour, for the sun had not yet risen upon the valley, by shepherds driving immense flocks from their folds to feed upon the hills. St. Aubert had set out thus early, not only that he might enjoy the first appearance of sunrise, but that he might inhale the first pure breath of morning, which above all things is refreshing to the spirits of the invalid. In these regions it was particularly so, where an abundance of wild-flowers and aromatic herbs breathed forth their essence on the air.

The dawn which softened the scenery with its peculiar grey tint now dispersed, and Emily watched the progress of the day, first trembling on the tops of the highest cliffs, then touching them with splendid light while their sides and the vale below were still wrapt in dewy mist. Meanwhile, the sullen grey of the eastern clouds began to blush, then to redden, and then to glow with a thousand colours, till the golden light darted over all the air, touched the lower points of the mountain's brow, and glanced in long sloping beams upon the valley and its stream. All nature seemed to have awakened from death into life; the spirit of St. Aubert was renovated. His heart was full; he wept, and his thoughts ascended to the Great Creator.

Emily wished to trip along the turf, so green and bright with dew, and

to taste the full delight of that liberty which the lizard seemed to enjoy as he bounded along the brow of the cliffs; while Valancourt often stopped to speak with the travellers, and with social feeling to point out to them the peculiar objects of his admiration. St. Aubert was pleased with him: *Here is the real ingenuousness and ardour of youth*, said he to himself. *This young man has never been at Paris.*

He was sorry when they came to the spot where the roads parted, and his heart took a more affectionate leave of Valancourt than is usual after so short an acquaintance. Valancourt talked long by the side of the carriage; he seemed more than once to be going but still lingered, and appeared to search anxiously for topics of conversation to account for his delay. At length he took leave. As he went, St. Aubert observed him look with an earnest and pensive eye at Emily, who bowed to him with a countenance full of timid sweetness while the carriage drove on. St. Aubert, for whatever reason, soon after looked from the window and saw Valancourt standing upon the bank of the road, resting on his pike with folded arms, and following the carriage with his eyes. He waved his hand, and Valancourt, seeming to awake from his reverie, returned the salute and started away.

The aspect of the country now began to change, and the travellers soon found themselves among mountains covered from their base nearly to their summits with forests of gloomy pine, except where a rock of granite shot up from the vale and lost its snowy top in the clouds. The rivulet which had hitherto accompanied them now expanded into a river; flowing deeply and silently along, it reflected, as in a mirror, the blackness of the impending shades. Sometimes a cliff was seen lifting its bold head above the woods and the vapours that floated midway down the mountains, and sometimes a face of perpendicular marble rose from the water's edge, over which the larch threw his gigantic arms, here scathed with lightning, and there floating in luxuriant foliage.

They continued to travel over a rough and unfrequented road, seeing now and then at a distance the solitary shepherd with his dog stalking along the valley, and hearing only the dashing of torrents which the woods concealed from the eye, the long sullen murmur of the breeze as it swept over the pines, or the notes of the eagle and the vulture which were seen towering round the beetling cliff.

Often, as the carriage moved slowly over uneven ground, St. Aubert alighted and amused himself with examining the curious plants that grew on the banks of the road while Emily, rapt in high enthusiasm, wandered away under the shades, listening in deep silence to the lonely murmur of the woods. Neither village nor hamlet was seen for many leagues; the goatherd's or the hunter's cabin perched among the cliffs of the rocks were the only human habitations that appeared.

The travellers again took their dinner in the open air, on a pleasant spot in the valley under the spreading shade of cedars, and then set forward towards Beaujeu.

The road now began to descend and, leaving the pine forests behind, wound among rocky precipices. The evening twilight again fell over the scene, and the travellers were ignorant how far they might yet be from Beaujeu. St. Aubert, however, conjectured that the distance could not be very great, and comforted himself with the prospect of travelling on a more frequented road after reaching that town, where he designed to pass the night. Mingled woods, and rocks, and heathy mountains were now seen obscurely through the dusk; soon even these imperfect images faded in darkness. Michael proceeded with caution, for he could scarcely distinguish the road; his mules, however, seemed to have more sagacity, and their steps were sure.

On turning the angle of a mountain, at a distance a light appeared that illumined the rocks and the horizon to a great extent. It was evidently a large fire, but whether accidental or otherwise they had no means of knowing. St. Aubert thought it was probably kindled by some of the numerous banditti that infested the Pyrenees, and he became watchful and anxious to know whether the road passed near this fire. He had arms with him, which in an emergency might afford some protection, though certainly a very unequal one, against a band of robbers, so desperate too as those usually were who haunted these wild regions. While many reflections rose upon his mind, he heard from the road behind a voice shouting and ordering the muleteer to stop. St. Aubert bade him proceed as fast as possible, but either Michael or his mules were obstinate, for they did not quit the old pace.

Horses' hoofs were now heard; a man rode up to the carriage, still ordering the driver to stop. St. Aubert, who could no longer doubt his purpose, was with difficulty able to prepare a pistol for his defence, and when the man's hand appeared upon the door of the carriage, he fired. The report of the pistol was followed by a groan, and St. Aubert's horror may be imagined when in the next instant he thought he heard the faint voice of Valancourt. He now himself bade the muleteer stop, and pronouncing the name of Valancourt was answered in a voice that no longer suffered him to doubt. St. Aubert, who instantly alighted and went to his assistance, found him still sitting on his horse but bleeding profusely and appearing to be in great pain, though he endeavoured to soften the terror of St. Aubert by assurances that he was not materially hurt, the wound being only in his arm. St. Aubert, with the muleteer, assisted him to dismount, and Valancourt sat down on the bank of the road.

St. Aubert tried to bind up his arm, but his hands trembled so excessively that he could not accomplish it; he called Emily to his assistance, Michael being now gone in pursuit of the horse, which on being disengaged from

his rider had galloped off. Receiving no answer, he went to the carriage and found her sunk on the seat in a fainting fit.⁸ Between the distress of this circumstance and that of leaving Valancourt bleeding, he scarcely knew what he did; he endeavoured, however, to raise her, and called to Michael to fetch water from the rivulet that flowed by the road, but Michael was gone beyond the reach of his voice.

Valancourt, who heard these calls and also the repeated name of Emily, instantly understood the subject of his distress; almost forgetting his own condition, he hastened to her relief. She was reviving when he reached the carriage; understanding that anxiety for him had occasioned her indisposition, he assured her in a voice that trembled, but not from anguish, that his wound was of no consequence.

While he said this St. Aubert turned round. Perceiving that Valancourt was still bleeding, the subject of his alarm changed again, and he hastily formed some handkerchiefs into a bandage. This stopped the effusion of the blood, but St. Aubert, dreading the consequence of the wound, enquired repeatedly how far they were from Beaujeu. Learning that it was at two leagues' distance, his distress increased, since he knew not how Valancourt in his present state would bear the motion of the carriage and perceived that he was already faint from loss of blood. When he mentioned the subject of his anxiety, Valancourt entreated that he would not suffer himself to be thus alarmed on his account, for he had no doubt he should be able to support himself very well, and then he talked of the accident as a slight one. The muleteer, now returned with the horse, assisted Valancourt into the carriage, and as Emily was now revived, they moved slowly on towards Beaujeu.

St. Aubert, when he had recovered from the terror occasioned him by this accident, expressed surprise on seeing Valancourt.

The young man explained his unexpected appearance by saying, "You, sir, renewed my taste for society; when you had left the hamlet, it did indeed appear a solitude. I determined therefore, since my object was merely amusement, to change the scene, and I took this road because I knew it led through a more romantic tract of mountains than the spot I have left. Besides," added he, hesitating for an instant, "I will own—and why should I not?—that I had some hope of overtaking you."

"And I have made you a very unexpected return for the compliment," said St. Aubert, who lamented again the rashness which had produced the accident and explained the cause of his late alarm.

But Valancourt seemed anxious only to remove from the minds of his companions every unpleasant feeling relative to himself, and for that purpose still struggled against a sense of pain and tried to converse with gaiety. Emily

8. A defensive behavior, perhaps, akin to the New World opossum's feigning of death.

meanwhile was silent, except when Valancourt particularly addressed her, and there was at those times a tremulous tone in his voice that spoke much.

The fire which had long flamed at a distance on the blackness of night now gleamed upon the road, and they could distinguish figures moving about the blaze. The way winding still nearer, they perceived in the valley one of those numerous bands of rovers which at that period particularly haunted the wilds of the Pyrenees and lived partly by plundering the traveller. Emily looked with some degree of terror on the savage countenances of these people shewn by the fire, which heightened the romantic effects of the scenery as it threw a red dusky gleam upon the rocks and on the foliage of the trees, leaving heavy masses of shade and regions of obscurity which the eye feared to penetrate.

The rovers were preparing their supper; a large pot stood by the fire, over which several figures were busy. The blaze discovered a rude kind of tent round which many children and dogs were playing, and the whole formed a picture highly grotesque. The travellers saw plainly their danger. Valancourt was silent but laid his hand on one of St. Aubert's pistols; St. Aubert drew forth another and ordered Michael to proceed as fast as possible. They passed the place, however, without being attacked; the rovers being probably unprepared for the opportunity and too busy about their supper to feel much interest at the moment in anything besides.

After a league and a half more passed in darkness, the travellers arrived at Beaujeu, and drove up to the only inn the place afforded, which, though superior to any they had seen since they entered the mountains, was bad enough.

The surgeon of the town was immediately sent for, if a surgeon he could be called who prescribed for horses as well as for men, and who shaved faces at least as dexterously as he set bones. After examining Valancourt's arm and perceiving that the bullet had passed through the flesh without touching the bone, he dressed it and left him with a solemn prescription of quiet, which his patient was not inclined to obey. The delight of ease had now succeeded pain—for ease may be allowed to assume a positive quality when contrasted with anguish—and his spirits thus reanimated, he wished to partake of the conversation of St. Aubert and Emily, who, released from so many apprehensions, were uncommonly cheerful. Late as it was, however, St. Aubert was obliged to go out with the landlord to buy meat for supper, and Emily, who during this interval had been absent as long as she could upon excuses of looking to their accommodation, which she found rather better than she expected, was compelled to return and converse with Valancourt alone. They talked of the character of the scenes they had passed, of the natural history of the country, of poetry, and of St. Aubert, a subject on which Emily always spoke and listened with peculiar pleasure.

The travellers passed an agreeable evening, but as St. Aubert was fatigued with his journey and Valancourt seemed again sensible of pain, they separated soon after supper.

In the morning St. Aubert found that Valancourt had passed a restless night; he was feverish, and his wound very painful. The surgeon, when he dressed it, advised him to remain quietly at Beaujeu, advice which was too reasonable to be rejected. St. Aubert, however, had no favourable opinion of this practitioner and was anxious to commit Valancourt into more skilful hands; but learning upon enquiry that there was no town within several leagues which seemed more likely to afford better advice, he altered the plan of his journey and determined to await the recovery of Valancourt, who with somewhat more ceremony than sincerity made many objections to this delay.

By order of his surgeon, Valancourt did not go out of the house that day; but St. Aubert and Emily surveyed with delight the environs of the town, which was situated at the feet of the Pyrenean alps. The mountains rose, some in abrupt precipices and others swelling with woods of cedar, fir, and cypress, which stretched nearly to their highest summits. Sometimes the cheerful green of the beech and mountain ash gleamed amidst the dark verdure of the forest, and sometimes a torrent poured its sparkling flood high among the woods.

Valancourt's indisposition detained the travellers at Beaujeu several days, during which interval St. Aubert observed his disposition and his talents with the philosophic enquiry so natural to him. He saw a frank and generous nature, full of ardour, highly susceptible to whatever is grand and beautiful, but impetuous, wild, and somewhat romantic. Valancourt had known little of the world. His perceptions were clear, and his feelings just; his indignation of an unworthy, or his admiration of a generous, action were expressed in terms of equal vehemence. St. Aubert sometimes smiled at his warmth, but seldom checked it, and often repeated to himself, *This young man has never been at Paris*. A sigh sometimes followed this silent ejaculation.

He determined not to leave Valancourt till he should be perfectly recovered, and as the young man was now well enough to travel though not able to manage his horse, St. Aubert invited him to accompany them for a few days in the carriage. This offer St. Aubert the more readily made since he had discovered that Valancourt was of a family of the same name in Gascony, with whose respectability he was well-acquainted. The latter accepted the offer with great pleasure, and they again set forward among these romantic wilds about Roussillon.

They travelled leisurely, stopping wherever a scene uncommonly grand appeared; frequently alighting to walk to an eminence whither the mules could not go, from which the prospect opened in greater magnificence; and often sauntering over hillocks covered with lavender, wild thyme, juniper, and tamarisk and under the shades of woods, between whose boles they caught the long mountain vista, sublime beyond anything that Emily had ever imagined.

St. Aubert sometimes amused himself with botanizing while Valancourt and Emily strolled on, he pointing out to her notice the objects that particularly

charmed him and reciting beautiful passages from such of the Latin and Italian poets as he had heard her admire. In the pauses of conversation, when Valancourt thought himself not observed, he frequently fixed his eyes pensively on her countenance, which expressed with so much animation the taste and energy of her mind, and when he spoke again, there was a peculiar tenderness in the tone of his voice that defeated any attempt to conceal his sentiments. By degrees these silent pauses became more frequent till Emily betrayed an anxiety to interrupt them. She, who had been hitherto reserved, would now talk again, and again, of the woods and the valleys and the mountains to avoid the danger of sympathy and silence.

From Beaujeu the road had constantly ascended, conducting the travellers into the higher regions of the air, where eternal snow whitened the summits. They often paused to contemplate these stupendous scenes and, seated on some wild cliff where only the ilex or the larch could flourish, looked over dark forests of fir and precipices where human foot had never wandered into the glen—so deep, that the thunder of the torrent that foamed along the bottom was scarcely heard to murmur. Over these crags rose others of stupendous height and fantastic shape: some shooting into cones, others impending far over their base in huge masses of granite along whose broken ridges was often lodged a weight of snow that, trembling even to the vibration of a sound, threatened to bear destruction in its course to the vale. Around on every side, far as the eye could penetrate, were seen only forms of grandeur—the long perspective of mountaintops tinged with ethereal blue or white with snow, and valleys of ice, and forests of gloomy fir.

The serenity and clearness of the air in these high regions were particularly delightful to the travellers; it seemed to inspire them with a finer spirit, and diffused an indescribable complacency over their minds. They had no words to express the sublime emotions they felt. A solemn expression characterized the feelings of St. Aubert; tears often came to his eyes, and he frequently walked away from his companions. Valancourt now and then spoke, to point to Emily's notice some feature of the scene. The thinness of the atmosphere, through which every object came so distinctly to the eye, surprised and deluded her; she could scarcely believe that objects which appeared so near were, in reality, so distant.

The deep silence of these solitudes was broken only at intervals by the scream of the vultures cowering round some cliff below, or by the cry of the eagle sailing high in the air; except when the travellers listened to the hollow thunder that sometimes muttered at their feet. While above the deep blue of the heavens was unobscured by the lightest cloud, halfway down the mountains long billows of vapour were frequently seen rolling, now wholly excluding the country below, and now opening and partially revealing its features. Emily

delighted to observe the grandeur of these clouds as they changed in shape and tints, and to watch their various effect on the lower world, whose features, partly veiled, were continually assuming new forms of sublimity.

After traversing these regions for many leagues, they began to descend towards Roussillon, and features of beauty then mingled with the scene. Though the travellers did not look back without some regret to the sublime objects they had quitted, the eye, fatigued with the extension of its powers, was glad to repose on the verdure of woods and pastures that now hung on the margin of the river below, and to view again the humble cottage shaded by cedars, the playful group of mountaineer children, and the flowery nooks that appeared among the hills.

As they descended, they saw at a distance on the right one of the grand passes of the Pyrenees into Spain, gleaming with its battlements and towers in the splendour of the setting rays, yellow tops of woods colouring the steeps below, while far above aspired the snowy points of the mountains, still reflecting a rosy hue.

St. Aubert began to look out for the little town he had been directed to by the people of Beaujeu, and where he meant to pass the night; but no habitation yet appeared. Of its distance Valancourt could not assist him to judge, having never been so far along this chain of alps. There was, however, a road to guide them; and there could be little doubt that it was the right one for, since they had left Beaujeu, there had been no variety of tracks to perplex or mislead.

The sun now gave its last light, and St. Aubert bade the muleteer proceed with all possible dispatch. He found, indeed, the lassitude of illness return upon him after a day of uncommon fatigue, both of body and mind, and he longed for repose. His anxiety was not soothed by observing a numerous train of men, horses, and loaded mules winding down the steeps of an opposite mountain, appearing and disappearing at intervals among the woods so that its numbers could not be judged. Something bright, like arms, glanced in the setting rays, and military dress was distinguishable upon the men who were in the van, and on others scattered among the troop that followed. As these wound into the vale, the rear of the party emerged from the woods, and exhibited a band of soldiers. St. Aubert's apprehensions now subsided; he had no doubt that the train before him consisted of smugglers who, in conveying prohibited goods over the Pyrenees, had been encountered and conquered by the troop.

The travellers had lingered so long among the sublimer scenes of these mountains that they found themselves entirely mistaken in their calculation that they could reach Montigny at sunset; but as they wound along the valley they saw, on a rude alpine bridge that united two lofty crags of the glen, a group of mountaineer children amusing themselves with dropping pebbles into a torrent below and watching the stones plunge into the water, which as it received them threw its white spray high in the air and returned a sullen

sound that the echoes of the mountains prolonged. Under the bridge was seen a perspective of the valley, with its cataract descending among the rocks, and a cottage on a cliff, overshadowed with pines. It appeared that they could not be far from some small town. St. Aubert bade the muleteer stop and then called to the children to enquire if he was near Montigny; but the distance and the roaring of the waters would not suffer his voice to be heard, and the crags adjoining the bridge were of such tremendous height and steepness that to have climbed either would have been scarcely practicable to a person unacquainted with the ascent. St. Aubert, therefore, did not waste more moments in delay. They continued to travel long after twilight had obscured the road, which was so broken that, now thinking it safer to walk than to ride, they all alighted.

The moon was rising, but its light was yet too feeble to assist them. While they stepped carefully on, they heard the vesper bell of a convent. The twilight would not permit them to distinguish anything like a building, but the sounds seemed to come from some woods that overhung an acclivity to the right.

Valancourt proposed to go in search of this convent. "If they will not accommodate us with a night's lodging," said he, "they may certainly inform us how far we are from Montigny, and direct us towards it."

He was bounding forward without waiting St. Aubert's reply when the latter stopped him. "I am very weary," said St. Aubert, "and wish for nothing so much as for immediate rest. We will all go to the convent. Your good looks would defeat our purpose, but when they see mine and Emily's exhausted countenances, they will scarcely deny us repose."

As he said this, he took Emily's arm within his, and after telling Michael to wait awhile in the road with the carriage, they began to ascend towards the woods, guided by the bell of the convent. His steps were feeble, and he accepted when Valancourt offered him his arm. The moon now threw a faint light over their path and soon after enabled them to distinguish some towers rising above the tops of the woods. Still following the note of the bell, they entered the shade of those woods, lighted only by the moonbeams that glided down between the leaves and threw a tremulous uncertain gleam upon the steep track they were winding.

The gloom and the silence that prevailed save when the bell returned upon the air, together with the wildness of the surrounding scene, struck Emily with a degree of fear which the voice and conversation of Valancourt somewhat repressed. When they had been some time ascending, St. Aubert complained of weariness, and they stopped to rest upon a little green summit where the trees opened and admitted the moonlight. He sat down upon the turf between Emily and Valancourt. The bell had now ceased, and the deep repose of the scene was undisturbed by any sound, for the low dull murmur of some distant torrents might be said to soothe rather than to interrupt the silence.

Before them extended the valley they had quitted; its rocks and woods to the

left, just silvered by the rays, formed a contrast to the deep shadow that involved the opposite cliffs, whose fringed summits only were tipped with light, while the distant perspective of the valley was lost in the yellow mist of moonlight. The travellers sat for some time rapt in the complacency which such scenes inspire.

“These scenes,” said Valancourt at length “soften the heart, like the notes of sweet music, and inspire that delicious melancholy which no person who had felt it once would resign for the gayest pleasures. They waken our best and purest feelings, disposing us to benevolence, pity, and friendship. Those whom I love—I always seem to love more in such an hour as this.” His voice trembled, and he paused.

Her father was silent. Emily perceived a warm tear fall upon the hand he held; she knew the object of his thoughts, for hers, too, had for some time been occupied by the remembrance of her mother.

St. Aubert seemed by an effort to rouse himself. “Yes,” said he, with a half-suppressed sigh, “the memory of those we love—of times forever past!—in such an hour as this steals upon the mind, like a strain of distant music in the stillness of night; all tender and harmonious as this landscape, sleeping in the mellow moonlight.” After the pause of a moment, he added, “I have always fancied that I thought with more clearness and precision at such an hour than at any other, and that any heart must be insensible in a great degree that does not soften to its influence. But many such there are.”

Valancourt sighed.

“Are there indeed many such?” asked Emily.

“A few years hence, my Emily,” replied St. Aubert, “and you may smile at the recollection of that question—if you do not weep to it. But come, I am somewhat refreshed, let us proceed.”

Having emerged from the woods, they saw upon a turfy hillock the convent they sought. A high wall that surrounded it led them to an ancient gate, at which they knocked; and the poor monk who opened it conducted them into a small adjoining room, where he desired they would wait while he informed the superior of their request. In this interval several friars came in separately to look at them. At length the first monk returned, and they followed him to a room where the superior was sitting in an armchair with a large folio volume printed in black letter open on a desk before him. He received them with courtesy, though he did not rise from his seat, and having asked them a few questions, granted their request. After a short conversation, formal and solemn on the part of the superior, they withdrew to the apartment where they were to sup.

Valancourt, whom one of the inferior friars civilly desired to accompany, went to seek Michael and his mules. They had not descended halfway down the cliffs before they heard the voice of the muleteer echoing far and wide. Sometimes he called on St. Aubert, and sometimes on Valancourt, who having at length convinced him that he had nothing to fear either for himself or his

master and having disposed of him for the night in a cottage on the skirts of the woods, returned to sup with his friends on such sober fare as the monks thought it prudent to set before them. While St. Aubert was too much indisposed to share it, Emily in her anxiety for her father forgot herself. Valancourt, silent and thoughtful, yet never inattentive to them, appeared particularly solicitous to accommodate and relieve St. Aubert, who often observed while his daughter was pressing him to eat or adjusting the pillow she had placed in the back of his armchair that Valancourt fixed on her a look of pensive tenderness, which he was not displeased to understand.

They separated at an early hour, and retired to their respective apartments. Emily was shewn to hers by a nun of the convent, whom she was glad to dismiss, for her heart was melancholy and her attention so much abstracted that conversation with a stranger was painful. She thought her father daily declining, and attributed his present fatigue more to the feeble state of his frame than to the difficulty of the journey. A train of gloomy ideas haunted her mind till she fell asleep.

In about two hours she was awakened by the chiming of a bell, and then heard quick steps pass along the gallery into which her chamber opened. She was so little accustomed to the manners of a convent as to be alarmed by this circumstance; her fears, ever alive for her father, suggested that he was very ill, and she rose in haste to go to him. Having paused, however, to let the persons in the gallery pass before she opened her door, her thoughts recovered from the confusion of sleep, and she understood that the bell was the call of the monks to prayers. It had now ceased, and all being again still, she forbore to go to St. Aubert's room. Her mind was not disposed for immediate sleep, and the moonlight that shone into her chamber invited her to open the casement and look out upon the country.

It was a still and beautiful night, the sky was unobscured by any cloud, and scarce a leaf of the woods beneath trembled in the air. As she listened, the midnight hymn of the monks rose softly from a chapel that stood on one of the lower cliffs, a holy strain that seemed to ascend through the silence of night to heaven, and her thoughts ascended with it. From the consideration of His works, her mind arose to the adoration of the Deity, in His goodness and power; wherever she turned her view, whether on the sleeping earth, or to the vast regions of space glowing with worlds beyond the reach of human thought, the sublimity of God and the majesty of His presence appeared. Her eyes were filled with tears of awful love and admiration; and she felt that pure devotion, superior to all the distinctions of human system, which lifts the soul above this world and seems to expand it into a nobler nature: such devotion as can perhaps only be experienced when the mind rescued, for a moment, from the humbleness of earthly considerations aspires to contemplate His power in the sublimity of His works, and His goodness in the infinity of His blessings.

The midnight chant of the monks soon after dropped into silence, but Emily remained at the casement watching the setting moon and the valley sinking into deep shade, and willing to prolong her present state of mind. At length she retired to her mattress, and sank into tranquil slumber.



5

*While in the rosy vale
Love breathed his infant sighs, from anguish free.*

JAMES THOMSON, *The Seasons*, "Spring"

St. Aubert, sufficiently restored by a night's repose to pursue his journey, set out in the morning with his family and Valancourt for Roussillon, which he hoped to reach before nightfall. The scenes through which they now passed were as wild and romantic as any they had yet observed with this difference: that beauty every now and then softened the landscape into smiles. Little woody recesses appeared among the mountains, covered with bright verdure and flowers; or a pastoral valley opened its grassy bosom in the shade of the cliffs, with flocks and herds loitering along the banks of a rivulet that refreshed it with perpetual green. St. Aubert could not repent their having taken this fatiguing road, though he was this day also frequently obliged to alight, to walk along the rugged precipice, and to climb the steep and flinty mountain. The wonderful sublimity and variety of the prospects repaid him for all this, and the enthusiasm with which they were viewed by his young companions heightened his own and awakened a remembrance of all the delightful emotions of his early days, when the sublime charms of nature were first unveiled to him.

He found great pleasure in conversing with Valancourt, and in listening to his ingenuous remarks. The fire and simplicity of his manners seemed to render him a characteristic figure in the scenes around them, and St. Aubert discovered in his sentiments the justness and the dignity of an elevated mind, unbiased by intercourse with the world. He perceived that Valancourt's opinions were formed, rather than imbibed; were more the result of thought, than of learning. Of the world he seemed to know nothing; for he believed well of all mankind, and this opinion gave him the reflected image of his own heart.

St. Aubert, as he sometimes lingered to examine the wild plants in his path, often looked forward with pleasure to Emily and Valancourt as they strolled on together; he, with a countenance of animated delight, pointing to her attention some grand feature of the scene, and she listening and observing with a look

of tender seriousness that spoke the elevation of her mind. They appeared like two lovers who had never strayed beyond these their native mountains, whose situation had secluded them from the frivolities of common life, whose ideas were simple and grand, like the landscapes among which they moved, and who knew no other happiness than in the union of pure and affectionate hearts. St. Aubert smiled, and sighed at the romantic picture of felicity his fancy drew, and sighed again to think that nature and simplicity were so little known to the world that their pleasures were thought romantic.

The world, mused he, pursuing this train of thought, ridicules a passion which it seldom feels; its scenes and its interests distract the mind, deprave the taste, corrupt the heart, and love cannot exist in a heart that has lost the meek dignity of innocence. Virtue and taste are nearly the same, for virtue is little more than active taste, and the most delicate affections of each combine in real love. How then are we to look for love in great cities, where selfishness, dissipation, and insincerity supply the place of tenderness, simplicity, and truth?

It was near noon when the travellers, having arrived at a piece of steep and dangerous road, alighted to walk. The road wound up an ascent that was clothed with wood, and instead of following the carriage, they entered the refreshing shade. A dewy coolness was diffused upon the air, which, with the bright verdure of turf that grew under the trees, the mingled fragrance of flowers and of balm, thyme, and lavender that enriched it, and the grandeur of the pines, beech, and chestnuts that overshadowed them, rendered this a most delicious retreat. Sometimes the thick foliage excluded all view of the country; at others, it admitted some partial catches of the distant scenery, which gave hints to the imagination to picture landscapes more interesting, more impressive, than any that had been presented to the eye. The wanderers often lingered to indulge in these reveries of fancy.

The pauses of silence, such as had formerly interrupted the conversations of Valancourt and Emily, were more frequent today than ever. Valancourt often dropped suddenly from the most animating vivacity into fits of deep musing, and there was sometimes an unaffected melancholy in his smile which Emily could not avoid understanding, for her heart was interested in the sentiment it spoke.

St. Aubert was refreshed by the shades, and they continued to saunter under them, following, as nearly as they could guess, the direction of the road till they perceived that they had totally lost it. They had continued near the brow of the precipice, allured by the scenery it exhibited, while the road wound far away over the cliff above. Valancourt called loudly to Michael but heard no voice except his own echoing among the rocks, and his various efforts to regain the road were equally unsuccessful. While they were thus circumstanced, they perceived a shepherd's cabin between the boles of the trees at some distance,

and Valancourt bounded on first to ask assistance. When he reached it, he saw only two little children at play on the turf before the door. He looked into the hut, but no person was there, and the eldest of the boys told him that their father was with his flocks, and their mother was gone down into the vale but would be back presently.

As he stood, considering what was further to be done, on a sudden he heard Michael's voice roaring forth most manfully among the cliffs above till he made their echoes ring. Valancourt immediately answered the call and endeavoured to make his way through the thicket that clothed the steeps, following the direction of the sound. After much struggle over brambles and precipices, he reached Michael, and at length prevailed with him to be silent. The road was at a considerable distance from the spot where St. Aubert and Emily were; the carriage could not easily return to the entrance of the wood, and since it would be very fatiguing for St. Aubert to climb the long and steep road to the place where it now stood, Valancourt was anxious to find a more easy ascent by the way he had himself passed.

Meanwhile St. Aubert and Emily approached the cottage, and rested themselves on a rustic bench fastened between two pines till Valancourt, whose steps they had observed, should return.

The eldest of the children desisted from his play and stood still to observe the strangers, while the younger continued his little gambols and teased his brother to join in them. St. Aubert looked with pleasure upon this picture of infantine simplicity, till it brought to his remembrance his own boys, whom he had lost about the age of these, and their lamented mother; and he sank into a thoughtfulness. Observing it, Emily immediately began to sing one of those simple and lively airs he was so fond of and which she knew how to give with the most captivating sweetness. St. Aubert smiled on her through his tears, took her hand and pressed it affectionately, and then tried to dissipate the melancholy reflections that lingered in his mind.

While she sang, Valancourt approached. Unwilling to interrupt her, he paused at a little distance to listen. When she had concluded, he joined the party and told them that he had found Michael, as well as a way by which he thought they could ascend the cliff to the carriage. He pointed to the woody steeps above, which St. Aubert surveyed with an anxious eye. He was already wearied by his walk, and this ascent was formidable to him. He thought, however, it would be less toilsome than the long and broken road, and he determined to attempt it; but Emily, ever watchful of his ease, proposed that he should rest and dine before they proceeded further, so Valancourt went to the carriage for the refreshments deposited there.

On his return, he proposed removing a little higher up the mountain, to where the woods opened upon a grand and extensive prospect; and thither

they were preparing to go when they saw a young woman join the children, and caress and weep over them.

The travellers, interested by her distress, stopped to observe her. She took the youngest of the children in her arms, and perceiving the strangers, hastily dried her tears and proceeded to the cottage. St. Aubert, on enquiring the occasion of her sorrow, learned that her husband, who was a shepherd and lived here in the summer months to watch over the flocks he led to feed upon these mountains, had lost on the preceding night his little all. A gang of rovers, who had for some time infested the neighbourhood, had driven away several of his master's sheep.

"Jacques," added the shepherd's wife, "had saved a little money, and had bought a few sheep with it, and now they must go to his master for those that are stolen; and what is worse than all, his master when he comes to know how it is will trust him no longer with the care of his flocks, for he is a hard man! and then what is to become of our children!"

The innocent countenance of the woman and the simplicity of her manner in relating her grievance inclined St. Aubert to believe her story, and Valancourt, convinced that it was true, asked eagerly what was the value of the stolen sheep, on hearing which he turned away with a look of disappointment. St. Aubert put some money into her hand, Emily too gave something from her little purse, and they walked towards the cliff; but Valancourt lingered behind and spoke to the shepherd's wife, who was now weeping with gratitude and surprise. He enquired how much money was yet wanting to replace the stolen sheep, and found that it was a sum very little short of all he had about him.

He was perplexed and distressed. *This sum then, said he to himself, would make this poor family completely happy – it is in my power to give it – to make them completely happy! But what is to become of me? How shall I contrive to reach home with the little money that will remain?* For a moment he stood, unwilling to forgo the luxury of raising a family from ruin to happiness, yet considering the difficulties of pursuing his journey with so small a sum as would be left.

While he was in this state of perplexity, the shepherd himself appeared. His children ran to meet him; he took one of them in his arms and with the other clinging to his coat came forward with a loitering step. His forlorn and melancholy look determined Valancourt at once; he threw down all the money he had, except a very few louis, and bounded away after St. Aubert and Emily, who were proceeding slowly up the steep. Valancourt had seldom felt his heart so light as at this moment; his gay spirits danced with pleasure; every object around him appeared more interesting or beautiful than before.

St. Aubert observed the uncommon vivacity of his countenance. "What has pleased you so much?" asked he.

“O what a lovely day,” replied Valancourt, “how brightly the sun shines, how pure is this air, what enchanting scenery!”

“It is indeed enchanting,” said St. Aubert, whom early experience had taught to understand the nature of Valancourt’s present feelings. “What pity that the wealthy, who can command such sunshine, should ever pass their days in gloom—in the cold shade of selfishness! For you, my young friend, may the sun always shine as brightly as at this moment; may your own conduct always give you the sunshine of benevolence and reason united!”

Valancourt, highly flattered by this compliment, could make no reply but by a smile of gratitude.

They continued to wind under the woods between the grassy knolls of the mountain, and as they reached the shady summit which he had pointed out, the whole party burst into an exclamation. Behind the spot where they stood, the rock rose perpendicularly in a massive wall to a considerable height and then branched out into overhanging crags. Their grey tints were well contrasted by the bright hues of the plants and wildflowers that grew in their fractured sides, and were deepened by the gloom of the pines and cedars that waved above. The steeps below, over which the eye passed abruptly to the valley, were fringed with thickets of alpine shrubs; and lower still appeared the tufted tops of the chestnut woods that clothed their base, among which peeped forth the shepherd’s cottage just left by the travellers, with its bluish smoke curling high in the air. On every side appeared the majestic summits of the Pyrenees, some exhibiting tremendous crags of marble, whose appearance was changing every instant as the varying lights fell upon their surface; others still higher displayed only snowy points while their lower steeps were covered with forests of pine, larch, and oak that stretched down to the vale. This was one of the narrow valleys that open from the Pyrenees into the country of Roussillon, and whose green pastures and cultivated beauty form a decided and wonderful contrast to the romantic grandeur that environs it. Through a vista of the mountains appeared the lowlands of Roussillon, tinted with the blue haze of distance as they united with the waters of the Mediterranean; on a promontory which marked the boundary of the shore stood a lonely beacon, over which were seen circling flights of seafowl. Beyond appeared, now and then, a stealing sail white with the sunbeam, whose progress was perceivable by its approach to the lighthouse. Sometimes, too, was seen a sail so distant that it served only to mark the line of separation between the sky and the waves.

On the other side of the valley, immediately opposite the spot where the travellers rested, a rocky pass opened toward Gascony. Here no sign of cultivation appeared. The rocks of granite that screened the glen rose abruptly from their base and stretched their barren points to the clouds, unvaried with woods and uncheered even by a hunter’s cabin. Sometimes, indeed, a gigantic larch threw its long shade over the precipice, and here and there a cliff reared

on its brow a monumental cross to tell the traveller the fate of him who had ventured thither before. This spot seemed the very haunt of banditti; and Emily, as she looked down upon it, almost expected to see them stealing out from some hollow cave to look for their prey. Soon after an object not less terrific struck her—a gibbet standing on a point of rock near the entrance of the pass, and immediately over one of the crosses she had before observed. These were hieroglyphics that told a plain and dreadful story. She forbore to point it out to St. Aubert, but it threw a gloom over her spirits and made her anxious to hasten forward, that they might with certainty reach Roussillon before nightfall. It was necessary, however, that St. Aubert should take some refreshment, and seating themselves on the short dry turf, they opened the basket of provisions.

St. Aubert was revived by rest, and by the serene air of this summit, and Valancourt was so charmed with all around and with the conversation of his companions that he seemed to have forgotten he had any further to go. Having concluded their simple repast, they gave a long farewell look to the scene, and again began to ascend. St. Aubert rejoiced when he reached the carriage, which Emily entered with him; but Valancourt, desiring a more extensive view of the enchanting country into which they were about to descend than the carriage offered, loosened his dogs and once more bounded with them along the banks of the road. He often quitted it for points that promised a wider prospect, and the slow pace at which the mules travelled allowed him to overtake the carriage with ease. Whenever a scene of uncommon magnificence appeared, he hastened to inform St. Aubert, who, though he was too much tired to walk himself, sometimes made the carriage wait while Emily went to the neighbouring cliff.

It was evening when they descended the lower alps that bind Roussillon and form a majestic barrier round that charming country, leaving it open only on the east to the Mediterranean. The gay tints of cultivation once more beautified the landscape, for the lowlands were coloured with the richest hues which a luxuriant climate and an industrious people can awaken into life. Groves of orange and lemon perfumed the air, their ripe fruit glowing among the foliage; while, sloping to the plains, extensive vineyards spread their treasures. Beyond these, woods and pastures and mingled towns and hamlets stretched towards the sea, on whose bright surface gleamed many a distant sail; while, over the whole scene, was diffused the purple glow of evening. This landscape with the surrounding alps did, indeed, present a perfect picture of the lovely and the sublime, of “beauty sleeping in the lap of horror.”⁹

The travellers, having reached the plains, proceeded between hedges of

9. Reworded from William Gilpin's *Observations Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1772, on Several Parts of England*, “Beauty lying in the lap of Horror.”

flowering myrtle and pomegranate to the town of Arles, where they proposed to rest for the night. They met with simple but neat accommodation, and would have passed a happy evening after the toils and the delights of this day had not the approaching separation thrown a gloom over their spirit. It was St. Aubert's plan to proceed on the morrow to the borders of the Mediterranean and travel along its shores into Languedoc, and Valancourt, since he was now nearly recovered and had no longer a pretence for continuing with his new friends, resolved to leave them here. St. Aubert, who was much pleased with him, invited him to go further but did not repeat the invitation, and Valancourt had resolution enough to forgo the temptation of accepting it, that he might prove himself not unworthy of the favour. On the following morning, therefore, they were to part, St. Aubert to pursue his way to Languedoc, and Valancourt to explore new scenes among the mountains on his return home. During this evening he was often silent and thoughtful; St. Aubert's manner towards him was affectionate, though grave, and Emily was serious, though she made frequent efforts to appear cheerful. After one of the most melancholy evenings they had yet passed together, they separated for the night.