

***THE GHOST-  
SEER***

***OR APPARITIONIST  
AND SPORT OF DESTINY***

***BOOK I***

**By Friedrich Schiller**

## BOOK I.

### FROM THE PAPERS OF COUNT O — — —

I am about to relate an adventure which to many will appear incredible, but of which I was in great part an eye-witness. The few who are acquainted with a certain political event will, if indeed these pages should happen to find them alive, receive a welcome solution thereof. And, even to the rest of my readers, it will be, perhaps, important as a contribution to the history of the deception and aberrations of the human intellect. The boldness of the schemes which malice is able to contemplate and to carry out must excite astonishment, as must also the means of which it can avail itself to accomplish its aims. Clear, unvarnished truth shall guide my pen; for, when these pages come before the public, I shall be no more, and shall therefore never learn their fate.

On my return to Courland in the year 17—, about the time of the Carnival, I visited the Prince of — — — at Venice. We had been acquainted in the — — — service, and we here renewed an intimacy which, by the restoration of peace, had been interrupted. As I wished to see

the curiosities of this city, and as the prince was waiting only for the arrival of remittances to return to his native country, he easily prevailed on me to tarry till his departure. We agreed not to separate during the time of our residence at Venice, and the prince was kind enough to accommodate me at his lodgings at the Moor Hotel.

As the prince wished to enjoy himself, and his small revenues did not permit him to maintain the dignity of his rank, he lived at Venice in the strictest incognito. Two noblemen, in whom he had entire confidence, and a few faithful servants, composed all his retinue. He shunned expenditure, more however from inclination than economy. He avoided all kinds of dissipation, and up to the age of thirty-five years had resisted the numerous allurements of this voluptuous city. To the charms of the fair sex he was wholly indifferent. A settled gravity and an enthusiastic melancholy were the prominent features of his character. His affections were tranquil, but obstinate to excess. He formed his attachments with caution and

timidity, but when once formed they were cordial and permanent. In the midst of a tumultuous crowd he walked in solitude. Wrapped in his own visionary ideas, he was often a stranger to the world about him; and, sensible of his own deficiency in the knowledge of mankind, he scarcely ever ventured an opinion of his own, and was apt to pay an unwarrantable deference to the judgment of others. Though far from being weak, no man was more liable to be governed; but, when conviction had once entered his mind, he became firm and decisive; equally courageous to combat an acknowledged prejudice or to die for a new one.

As he was the third prince of his house, he had no likely prospect of succeeding to the sovereignty. His ambition had never been awakened; his passions had taken another direction. Contented to find himself independent of the will of others, he never enforced his own as a law; his utmost wishes did not soar beyond the peaceful quietude of a private life, free from care. He read much, but without discrimination. As his education had been neglected, and, as he had early entered the career of arms, his understanding had never been fully matured. Hence the knowledge he afterwards acquired served but to increase the chaos of his ideas, because it was built on an unstable foundation.

He was a Protestant, as all his family had been, by birth, but not by investigation, which he had never attempted, although at one period of his life he had been an enthusiast in its cause. He had never, so far as came to my knowledge, been a freemason.

One evening we were, as usual, walking by ourselves, well masked in the square of St. Mark. It was growing late, and the crowd was dispersing, when the prince observed a mask which followed us everywhere. This mask was an Armenian, and walked alone. We quickened our steps, and endeavored to baffle him by repeatedly altering our course. It was in vain, the mask was always close behind us. "You have had no intrigue here, I hope," said the prince at last, "the husbands of Venice are dangerous." "I do not know a single lady in the place," was my answer. "Let us sit down here, and speak German," said he; "I fancy we are mistaken for some other persons." We sat down upon a stone bench, and expected the mask would have passed by. He came directly up to us, and took his

seat by the side of the prince. The latter took out his watch, and, rising at the same time, addressed me thus in a loud voice in French, "It is past nine. Come, we forget that we are waited for at the Louvre." This speech he only invented in order to deceive the mask as to our route. "Nine!" repeated the latter in the same language, in a slow and expressive voice, "Congratulate yourself, my prince" (calling him by his real name); "he died at nine." In saying this, he rose and went away.

We looked at each other in amazement. "Who is dead?" said the prince at length, after a long silence. "Let us follow him," replied I, "and demand an explanation." We searched every corner of the place; the mask was nowhere to be found. We returned to our hotel disappointed. The prince spoke not a word to me the whole way; he walked apart by himself, and appeared to be greatly agitated, which he afterwards confessed to me was the case. Having reached home, he began at length to speak: "Is it not laughable," said he, "that a madman should have the power thus to disturb a man's tranquillity by two or three words?" We wished each other a goodnight; and, as soon as I was in my own apartment, I noted down in my pocket-book the day and the hour when this adventure happened. It was on a Thursday.

The next evening the prince said to me, "Suppose we go to the square of St. Mark, and seek for our mysterious Armenian. I long to see this comedy unravelled." I consented. We walked in the square till eleven. The Armenian was nowhere to be seen. We repeated our walk the four following evenings, and each time with the same bad success.

On the sixth evening, as we went out of the hotel, it occurred to me, whether designedly or otherwise I cannot recollect, to tell the servants where we might be found in case we should be inquired for. The prince remarked my precaution, and approved of it with a smile. We found the square of St. Mark very much crowded. Scarcely had we advanced thirty steps when I perceived the Armenian, who was pressing rapidly through the crowd, and seemed to be in search of some one. We were just approaching him, when Baron F— —, one of the prince's retinue, came up to us quite breathless, and delivered to the prince a letter. "It is sealed with

black," said he, "and we supposed from this that it might contain matters of importance." I was struck as with a thunderbolt. The prince went near a torch, and began to read. "My cousin is dead!" exclaimed he. "When?" inquired I anxiously, interrupting him. He looked again into the letter. "Last Thursday night at nine."

We had not recovered from our surprise when the Armenian stood before us. "You are known here, my prince!" said he. "Hasten to your hotel. You will find there the deputies from the Senate. Do not hesitate to accept the honor they intend to offer you. Baron I—forgot to tell you that your remittances are arrived." He disappeared among the crowd.

We hastened to our hotel, and found everything as the Armenian had told us. Three noblemen of the republic were waiting to pay their respects to the prince, and to escort him in state to the Assembly, where the first nobility of the city were ready to receive him. He had hardly time enough to give me a hint to sit up for him till his return.

About eleven o'clock at night he returned. On entering the room he appeared grave and thoughtful. Having dismissed the servants, he took me by the hand, and said, in the words of Hamlet, "Count —

*"There are more things in heav'n and earth,*

*Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.'"*

"Gracious prince!" replied I, "you seem to forget that you are retiring to your pillow greatly enriched in prospect." The deceased was the hereditary prince.

"Do not remind me of it," said the prince; "for should I even have acquired a crown I am now too much engaged to occupy myself with such a trifle. If that Armenian has not merely guessed by chance"

"How can that be, my prince?" interrupted I.

"Then will I resign to you all my hopes of royalty in exchange for a monk's cowl."

I have mentioned this purposely to show how far every ambitious idea was then distant from his thoughts.

The following evening we went earlier than usual to the square of St. Mark. A sudden shower of rain obliged us to take shelter in a coffee-house, where we found a party engaged at cards. The prince took his place behind the chair of a Spaniard to observe the game. I went into an adjacent chamber to read the newspapers. A short time afterwards I heard a noise in the card-room. Previously to the entrance of the prince the Spaniard had been constantly losing, but since then he had won upon every card. The fortune of the game was reversed in a striking manner, and the bank was in danger of being challenged by the *pointeur*, whom this lucky change of fortune had rendered more adventurous. A Venetian, who kept the bank, told the prince in a very rude manner that his presence interrupted the fortune of the game, and desired him to quit the table. The latter looked coldly at him, remained in his place, and preserved the same countenance, when the Venetian repeated his insulting demand in French. He thought the prince understood neither French nor Italian; and, addressing himself with a contemptuous laugh to the company, said "Pray, gentlemen, tell me how I must make myself understood to this fool." At the same time he rose and prepared to seize the prince by the arm. His patience forsook the latter; he grasped the Venetian with a strong hand, and threw him violently on the ground. The company rose up in confusion. Hearing the noise, I hastily entered the room, and unguardedly called the prince by his name. "Take care," said I, imprudently; "we are in Venice." The name of the prince caused a general silence, which ended in a whispering which appeared to me to have a dangerous tendency. All the Italians present divided into parties, and kept aloof. One after the other left the room, so that we soon found ourselves alone with the Spaniard and a few Frenchmen. "You are lost, prince," said they, "if you do not leave the city immediately. The Venetian whom you have handled so roughly is rich enough to hire a bravo. It costs him but fifty zechins to be revenged by your death." The Spaniard offered, for the security of the prince, to go for the guards, and even to accompany us home himself. The Frenchmen proposed to do the same. We were still deliberating what to do when the doors suddenly opened, and some officers of the Inquisition entered the room. They produced an order

of government, which charged us both to follow them immediately. They conducted us under a strong escort to the canal, where a gondola was waiting for us, in which we were ordered to embark. We were blindfolded before we landed. They led us up a large stone staircase, and through a long, winding passage, over vaults, as I judged from the echoes that resounded under our feet. At length we came to another staircase, and, having descended a flight of steps, we entered a hall, where the bandage was removed from our eyes. We found ourselves in a circle of venerable old men, all dressed in black; the hall was hung round with black and dimly lighted. A dead silence reigned in the assembly, which inspired us with a feeling of awe. One of the old men, who appeared to be the principal Inquisitor, approached the prince with a solemn countenance, and said, pointing to the Venetian, who was led forward:

"Do you recognize this man as the same who offended you at the coffee-house?"

"I do," answered the prince.

Then addressing the prisoner: "Is this the same person whom you meant to have assassinated to-night?"

The prisoner replied, "Yes."

In the same instant the circle opened, and we saw with horror the head of the Venetian severed from his body.

"Are you content with this satisfaction?" said the Inquisitor. The prince had fainted in the arms of his attendants. "Go," added the Inquisitor, turning to me, with a terrible voice, "Go; and in future judge less hastily of the administration of justice in Venice."

Who the unknown friend was who had thus saved us from inevitable death, by interposing in our behalf the active arm of justice, we could not conjecture. Filled with terror we reached our hotel. It was past midnight. The chamberlain, Z — — —, was waiting anxiously for us at the door.

"How fortunate it was that you sent us a message," said he to the prince, as he lighted us up the staircase. "The news which Baron F — — soon after brought us respecting you from the square of St. Mark would otherwise have given us the greatest uneasiness."

"I sent you a message!" said the prince. "When? I know nothing of it."

"This evening, after eight, you sent us word that we must not be alarmed if you should come home later to-night than usual."

The prince looked at me. "Perhaps you have taken this precaution without mentioning it to me."

I knew nothing of it.

"It must be so, however," replied the chamberlain, "since here is your repeating-watch, which you sent me as a mark of authenticity."

The prince put his hand to his watch-pocket. It was empty, and he recognized the watch which the chamberlain held as his own.

"Who brought it?" said he, in amazement.

"An unknown mask, in an Armenian dress, who disappeared immediately."

We stood looking at each other. "What do you think of this?" said the prince at last, after a long silence. "I have a secret guardian here in Venice."

The frightful transaction of this night threw the prince into a fever, which confined him to his room for a week. During this time our hotel was crowded with Venetians and strangers, who visited the prince from a deference to his newly-discovered rank. They vied with each other in offers of service, and it was not a little entertaining to observe that the last visitor seldom failed to hint some suspicion derogatory to the character of the preceding one. Billets-doux and nostrums poured in upon us from all quarters. Every one endeavored to recommend himself in his own way. Our adventure with the Inquisition was no more mentioned. The court of — — — —, wishing the prince to delay his departure from Venice



for some time, orders were sent to several bankers to pay him considerable sums of money. He was thus, against his will, compelled to protract his residence in Italy; and at his request I also resolved to postpone my departure for some time longer.

As soon as the prince had recovered strength enough to quit his chamber he was advised by his physician to take an airing in a gondola upon the Brenta, for the benefit of the air, to which, as the weather was serene, he readily consented. Just as the prince was about to step into the boat he missed the key of a little chest in which some very valuable papers were enclosed.. We immediately turned back to search for it. He very distinctly remembered that he had locked the chest the day before, and he had never left the room in the interval. As our endeavors to find it proved ineffectual, we were obliged to relinquish the search in order to avoid being too late. The prince, whose soul was above suspicion, gave up the key as lost, and desired that it might not be mentioned any more.

Our little voyage was exceedingly delightful. A picturesque country, which at every winding of the river seemed to increase in richness and beauty; the serenity of the sky, which formed a May day in the middle of February; the charming gardens and elegant countryseats which adorned the banks of the Brenta; the maestic city of Venice behind us, with its lofty spires, and a forest of masts, rising as it were out of the waves; all this afforded us one of the most splendid prospects in the world. We wholly abandoned ourselves to the enchantment of Nature's luxuriant scenery; our minds shared the hilarity of the day; even the prince himself lost his wonted gravity, and vied with us in merry jests and diversions. On landing about two Italian miles from the city we heard the sound of sprightly music; it came from a small village at a little distance from the Brenta, where there was at that time a fair. The place was crowded with company of every description. A troop of young girls and boys, dressed in theatrical habits, welcomed us in a pantomimical dance. The invention was novel; animation and grace attended their every movement. Before the dance was quite concluded the principal actress, who represented a queen, stopped suddenly, as if arrested by an invisible arm. Herself and those around her were motionless. The music ceased. The assembly was silent. Not a breath was to be heard, and the queen stood with her

eyes fixed on the ground in deep abstraction. On a sudden she started from her reverie with the fury of one inspired, and looked wildly around her. "A king is among us," she exclaimed, taking her crown from her head, and laying it at the feet of the prince. Every one present cast their eyes upon him, and doubted for some time whether there was any meaning in this farce; so much were they deceived by the impressive seriousness of the actress. This silence was at length broken by a general clapping of hands, as a mark of approbation. I looked at the prince. I noticed that he appeared not a little disconcerted, and endeavored to escape the inquisitive glances of the spectators. He threw money to the players, and hastened to extricate himself from the crowd.

We had advanced but a few steps when a venerable barefooted friar, pressing through the crowd, placed himself in the prince's path. "My lord," said he, "give the holy Virgin part of your gold. You will want her prayers." He uttered these words in a tone of voice which startled us extremely, and then disappeared in the throng.

In the meantime our company had increased. An English lord, whom the prince had seen before at Nice, some merchants of Leghorn, a German prebendary, a French abbe with some ladies, and a Russian officer, attached themselves to our party. The physiognomy of the latter had something so uncommon as to attract our particular attention. Never in my life did I see such various features and so little expression; so much attractive benevolence and such forbidding coldness in the same face. Each passion seemed by turns to have exercised its ravages on it, and to have successively abandoned it. Nothing remained but the calm, piercing look of a person deeply skilled in the knowledge of mankind; but it was a look that abashed every one on whom it was directed. This extraordinary man followed us at a distance, and seemed apparently to take but little interest in what was passing.

We came to a booth where there was a lottery. The ladies bought shares. We followed their example, and the prince himself purchased a ticket. He won a snuffbox. As he opened it I saw him turn pale and start back. It contained his lost key.

"How is this?" said he to me, as we were left for a moment alone. "A superior power attends me, omniscience surrounds me. An

invisible being, whom I cannot escape, watches over my steps. I must seek for the Armenian, and obtain an explanation from him."

The sun was setting when we arrived at the pleasurehouse, where a supper had been prepared for us. The prince's name had augmented our company to sixteen. Besides the above-mentioned persons there was a virtuoso from Rome, several Swiss gentlemen, and an adventurer from Palermo in regimentals, who gave himself out for a captain. We resolved to spend the evening where we were, and to return home by torchlight. The conversation at table was lively. The prince could not forbear relating his adventure of the key, which excited general astonishment. A warm dispute on the subject presently took place. Most of the company positively maintained that the pretended occult sciences were nothing better than juggling tricks. The French abbe, who had drunk rather too much wine, challenged the whole tribe of ghosts, the English lord uttered blasphemies, and the musician made a cross to exorcise the devil. Some few of the company, amongst whom was the prince, contended that opinions respecting such matters ought to be kept to oneself. In the meantime the Russian officer discoursed with the ladies, and did not seem to pay attention to any part of conversation. In the heat of the dispute no one observed that the Sicilian had left the room. In less than half an hour he returned wrapped in a cloak, and placed himself behind the chair of the Frenchman. "A few moments ago," said he, "you had the temerity to challenge the whole tribe of ghosts. Would you wish to make a trial with one of them?"

"I will," answered the abbe, "if you will take upon yourself to introduce one."

"That I am ready to do," replied the Sicilian, turning to us, "as soon as these ladies and gentlemen have left us."

"Why only then?" exclaimed the Englishman. "A courageous ghost will surely not be afraid of a cheerful company."

"I would not answer for the consequences," said the Sicilian.

"For heaven's sake, no!" cried the ladies, starting affrighted from their chairs.

"Call your ghost," said the abbe, in a tone of defiance, "but warn him beforehand that there are sharp-pointed weapons here." At the same time he asked one of the company for a sword.

"If you preserve the same intention in his presence," answered the Sicilian, coolly, "you may then act as you please." He then turned towards the prince: "Your highness," said he, "asserts that your key has been in the hands of a stranger; can you conjecture in whose?"

"No"

"Have you no suspicion?"

"It certainly occurred to me that" —

"Should you know the person if you saw him?"

"Undoubtedly."

The Sicilian, throwing back his cloak, took out a looking-glass and held it before the prince. "Is this the man?"

The prince drew back with affright.

"Whom have you seen?" I inquired.

"The Armenian."

The Sicilian concealed his looking-glass under his cloak.

"Is it the person whom you thought of?" demanded the whole company.

"The same."

A sudden change manifested itself on every face; no more laughter was to be heard. All eyes were fixed with curiosity on the Sicilian.

"Monsieur l'Abbe! The matter grows serious," said the Englishman. "I advise you to think of beating a retreat."

"The fellow is in league with the devil," exclaimed the Frenchman, and rushed out of the house. The ladies ran shrieking from the room. The virtuoso followed them. The German prebendary was snoring in a chair. The Russian officer continued sitting in his place as before, perfectly indifferent to what was passing.

"Perhaps your attention was only to raise a laugh at the expense of that boaster," said the prince, after they were gone, "or would you indeed fulfil your promise to us?"

"It is true," replied the Sicilian; "I was but jesting with the abbe. I took him at his word, because I knew very well that the coward would not suffer me to proceed to extremities. The matter itself is, however, too serious to serve merely as a jest."

"You grant, then, that it is in your power?"

The sorcerer maintained a long silence, and kept his look fixed steadily on the prince, as if to examine him.

"It is!" answered he at last.

The prince's curiosity was now raised to the highest pitch. A fondness for the marvellous had ever been his prevailing weakness. His improved understanding and a proper course of reading had for some time dissipated every idea of this kind; but the appearance of the Armenian had revived them. He stepped aside with the Sicilian, and I heard them in very earnest conversation.

"You see in me," said the prince, "a man who burns with impatience to be convinced on this momentous subject. I would embrace as a benefactor, I would cherish as my best friend him who could dissipate my doubts and remove the veil from my eyes. Would you render me this important service?"

"What is your request!" inquired the Sicilian, hesitating.

"For the present I only beg some proof of your art. Let me see an apparition."

"To what will this lead?"

"After a more intimate acquaintance with me you may be able to judge whether I deserve further instruction."

"I have the greatest esteem for your highness, gracious prince. A secret power in your countenance, of which you yourself are as yet ignorant, drew me at first sight irresistibly towards you. You are more powerful than you are yourself aware. You may command me to the utmost extent of my power, but—"

"Then let me see an apparition."

"But I must first be certain that you do not require it from mere curiosity. Though the invisible powers are in some degree at my command, it is on the sacred condition that I do not abuse my authority."

"My intentions are most pure. I want truth."

They left their places, and removed to a distant window, where I could no longer hear them. The English lord, who had likewise overheard this conversation, took me aside. "Your prince has a noble mind. I am sorry for him. I will pledge my salvation that he has to do with a rascal."

"Everything depends on the manner in which the sorcerer will extricate himself from this business."

"Listen to me. The poor devil is now pretending to be scrupulous. He will not show his tricks unless he hears the sound of gold. There are nine of us. Let us make a collection. That will spoil his scheme, and perhaps open the eyes of the prince."

"I am content." The Englishman threw six guineas upon a plate, and went round gathering subscriptions. Each of us contributed some louis-d'ors. The Russian officer was particularly pleased with our proposal; he laid a bank-note of one hundred zechins on the plate, a piece of extravagance which startled the Englishman. We brought the collection to the prince. "Be so kind," said the English lord, "as to entreat this gentleman in our names to let us see a specimen of his art, and to accept of this small token of our gratitude." The prince added a ring of value, and offered the whole

to the Sicilian. He hesitated a few moments. "Gentlemen," answered he, "I am humbled by this generosity, but I yield to your request. Your wishes shall be gratified." At the same time he rang the bell. "As for this money," continued he, "to which I have no right myself, permit me to send it to the next monastery to be applied to pious uses. I shall only keep this ring as a precious memorial of the worthiest of princes."

Here the landlord entered; and the Sicilian handed him over the money. "He is a rascal notwithstanding," whispered the Englishman to me. "He refuses the money because at present his designs are chiefly on the prince."

"Whom do you wish to see?" asked the sorcerer.

The prince considered for a moment. "We may as well have a great man at once," said the Englishman. "Ask for Pope Ganganelli. It can make no difference to this gentleman."

The Sicilian bit his lips. "I dare not call one of the Lord's anointed."

"That is a pity!" replied the English lord; "perhaps we might have heard from him what disorder he died of."

"The Marquis de Lanoy," began the prince, "was a French brigadier in the late war, and my most intimate friend. Having received a mortal wound in the battle of Hastinbeck, he was carried to my tent, where he soon after died in my arms. In his last agony he made a sign for me to approach. 'Prince,' said he to me, 'I shall never again behold my native land. I must, therefore, acquaint you with a secret known to none but myself. In a convent on the frontiers of Flanders lives a — — — —' He expired. Death cut short the thread of his discourse. I wish to see my friend to hear the remainder."

"You ask much," exclaimed the Englishman, with an oath. "I proclaim you the greatest sorcerer on earth if you can solve this problem," continued he, turning to the Sicilian. We admired the wise choice of the prince, and unanimously gave our approval to the proposition. In the meantime the sorcerer paced up and down the room with hasty steps, apparently struggling with himself.

"This was all that the dying marquis communicated to you?"

"It is all."

"Did you make no further inquiries about the matter in his native country?"

"I did, but they all proved fruitless."

"Had the Marquis de Lanoy led an irreproachable life? I dare not call up every shade indiscriminately."

"He died, repenting the excesses of his youth."

"Do you carry with you any token of his!"

"I do." (The prince had really a snuff-box with the marquis' portrait enamelled in miniature on the lid, which he had placed upon the table near his plate during the time of supper.)

"I do not want to know what it is. If you will leave me you shall see the deceased."

He requested us to wait in the other pavilion until he should call us. At the same time he caused all the furniture to be removed from the room, the windows to be taken out, and the shutters to be bolted. He ordered the innkeeper, with whom he appeared to be intimately connected, to bring a vessel with burning coals, and carefully to extinguish every fire in the house. Previous to our leaving the room he obliged us separately to pledge our honor that we would maintain an everlasting silence respecting everything we should see and hear. All the doors of the pavilion we were in were bolted behind us when we left it.

It was past eleven, and a dead silence reigned throughout the whole house. As we were retiring from the saloon the Russian officer asked me whether we had loaded pistols. "For what purpose?" asked I. "They may possibly be of some use," replied he. "Wait a moment. I will provide some." He went away. The Baron F— — — and I opened a window opposite the pavilion we had left. We fancied we heard two persons whispering to each other, and a noise like that of a ladder applied to one of the windows. This was,



however, a mere conjecture, and I did not dare affirm it as a fact. The Russian officer came back with a brace of pistols, after having been absent about half an hour. We saw him load them with powder and ball. It was almost two o'clock in the morning when the sorcerer came and announced that all was prepared. Before we entered the room he desired us to take off our shoes, and to appear in our shirts, stockings, and under-garments. He bolted the doors after us as before.

We found in the middle of the room a large, black circle, drawn with charcoal, the space within which was capable of containing us all very easily. The planks of the chamber floor next to the wall were taken up all round the room, so that we stood as it were upon an island. An altar covered with black cloth was placed in the centre upon a carpet of red satin. A Chaldee Bible was laid open, together with a skull; and a silver crucifix was fastened upon the altar. Instead of candles some spirits of wine were burning in a silver vessel. A thick smoke of frankincense darkened the room and almost extinguished the lights. The sorcerer was undressed like ourselves, but barefooted; about his bare neck he wore an amulet, suspended by a chain of human hair; round his middle was a white apron marked with cabalistic characters and symbolical figures.

He desired us to join hands and to observe profound silence; above all he ordered us not to ask the apparition any question. He desired the Englishman and myself, whom he seemed to distrust the most, constantly to hold two naked swords crossways an inch above his head as long as the conjuration should last. We formed a half-moon round him; the Russian officer placed himself close to the English lord, and was the nearest to the altar. The sorcerer stood upon the satin carpet with his face turned to the east. He sprinkled holy water in the direction of the four cardinal points of the compass, and bowed three times before the Bible. The formula of the conjuration, of which we did not understand a word, lasted for the space of seven or eight minutes, at the end of which he made a sign to those who stood close behind to seize him firmly by the hair. Amid the most violent convulsions he called the deceased three times by his name, and the third time he stretched forth his hand towards the crucifix.

On a sudden we all felt at the same instant a stroke as of a flash of lightning, so powerful that it obliged us to quit each other's hands; a terrible thunder shook the house; the locks jarred; the doors creaked; the cover of the silver box fell down and extinguished the light; and on the opposite wall over the chimney-piece appeared a human figure in a bloody shirt, with the paleness of death on its countenance.

"Who calls me?" said a hollow, hardly intelligible voice.

"Thy friend," answered the sorcerer, "who respects thy memory, and prays for thy soul." He named the prince.

The answers of the apparition were always given at very long intervals.

"What does he want with me?" continued the voice.

"He wants to hear the remainder of the confession which then had begun to impart to him in thy dying hour, but did not finish."

"In a convent on the frontiers of Flanders lives a — — —"

The house again trembled; a dreadful thunder rolled; a flash of lightning illuminated the room; the doors flew open, and another human figure, bloody and pale as the first, but more terrible, appeared on the threshold. The spirit in the box began to burn again by itself, and the hall was light as before.

"Who is amongst us?" exclaimed the sorcerer, terrified, casting a look of horror on the assemblage; "I did not want thee." The figure advanced with noiseless and majestic steps directly up to the altar, stood on the satin Carpet over against us, and touched the crucifix. The first apparition was seen no more.

"Who calls me?" demanded the second apparition.

"The sorcerer began to tremble. Terror and amazement kept us motionless for some time. I seized a pistol. The sorcerer snatched it out of my hand, and fired it at the apparition. The ball rolled slowly upon the altar, and the figure emerged unaltered from the smoke. The Sorcerer fell senseless on the ground.

"What is this?" exclaimed the Englishman, in astonishment, aiming a blow at the ghost with a sword. The figure touched his arm, and the weapon fell to the ground. The perspiration stood on my brow with horror. Baron — — — afterwards confessed to me that he had prayed silently.

During all this time the prince stood fearless and tranquil, his eyes riveted on the second apparition. "Yes, I know thee," said he at length, with emotion; "thou art Lanoy; thou art my friend. Whence comest thou?"

"Eternity is mute. Ask me concerning my past life."

"Who is it that lives in the convent which thou mentionedst to me in thy last moments?"

"My daughter."

"How? Hast thou been a father?"

"Woe is me that I was not."

"Art thou not happy, Lanoy?"

"God has judged."

"Can I render thee any further service in this world?"

"None but to think of thyself."

"How must I do that?"

"Thou wilt learn at Rome."

The thunder again rolled; a black cloud of smoke filled the room; when it had dispersed the figure was no longer visible. I forced open one of the window shutters. It was daylight.

The sorcerer now recovered from his swoon. "Where are we?" asked he, seeing the daylight.

The Russian officer stood close beside him, and looked over his shoulder. "Juggler," said he to him, with a terrible countenance, "Thou shalt summon no more ghosts."

The Sicilian turned round, looked steadfastly in his face, uttered a loud shriek, and threw himself at his feet.

We looked all at once at the pretended Russian. The prince instantly recognized the features of the Armenian, and the words he was about to utter expired on his tongue. We were all as it were petrified with fear and amazement. Silent and motionless, our eyes were fixed on this mysterious being, who beheld us with a calm but penetrating look of grandeur and superiority. A minute elapsed in this awful silence; another succeeded; not a breath was to be heard.

A violent battering against the door roused us at last from this stupor. The door fell in pieces into the room, and several officers of justice, with a guard, rushed in. "Here they are, all together," said the leader to his followers. Then addressing himself to us, "In the name of the government," continued he, "I arrest you." We had no time to recollect ourselves; in a few moments we were surrounded. The Russian officer, whom I shall again call the Armenian, took the chief officer aside, and, as far as I in my confusion could notice, I observed him whisper a few words to the latter, and show him a written paper. The officer, bowing respectfully, immediately quitted him, turned to us, and taking off his hat, said "Gentlemen, I humbly beg your pardon for having confounded you with this impostor. I shall not inquire who you are, as this gentleman assures me you are men of honor." At the same time he gave his companions a sign to leave us at liberty. He ordered the Sicilian to be bound and strictly guarded. "The fellow is ripe for punishment," added he; "we have been searching for him these seven months."

The wretched sorcerer was really an object of pity. The terror caused by the second apparition, and by this unexpected arrest, had together overpowered his senses. Helpless as a child, he suffered himself to be bound without resistance. His eyes were wide open and immovable; his face was pale as death; his lips quivered convulsively, but he was unable to utter a sound. Every moment we expected he would fall into a fit. The prince was moved by the situation in which he saw him. He undertook to procure his

discharge from the leader of the police, to whom he discovered his rank. "Do you know, gracious prince," said the officer, "for whom your highness is so generously interceding? The juggling tricks by which he endeavored to deceive you are the least of his crimes. We have secured his accomplices; they depose terrible facts against him. He may think himself fortunate if he is only punished with the galleys."

In the meantime we saw the innkeeper and his family led bound through the yard. "This man, too?" said the prince; "and what is his crime?"

"He was his comrade and accomplice," answered the officer. "He assisted him in his deceptions and robberies, and shared the booty with him. Your highness shall be convinced of it presently. Search the house," continued he, turning to his followers, "and bring me immediate notice of what you find."

The prince looked around for the Armenian, but he had disappeared. In the confusion occasioned by the arrival of the watch he had found means to steal away unperceived. The prince was inconsolable; he declared he would send all his servants, and would himself go in search of this mysterious man; and he wished me to go with him. I hastened to the window; the house was surrounded by a great number of idlers, whom the account of this event had attracted to the spot. It was impossible to get through the crowd. I represented this to the prince. "If," said I, "it is the Armenian's intention to conceal himself from us, he is doubtless better acquainted with the intricacies of the place than we, and all our inquiries would prove fruitless. Let us rather remain here a little longer, gracious prince," added I. "This officer, to whom, if I observed right, he discovered himself, may perhaps give us some information respecting him."

We now for the first time recollected that we were still undressed. We hastened to the other pavilion and put on our clothes as quickly as possible. When we returned they had finished searching the house.

On removing the altar and some of the boards of the floor a spacious vault was discovered. It was high enough, for a man might

sit upright in it with ease, and was separated from the cellar by a door and a narrow staircase. In this vault they found an electrical machine, a clock, and a little silver bell, which, as well as the electrical machine, was in communication with the altar and the crucifix that was fastened upon it. A hole had been made in the window-shutter opposite the chimney, which opened and shut with a slide. In this hole, as we learnt afterwards, was fixed a magic lantern, from which the figure of the ghost had been reflected on the opposite wall, over the chimney. From the garret and the cellar they brought several drums, to which large leaden bullets were fastened by strings; these had probably been used to imitate the roaring of thunder which we had heard.

On searching the Sicilian's clothes they found, in a case, different powders, genuine mercury in vials and boxes, phosphorus in a glass bottle, and a ring, which we immediately knew to be magnetic, because it adhered to a steel button that by accident had been placed near it. In his coat-pockets were found a rosary, a Jew's beard, a dagger, and a brace of pocket-pistols. "Let us see whether they are loaded," said one of the watch, and fired up the chimney.

"Jesus Maria!" cried a hollow voice, which we knew to be that of the first apparition, and at the same instant a bleeding person came tumbling down the chimney. "What! not yet laid, poor ghost!" cried the Englishman, while we started back in affright. "Home to thy grave. Thou hast appeared what thou wert not; now thou wilt become what thou didst but seem."

"Jesus Maria! I am wounded," repeated the man in the chimney. The ball had fractured his right leg. Care was immediately taken to have the wound dressed.

"But who art thou?" said the English lord; "and what evil spirit brought thee here?"

"I am a poor mendicant friar," answered the wounded man; "a strange gentleman gave me a zechin to —"

"Repeat a speech. And why didst thou not withdraw as soon as thy task was finished?"

I was waiting for a signal which we had agreed on to continue my speech; but as this signal was not given, I was endeavoring to get away, when I found the ladder had been removed"

"And what was the formula he taught thee?"

The wounded man fainted away; nothing more could be got from him. In the meantime the prince turned towards the principal officer of the watch, giving him at the same time some pieces of gold. "You have rescued us," said he, "from the hands of an impostor, and done us justice without even knowing who we were; would you increase our gratitude by telling us the name of the stranger who, by speaking only a few words, was able to procure us our liberty."

"Whom do you mean?" inquired the party addressed, with an air which plainly showed that the question was useless.

"The gentleman in a Russian uniform, who took you aside, showed you a written paper, and whispered a few words, in consequence of which you immediately set us free."

"Do not you know the gentleman? Was he not one of your company?"

"No," answered the prince; "and I have very important reasons for wishing to be more intimately acquainted with him."

"I know very little of him myself. Even his name is unknown to me, and I saw him to-day for the first time in my life."

"How? And was he in so short a time, and by using only a few words, able to convince you both of our innocence and his own?"

"Undoubtedly, with a single word."

"And this was? I confess I wish to know it."

"This stranger, my prince," said the officer, weighing the zechins in his hand, — "you have been too generous for me to make a secret of it any longer, — this stranger is an officer of the Inquisition."

"Of the Inquisition? This man?"

"He is, indeed, gracious prince. I was convinced of it by the paper which he showed to me."

"This man, did you say? That cannot be."

"I will tell your highness more. It was upon his information that I have been sent here to arrest the sorcerer."

We looked at each other in the utmost astonishment.

"Now we know," said the English lord at length, "why the poor devil of a sorcerer started in such a terror when he looked more closely into his face. He knew him to be a spy, and that is why he uttered that shriek, and fell down before him."

"No!" interrupted the prince. "This man is whatever he wishes to be, and whatever the moment requires him to be. No mortal ever knew what he really was. Did you not see the knees of the Sicilian sink under him, when he said, with that terrible voice: 'Thou shalt summon no more ghosts?' There is something inexplicable in this matter. No person can persuade me that one man should be thus alarmed at the sight of another."

"The sorcerer himself will probably explain it the best," said the English lord, "if that gentleman," pointing to the officer, "will afford us an opportunity of speaking with his prisoner."

The officer consented to it, and, having agreed with the Englishman to visit the Sicilian in the morning, we returned to Venice.

Lord Seymour (this was the name of the Englishman) called upon us very early in the forenoon, and was soon after followed by a confidential person whom the officer had entrusted with the care of conducting us to the prison.

I forgot to mention that one of the prince's domestics, a native of Bremen, who had served him many years with the strictest fidelity, and had entirely gained his confidence, had been missing for several days. Whether he had met with any accident, whether he had been kidnapped, or had voluntarily absented himself, was a secret to every one. The last supposition was extremely improbable, as his



conduct had always been quiet and regular, and nobody had ever found fault with him. All that his companions could recollect was that he had been for some time very melancholy, and that, whenever he had a moment's leisure, he used to visit a certain monastery in the Giudecca, where he had formed an acquaintance with some monks. This induced us to suppose that he might have fallen into the hands of the priests and had been persuaded to turn Catholic; and as the prince was very tolerant, or rather indifferent about matters of this kind, and the few inquiries he caused to be made proved unsuccessful, he gave up the search. He, however, regretted the loss of this man, who had constantly attended him in his campaigns, had always been faithfully attached to him, and whom it was therefore difficult to replace in a foreign country. The very same day the prince's banker, whom he had commissioned to provide him with another servant, was announced at the moment we were going out. He presented to the prince a middle-aged man, well-dressed, and of good appearance, who had been for a long time secretary to a procurator, spoke French and a little German, and was besides furnished with the best recommendations. The prince was pleased with the man's physiognomy; and as he declared that he would be satisfied with such wages as his service should be found to merit, the prince engaged him immediately.

We found the Sicilian in a private prison where, as the officer assured us, he had been lodged for the present, to accommodate the prince, before being removed to the lead roofs, to which there is no access. These lead roofs are the most terrible prisons in Venice. They are situated on the top of the palace of St. Mark, and the miserable criminals suffer so dreadfully from the heat of the leads occasioned by the heat of the burning rays of the sun descending directly upon them that they frequently become delirious. The Sicilian had recovered from his yesterday's terror, and rose respectfully on seeing the prince enter. He had fetters on one hand and on one leg, but was able to walk about the room at liberty. The sentinel at the door withdrew as soon as we had entered.

"I come," said the prince, "to request an explanation of you on two subjects. You owe me the one, and it shall not be to your disadvantage if you grant me the other."

"My part is now acted," replied the Sicilian, "my destiny is in your hands."

"Your sincerity alone can mitigate your punishment.

"Speak, honored prince, I am ready to answer you. I have nothing now to lose."

"You showed me the face of the Armenian in a looking-glass. How was this effected?"

"What you saw was no looking-glass. A portrait in crayons behind a glass, representing a man in an Armenian dress, deceived you. My quickness, the twilight, and your astonishment favored the deception. The picture itself must have been found among the other things seized at the inn."

"But how could you read my thoughts so accurately as to hit upon the Armenian?"

"This was not difficult, your highness. You must frequently have mentioned your adventure with the Armenian at table in the presence of your domestics. One of my accomplices accidentally got acquainted with one of your domestics in the Giudecca, and learned from him gradually as much as I wished to know."

"Where is the man?" asked the prince; "I have missed him, and doubtless you know of his desertion."

"I swear to your honor, sir, that I know not a syllable about it. I have never seen him myself, nor had any other concern with him than the one before mentioned."

"Proceed with your story," said the prince.

"By this means, also, I received the first information of your residence and of your adventures at Venice; and I resolved immediately to profit by them. You see, prince, I am sincere. I was apprised of your intended excursion on the Brenta. I prepared for it, and a key that dropped by chance from your pocket afforded me the first opportunity of trying my art upon you."

"How! Have I been mistaken? The adventure of the key was then a trick of yours, and not of the Armenian? You say this key fell from my pocket?"

"You accidentally dropped it in taking out your purse, and I seized an opportunity, when no one noticed me, to cover it with my foot. The person of whom you bought the lottery-ticket acted in concert with me. He caused you to draw it from a box where there was no blank, and the key had been in the snuff-box long before it came into your possession."

"I understand you. And the monk who stopped me in my way and addressed me in a manner so solemn."

"Was the same who, as I hear, has been wounded in the chimney. He is one of my accomplices, and under that disguise has rendered me many important services."

"But what purpose was this intended to answer?"

"To render you thoughtful; to inspire you with such a train of ideas as should be favorable to the wonders I intended afterwards to show you."

"The pantomimical dance, which ended in a manner so extraordinary, was at least none of your contrivance?"

"I had taught the girl who represented the queen. Her performance was the result of my instructions. I supposed your highness would be not a little astonished to find yourself known in this place, and (I entreat your pardon, prince) your adventure with the Armenian gave me reason to hope that you were already disposed to reject natural interpretations, and to attribute so marvellous an occurrence to supernatural agency."

"Indeed," exclaimed the prince, at once angry and amazed, and casting upon me a significant look; "indeed, I did not expect this."

"But," continued he, after a long silence, "how did you produce the figure which appeared on the wall over the chimney?"

"By means of a magic lantern that was fixed in the opposite window-shutter, in which you have undoubtedly observed an opening."

"But how did it happen that not one of us perceived the lantern?" asked Lord Seymour.

"You remember, my lord, that on your re-entering the room it was darkened by a thick smoke of frankincense. I likewise took the precaution to place the boards which had been taken up from the floor upright against the wall near the window. By these means I prevented the shutter from immediately attracting observation. Moreover, the lantern remained covered by a slide until you had taken your places, and there was no further reason to apprehend that you would institute any examination of the saloon."

"As I looked out of the window in the other pavilion," said I, "I fancied I heard a noise like that of a person placing a ladder against the side of the house. Was I right?"

"Exactly; it was the ladder upon which my assistants stood to direct the magic-lantern."

"The apparition," continued the prince, "had really a superficial likeness to my deceased friend, and what was particularly striking, his hair, which was of a very light color, was exactly imitated. Was this mere chance, or how did you come by such a resemblance?"

"Your highness must recollect that you had at table a snuff-box by your plate, with an enamelled portrait of an officer in a uniform. I asked whether you had anything about you as a memento of your friend, and as your highness answered in the affirmative, I conjectured that it might be the box. I had attentively examined the picture during supper, and being very expert in drawing and not less happy in taking likenesses, I had no difficulty in giving to my shade the superficial resemblance you have perceived, the more so as the marquis' features are very marked."

"But the figure seemed to move?"

"It appeared so, yet it was not the figure that moved but the smoke on which the light was reflected."

"And the man who fell down in the chimney spoke for the apparition?"

"He did."

"But he could not hear your question distinctly."

"There was no occasion for it. Your highness will recollect that I cautioned you all very strictly not to propose any question to the apparition yourselves. My inquiries and his answers were preconcerted between us; and that no mistake might happen, I caused him to speak at long intervals, which he counted by the beating of a watch."

"You ordered the innkeeper carefully to extinguish every fire in the house with water; this was undoubtedly –"

"To save the man in the chimney from the danger of being suffocated; because the chimneys in the house communicate with each other, and I did not think myself very secure from your retinue."

"How did it happen," asked Lord Seymour, "that your ghost appeared neither sooner nor later than you wished him?"

"The ghost was in the room for some time before I called him, but while the room was lighted, the shade was too faint to be perceived. When the formula of the conjuration was finished, I caused the cover of the box, in which the spirit was burning, to drop down, the saloon was darkened, and it was not till then that the figure on the wall could be distinctly seen, although it had been reflected there a considerable time before."

"When the ghost appeared, we all felt an electric shock. How was that managed?"

"You have discovered the machine under the altar. You have also seen that I was standing upon a silk carpet. I directed you to form a half-moon around me, and to take each other's hands. When the

crisis approached, I gave a sign to one of you to seize me by the hair. The silver crucifix was the conductor, and you felt the electric shock when I touched it with my hand."

"You ordered Count O— — and myself," continued Lord Seymour, "to hold two naked swords crossways over your head, during the whole time of the conjuration; for what purpose?"

"For no other than to engage your attention during the operation; because I distrusted you two the most. You remember, that I expressly commanded you to hold the sword one inch above my head; by confining you exactly to this distance, I prevented you from looking where I did not wish you. I had not then perceived my principal enemy."

"I own," cried Lord Seymour, "you acted with due precaution— but why were we obliged to appear undressed?"

"Merely to give a greater solemnity to the scene, and to excite your imaginations by the strangeness of the proceeding."

"The second apparition prevented your ghost from speaking," said the prince. "What should we have learnt from him?"

"Nearly the same as what you heard afterwards. It was not without design that I asked your highness whether you had told me everything that the deceased communicated to you, and whether you had made any further inquiries on this subject in his country. I thought this was necessary, in order to prevent the deposition of the ghost from being contradicted by facts with which you were previously acquainted. Knowing likewise that every man in his youth is liable to error, I inquired whether the life of your friend had been irreproachable, and on your answer I founded that of the ghost."

"Your explanation of this matter is satisfactory," resumed the prince, after a short silence; "but there remains a principal circumstance which I must ask you to clear up."

"If it be in my power, and— "

"No conditions! Justice, in whose hands you now are, might perhaps not interrogate you with so much delicacy. Who was this unknown at whose feet we saw you fall? What do you know of him? How did you get acquainted with him? And in what way was he connected with the appearance of the second apparition?"

"Your highness" –

"On looking at him more attentively, you gave a loud scream, and fell at his feet. What are we to understand by that?"

"This man, your highness" – He stopped, grew visibly perplexed, and with an embarrassed countenance looked around him. "Yes, prince, by all that is sacred, this unknown is a terrible being."

"What do you know of him? What connection have you with him? Do not hope to conceal the truth from us."

"I shall take care not to do so, – for who will warrant that he is not among us at this very moment?"

"Where? Who?" exclaimed we altogether, half-amused, half-startled, looking about the room. "That is impossible."

"Oh! to this man, or whatever he may be, things still more incomprehensible are possible."

"But who is he? Whence comes he? Is he an Armenian or a Russian? Of the characters he assumes, which is his real one?"

"He is nothing of what he appears to be. There are few conditions or countries of which he has not worn the mask. No person knows who he is, whence he comes, or whither he goes. That he has been for a long time in Egypt, as many pretend, and that he has brought from thence, out of a catacomb, his, occult sciences, I will neither affirm nor deny. Here we only know him by the name of the Incomprehensible. How old, for instance, do you suppose he is?"

"To judge from his appearance he can scarcely have passed forty."

"And of what age do you suppose I am?"

"Not far from fifty."

"Quite right; and I must tell you that I was but a boy of seventeen when my grandfather spoke to me of this marvellous man whom he had seen at Famagusta; at which time he appeared nearly of the same age as he does at present."

"This is exaggerated, ridiculous, and incredible."

"By no means. Were I not prevented by these fetters I could produce vouchers whose dignity and respectability should leave you no room for doubt. There are several credible persons who remember having seen him, each, at the same time, in different parts of the globe. No sword can wound, no poison can hurt, no fire can burn him; no vessel in which he embarks can be wrecked. Time itself seems to lose its power over him. Years do not affect his constitution, nor age whiten his hair. Never was he seen to take any food. Never did he approach a woman. No sleep closes his eyes. Of the twenty-four hours in the day there is only one which he cannot command; during which no person ever saw him, and during which he never was employed in any terrestrial occupation."

"And this hour is?"

"The twelfth in the night. When the clock strikes twelve at midnight he ceases to belong to the living. In whatever place he is he must immediately be gone; whatever business he is engaged in he must instantly leave it. The terrible sound of the hour of midnight tears him from the arms of friendship, wrests him from the altar, and would drag him away even in the agonies of death. Whither he then goes, or what he is then engaged in, is a secret to every one. No person ventures to interrogate, still less to follow him. His features, at this dreadful hour, assume a sternness of expression so gloomy and terrifying that no person has courage sufficient to look him in the face, or to speak a word to him. However lively the conversation may have been, a dead silence immediately succeeds it, and all around wait for his return in respectful silence without venturing to quit their seats, or to open the door through which he has passed."



"Does nothing extraordinary appear in his person when he returns?" inquired one of our party.

"Nothing, except that he seems pale and exhausted, like a man who has just suffered a painful operation, or received some disastrous intelligence. Some pretend to have seen drops of blood on his linen, but with what degree of veracity I cannot affirm."

"Did no person ever attempt to conceal the approach of this hour from him, or endeavor to preoccupy his mind in such a manner as to make him forget it?"

"Once only, it is said, he missed the appointed time. The company was numerous and remained together late in the night. All the clocks and watches were purposely set wrong, and the warmth of conversation carried him away. When the stated hour arrived he suddenly became silent and motionless; his limbs continued in the position in which this instant had arrested them; his eyes were fixed; his pulse ceased to beat. All the means employed to awake him proved fruitless, and this situation endured till the hour had elapsed. He then revived on a sudden without any assistance, opened his eyes, and resumed his speech at the very syllable which he was pronouncing at the moment of interruption. The general consternation discovered to him what had happened, and he declared, with an awful solemnity, that they ought to think themselves happy in having escaped with the fright alone. The same night he quitted forever the city where this circumstance had occurred. The common opinion is that during this mysterious hour he converses with his genius. Some even suppose him to be one of the departed who is allowed to pass twenty-three hours of the day among the living, and that in the twenty-fourth his soul is obliged to return to the infernal regions to suffer its punishment. Some believe him to be the famous Apollonius of Tyana; and others the disciple of John, of whom it is said, 'He shall remain until the last judgment.'"

"A character so wonderful," replied the prince, "cannot fail to give rise to whimsical conjectures. But all this you profess to know only by hearsay, and yet his behavior to you and yours to him, seemed to indicate a more intimate acquaintance. Is it not founded upon some particular event in which you have yourself been concerned? Conceal nothing from us."

The Sicilian looked at us doubtingly and remained silent.

"If it concerns something," continued the prince, "that you do not wish to be made known, I promise you, in the name of these two gentlemen, the most inviolable secrecy. But speak candidly and without reserve."

"Could I hope," answered the prisoner, after a long silence, "that you would not make use of what I am going to relate as evidence against me, I would tell you a remarkable adventure of this Armenian, of which I myself was witness, and which will leave you no doubt of his supernatural powers. But I beg leave to conceal some of the names."

"Cannot you do it without this condition?"

"No, your highness. There is a family concerned in it whom I have reason to respect."

"Let us hear your story."

"It is about five years ago," began the Sicilian, "that at Naples, where I was practising my art with tolerable success, I became acquainted with a person of the name of Lorenzo del M— — —, chevalier of the Order of St. Stephen, a young and rich nobleman, of one of the first families in the kingdom, who loaded me with kindnesses, and seemed to have a great esteem for my occult knowledge. He told me that the Marquis del M—nte, his father, was a zealous admirer of the cabala, and would think himself happy in having a philosopher like myself (for such he was pleased to call me) under his roof. The marquis lived in one of his country seats on the sea-shore, about seven miles from Naples. There, almost entirely secluded from the world, he bewailed, the loss of a beloved son, of whom he had been deprived by a terrible calamity. The chevalier gave me to understand that he and his family might perhaps have occasion to employ me on a matter of the most grave importance, in the hope of gaining through my secret science some information, to procure which all natural means had been tried in vain. He added, with a very significant look, that he himself might, perhaps at some future period, have reason to look upon me as the restorer of his

tranquillity, and of all his earthly happiness. The affair was as follows:—

"This Lorenzo was the younger son of the marquis, and for that reason had been destined for the church; the family estates were to descend to the eldest. Jeronymo, which was the name of the latter, had spent many years on his travels, and had returned to his country about seven years prior to the event which I am about to relate, in order to celebrate his marriage with the only daughter of the neighboring Count C— —tti. This marriage had been determined on by the parents during the infancy of the children, in order to unite the large fortunes of the two houses. But though this agreement was made by the two families, without consulting the hearts of the parties concerned, the latter had mutually pledged their faith to each other in secret. Jeronymo del M— — — and Antonia C— — had been brought up together, and the little restraint imposed on two children, whom their parents were already accustomed to regard as destined for each other, soon produced between them a connection of the tenderest kind; the congeniality of their tempers cemented this intimacy; and in later years it ripened insensibly into love. An absence of four years, far from cooling this passion, had only served to inflame it; and Jeronymo returned to the arms of his intended bride as faithful and as ardent as if they had never been separated.

"The raptures occasioned by his return had not yet subsided, and the preparations for the happy day were advancing with the utmost zeal and activity, when the bridegroom disappeared. He used frequently to pass whole afternoons in a summer-house which commanded a prospect of the sea, and was accustomed to take the diversion of sailing on the water. One day, on an evening spent in this manner, it was observed that he remained absent a much longer time than usual, and his friends began to be very uneasy on his account. Messengers were despatched after him, vessels were sent to sea in quest of him; no person had seen him. None of his servants were missed; he must, therefore, have gone alone. Night came on, and he did not appear. The next morning dawned; the day passed, the evening succeeded—, Jeronymo came not. Already they had begun to give themselves up to the most melancholy conjectures when the news arrived that an Algerine pirate had landed the

preceeding day on that coast, and carried off several of the inhabitants. Two galleys which were ready for sea were immediately manned; the old marquis himself embarked in one of them, to attempt the deliverance of his son at the peril of his own life. On the third morning they perceived the corsair. They had the advantage of the wind; they were just about to overtake the pirate, and had even approached so near that Lorenzo, who was in one of the galleys, fancied that he saw upon the deck of the adversary's ship a signal made by his brother, when a sudden storm separated the vessels. Hardly could the damaged galleys sustain the fury of the tempest. The pirate in the meantime had disappeared, and the distressed state of the other vessels obliged them to land at Malta. The affliction of the family knew no bounds. The distracted old marquis tore his gray hairs in the utmost violence of grief; and fears were entertained for the life of the young countess. Five years were consumed in fruitless inquiries. Diligent search was made along all the coast of Barbary; immense sums were offered for the ransom of the poor marquis, but no person came forward to claim them. The only probable conjecture which remained for the family to form was, that the same storm which had separated the galleys from the pirate had destroyed the latter, and that the whole ship's company had perished in the waves.

"But, however this supposition might be, it did not by any means amount to a certainty, and could not authorize the family altogether to renounce the hope that the lost Jeronymo might again appear. In case, however, that he was really dead, either the family must become extinct, or the younger son must relinquish the church, and assume the rights of the elder. As justice, on the one hand, seemed to oppose the latter measure, so, on the other hand, the necessity of preserving the family from annihilation required that the scruple should not be carried too far. In the meantime through grief and the infirmities of age, the old marquis was fast sinking to his grave; every unsuccessful attempt diminished the hope of finding his lost son; he saw the danger of his family's becoming extinct, which might be obviated by a trifling injustice on his part, in consenting to favor his younger son at the expense of the elder. The consummation of his alliance with the house of Count C—tti required only that a name should be changed, for the object of the two families was equally accomplished, whether Antonia became

the wife of Lorenzo or of Jeronymo. The faint probability of the latter's appearing again weighed but little against the certain and pressing danger of the total extinction of the family, and the old marquis, who felt the approach of death every day more and more, ardently wished at least to die free from this inquietude.

"Lorenzo, however, who was to be principally benefited by this measure, opposed it with the greatest obstinacy. Alike unmoved by the allurements of an immense fortune, and the attractions of the beautiful and accomplished being whom his family were about to deliver into his arms, he refused, on principles the most generous and conscientious, to invade the rights of a brother, who perhaps was still alive, and might some day return to claim his own. 'Is not the lot of my dear Jeronymo,' said he, 'made sufficiently miserable by the horrors of a long captivity, that I should yet add bitterness to his cup of grief by stealing from him all that he holds most dear? With what conscience could I supplicate heaven for his return when his wife is in my arms? With what countenance could I hasten to meet him should he at last be restored to us by some miracle? And even supposing that he is torn from us forever, how can we better honor his memory than by keeping constantly open the chasm which his death has caused in our circle? Can we better show our respect to him than by sacrificing our dearest hopes upon his tomb, and keeping untouched, as a sacred deposit, what was peculiarly his own?'

"But all the arguments which fraternal delicacy could adduce were insufficient to reconcile the old marquis to the idea of being obliged to witness the extinction of a pedigree which nine centuries had beheld flourishing. All that Lorenzo could obtain was a respite of two years before leading the affianced bride of his brother to the altar. During this period they continued their inquiries with the utmost diligence. Lorenzo himself made several voyages, and exposed his person to many dangers. No trouble, no expense was spared to recover the lost Jeronymo. These two years, however, like those which preceded them, were in vain?"

"And the Countess Antonia?" said the prince, "You tell us nothing of her. Could she so calmly submit to her fate? I cannot suppose it."

"Antonia," answered the Sicilian, "experienced the most violent struggle between duty and inclination, between hate and admiration. The disinterested generosity of a brother's love affected her; she felt herself forced to esteem a person whom she could never love. Her heart was torn by conflicting sentiments. But her repugnance to the chevalier seemed to increase in the same degree as his claims upon her esteem augmented. Lorenzo perceived with heartfelt sorrow the grief that consumed her youth. A tender compassion insensibly assumed the place of that indifference with which, till then, he had been accustomed to regard her; but this treacherous sentiment quickly deceived him, and an ungovernable passion began by degrees to shake the steadiness of his virtue — a virtue which, till then, had been unequalled.

"He, however, still obeyed the dictates of generosity, though at the expense of his love. By his efforts alone was the unfortunate victim protected against the arbitrary proceedings of the rest of the family. But his endeavors were ineffectual. Every victory he gained over his passion rendered him more worthy of Antonia; and the disinterestedness with which he refused her left her no excuse for resistance.

"This was the state of affairs when the chevalier engaged me to visit him at his father's villa. The earnest recommendation of my patron procured me a reception which exceeded my most sanguine hopes. I must not forget to mention that by some remarkable operations I had previously rendered my name famous in different lodges of Freemasons, which circumstance may, perhaps, have contributed to strengthen the old marquis' confidence in me, and to heighten his expectations. I beg you will excuse me from describing particularly the lengths I went with him, and the means which I employed; you may judge of them from what I have already confessed to you. Profiting by the mystic books which I found in his very extensive library, I was soon able to converse with him in his own language, and to adorn my system of the invisible world with the most extraordinary inventions. In a short time I could make him believe whatever I pleased, and he would have sworn as readily as upon an article in the canon. Moreover, as he was very devout, and was by nature somewhat credulous, my fables received credence the more readily, and in a short time I had so completely surrounded

and hemmed him in with mystery that he cared for nothing that was not supernatural. In short I became the patron saint of the house. The usual subject of my lectures was the exaltation of human nature, and the intercourse of men with superior beings; the infallible Count Gabalis was my oracle.

"The young countess, whose mind since the loss of her lover had been more occupied in the world of spirits than in that of nature, and who had, moreover, a strong shade of melancholy in her composition, caught my hints with a fearful satisfaction. Even the servants contrived to have some business in the room when I was speaking, and seizing now and then one of my expressions, joined the fragments together in their own way.

"Two months were passed in this manner at the marquis' villa, when the chevalier one morning entered my apartment. A deep sorrow was painted on his countenance, his features were convulsed, he threw himself into a chair, with gestures of despair.

"'Captain,' said he, 'it is all over with me, I must begone; I can remain here no longer.'

"'What is the matter, chevalier? What ails you?'

"'Oh! this fatal passion!' said he, starting frantically from his chair. 'I have combated it like a man; I can resist it no longer.'

"'And whose fault is it but yours, my dear chevalier? Are they not all in your favor? Your father, your relations.'

"'My father, my relations! What are they to me? I want not a forced union, but one of inclination, Have not I a rival? Alas! and what a rival! Perhaps among the dead! Oh! let me go! Let me go to the end of the world, — I must find my brother.'

"'What! after so many unsuccessful attempts can you still cherish hope?'

"'Hope!' replied the chevalier; 'alas! no. It has long since vanished from my heart, but it has not from hers. Of what consequence are my sentiments? Can I be happy while there remains a gleam of hope in Antonia's heart? Two words, my friend, would end my torments.

But it is in vain. My destiny must continue to be miserable till eternity shall break its long silence, and the grave shall speak in my behalf.'

"Is it then a state of certainty that would render you happy?"

"Happy! Alas! I doubt whether I can ever again be happy. But uncertainty is of all others the most dreadful pain.'

"After a short interval of silence he suppressed his emotion, and continued mournfully, 'If he could but see my torments! Surely a constancy which renders his brother miserable cannot add to his happiness. Can it be just that the living should suffer so much for the sake of the dead, who can no longer enjoy earthly felicity? If he knew the pangs I suffer,' continued he, hiding his face on my shoulder, while the tears streamed from his eyes, 'yes, perhaps he himself would conduct her to my arms.'

"But is there no possibility of gratifying your wishes?"

"He started. 'What do you say, my friend?'"

"Less important occasions than the present,' said I, 'have disturbed the repose of the dead for the sake of the living. Is not the whole earthly happiness of a man, of a brother'

"The whole earthly happiness! Ah, my friend, I feel what you say is but too true; my entire felicity.'

"And the tranquillity of a distressed family, are not these sufficient to justify such a measure? Undoubtedly. If any sublunary concern can authorize us to interrupt the peace of the blessed, to make use of a power'

"For God's sake, my friend,' said he, interrupting me, no more of this. Once, I avow it, I had such a thought; I think I mentioned it to you; but I have long since rejected it as horrid and abominable.'

"You will have conjectured already," continued the Sicilian, "to what this conversation led us. I endeavored to overcome the scruples of the chevalier, and at last succeeded. We resolved to summon the spirit of the deceased Jeronymo. I only stipulated for



the delay of a fortnight, in order, as I pretended, to prepare myself in a suitable manner for so solemn an act. The time being expired, and my machinery in readiness, I took advantage of a very gloomy day, when we were all assembled as usual, to obtain the consent of the family, or rather, gradually to lead them to the subject, so that they themselves requested it of me. The most difficult part of the task was to obtain the approbation of Antonia, whose presence was most essential. My endeavors were, however, greatly assisted by the melancholy turn of her mind, and perhaps still more so by a faint hope that Jeronymo might still be living, and therefore would not appear. A want of confidence in the thing itself, or a doubt of my ability, was the only obstacle which I had not to contend with.

"Having obtained the consent of the family, the third day was fixed on for the operation. I prepared them for the solemn transaction by mystical instruction, by fasting, solitude, and prayers, which I ordered to be continued till late in the night. Much use was also made of a certain musical instrument, unknown till that time, and which, in such cases, has often been found very powerful. The effect of these artifices was so much beyond my expectation that the enthusiasm to which on this occasion I was obliged to force myself was infinitely heightened by that of my audience. The anxiously-expected hour at last arrived."

"I guess," said the prince, "whom you are now going to introduce. But go on, go on."

"No, your highness. The incantation succeeded according to my wishes."

"How? Where is the Armenian?"

"Do not fear, your highness. He will appear but too soon. I omit the description of the farce itself, as it would lead me to too great a length. Be it sufficient to say that it answered my utmost expectations. The old marquis, the young countess, her mother, Lorenzo, and a few others of the family, were present. You may imagine that during my long residence in this house I had not wanted opportunities of gathering information respecting everything that concerned the deceased. Several portraits of him enabled me to give the apparition the most striking likeness, and as I

suffered the ghost to speak only by signs, the sound of his voice could excite no suspicion.

"The departed Jeronymo appeared—in the dress of a Moorish slave, with a deep wound in his neck. You observe that in this respect I was counteracting the general supposition that he had perished in the waves, for I had reason to hope that the unexpectedness of this circumstance would heighten their belief in the apparition itself, while, on the other hand, nothing appeared to me more dangerous than to keep too strictly to what was natural."

"I think you judged rightly," said the prince. "In whatever respects apparitions the most probable is the least acceptable. If their communications are easily comprehended we undervalue the channel by which they are obtained. Nay, we even suspect the reality of the miracle if the discoveries which it brings to light are such as might easily have been imagined. Why should we disturb the repose of a spirit if it is to inform us of nothing more than the ordinary powers of the intellect are capable of teaching us? But, on the other hand, if the intelligence which we receive is extraordinary and unexpected it confirms in some degree the miracle by which it is obtained; for who can doubt an operation to be supernatural when its effect could not be produced by natural means? I interrupt you," added the prince. "Proceed in your narrative."

"I asked the ghost whether there was anything in this world which he still considered as his own," continued the Sicilian, "and whether he had left anything behind that was particularly dear to him? The ghost shook his head three times, and lifted up his hand towards heaven. Previous to his retiring he dropped a ring from his finger, which was found on the floor after he had disappeared. Antonia took it, and, looking at it attentively, she knew it to be the ring she had given her intended husband on their betrothal."

"The ring!" exclaimed the prince, surprised. "How did you get it?"

"Who? I? It was not the true one, your highness; I got it. It was only a counterfeit."

"A counterfeit!" repeated the prince. "But in order to counterfeit you required the true one. How did you come by it? Surely the deceased never went without it."

"That is true," replied the Sicilian, with symptoms of confusion. "But from a description which was given me of the genuine ring"

"A description which was given you! By whom?"

"Long before that time. It was a plain gold ring, and had, I believe, the name of the young countess engraved on it. But you made me lose the connection."

"What happened further?" said the prince, with a very dissatisfied countenance.

"The family felt convinced that Jeronymo was no more. From that day forward they publicly announced his death, and went into mourning. The circumstance of the ring left no doubt, even in the mind of Antonia, and added a considerable weight to the addresses of the chevalier.

"In the meantime the violent shock which the young countess had received from the sight of the apparition brought on her a disorder so dangerous that the hopes of Lorenzo were very near being destroyed forever. On her recovery she insisted upon taking the veil; and it was only at the most serious remonstrances of her confessor, in whom she placed implicit confidence, that she was induced to abandon her project. At length the united solicitations of the family, and of the confessor, forced from her a reluctant consent. The last day of mourning was fixed on for the day of marriage, and the old marquis determined to add to the solemnity of the occasion by making over all his estates to his lawful heir.

"The day arrived, and Lorenzo received his trembling bride at the altar. In the evening a splendid banquet was prepared for the cheerful guests in a hall superbly illuminated, and the most lively and delightful music contributed to increase the general gladness. The happy old marquis wished all the world to participate in his joy. All the entrances of the palace were thrown open, and every one

who sympathized in his happiness was joyfully welcomed. In the midst of the throng—"

The Sicilian paused. A trembling expectation suspended our breath.

"In-the midst of the throng," continued the prisoner, "appeared a Franciscan monk, to whom my attention was directed by the person who sat next to me at table. He was standing motionless like a marble pillar. His shape was tall and thin; his face pale and ghastly; his eyes were fixed with a grave and mournful expression on the new-married couple. The joy which beamed on the face of every one present appeared not on his. His countenance never once varied. He seemed like a statue among the living. Such an object, appearing amidst the general joy, struck me more forcibly from its contrast with everything around. It left on my mind so indelible an impression that from it alone I have been enabled (which would otherwise have been impossible) to recollect the features of the Franciscan monk in the Russian officer; for, without doubt, you must have already conceived that the person I have described was no other than your Armenian.

"I frequently attempted to withdraw my eyes from this terrible figure, but they wandered back involuntarily, and found his countenance unaltered. I pointed him out to the person who sat nearest to me on the other side, and he did the same to the person next to him. In a few minutes a general curiosity and astonishment pervaded the whole company. The conversation languished; a general silence succeeded; the monk did not heed it. He continued motionless as before; his grave and mournful looks constantly fixed upon the new-married couple; his appearance struck every one with terror. The young countess alone, who found the transcript of her own sorrow in the fact of the stranger, beheld with a melancholy satisfaction the only object that seemed to understand and sympathize in her sufferings. The crowd insensibly diminished. It was past midnight; the music became fainter and more languid; the tapers grew dim, and many of them went out. The conversation, declining by degrees, lost itself at last in secret murmurs, and the faintly illuminated hall was nearly deserted. The monk, in the meantime, continued motionless, with the same grave and mournful

look still fixed on the new-married couple. The company at length rose from the table; the guests dispersed; the family assembled in a separate group, and the monk, though uninvited, continued near them. How it happened that no person spoke to him I cannot conceive.

"The female friends now surrounded the trembling bride, who cast a supplicating and distressed look on the venerable stranger; he did not answer it. The gentlemen assembled in the same manner around the bridegroom. A solemn and anxious silence prevailed among them. 'That we should be so happy here together,' began at length the old marquis, who alone seemed not to behold the stranger, or at least seemed to behold him without dismay. 'That we should be so happy here together, and my son Jeronymo cannot be with us!'

"Have you invited him, and has he failed to come?' asked the monk. It was the first time he had spoken. We looked at him in alarm.

"Alas! he is gone to a place from whence there is no return,' answered the old man. 'Reverend father I you misunderstood me. My son Jeronymo is dead.'

"Perhaps he only fears to appear in this company,' replied the monk. 'Who knows how your son Jeronymo may be situated? Let him now hear the voice which he heard the last. Desire your son Lorenzo to call him.'

"What means he?' whispered the company to one another. Lorenzo changed color. I will not deny that my own hair began to stand on end.

"In the meantime the monk approached a sideboard; he took a glass of wine and carried to his lips. 'To the memory of our dear Jeronymo!' said he. 'Let every one who loved the deceased follow my example.'

"Be you who you may, reverend father!' exclaimed the old marquis, 'you have pronounced a name dear to us all, and you are heartily welcome here;' then turning to us, he offered us full glasses.

'Come, my friends!' continued he, 'let us not be surpassed by a stranger. The memory of my son Jeronymo!

"Never, I believe, was any toast less heartily received.

"There is one glass still unemptied," said the marquis. 'Why does my son Lorenzo refuse to drink this friendly toast?'

"Lorenzo, trembling, received the glass from the hands of the monk; tremblingly he put it to his lips. 'To my dearly-beloved brother Jeronymo!' he stammered out, and replaced the glass with a shudder.

"That was my murderer's voice!" exclaimed a terrible figure, which appeared suddenly in the midst of us, covered with blood, and disfigured with horrible wounds.

"Do not ask me the rest," added the Sicilian, with every symptom of horror in his countenance. "I lost my senses the moment I looked at this apparition. The same happened to every one present. When we recovered the monk and the ghost had disappeared; Lorenzo was writhing in the agonies of death. He was carried to bed in the most dreadful convulsions. No person attended him but his confessor and the sorrowful old marquis, in whose presence he expired. The marquis died a few weeks after him. Lorenzo's secret is locked in the bosom of the priest who received his last confession; no person ever learnt what it was.

"Soon after this event a well was cleaned in the farmyard of the marquis' villa. It had been disused for many years, and was almost closed up by shrubs and old trees. On digging among the rubbish a human skeleton was found. The house where this happened is now no more; the family del M—nte is extinct, and Antonia's tomb may be seen in a convent not far from Salerno.

"You see," continued the Sicilian, seeing us all stand silent and thoughtful, "you see how my acquaintance with this Russian officer, Armenian, or Franciscan friar originated. Judge now whether I had not good cause to tremble at the sight of a being who has twice placed himself in my way in a manner so terrible."

"I beg you will answer me one question more," said the prince, rising from his seat. "Have you been always sincere in your account of everything relating to the chevalier?"

"To the best of my knowledge I have," replied the Sicilian.

"You really believed him to be an honest man?"

"I did; by heaven! I did," answered he again.

"Even at the time he gave you the ring?"

"How! He gave me no ring. I did not say that he gave me the ring."

"Very well!" said the prince, pulling the bell, and preparing to depart. "And you believe" (going back to the prisoner) "that the ghost of the Marquis de Lanoy, which the Russian officer introduced after your apparition, was a true and real ghost?"

"I cannot think otherwise."

"Let us go!" said the prince, addressing himself to us. The gaoler came in. "We have done," said the prince to him. "You, sir," turning to the prisoner, "you shall hear further from me."

"I am tempted to ask your highness the last question you proposed to the sorcerer," said I to the prince, when we were alone. "Do you believe the second ghost to have been a real and true one?"

"I believe it! No, not now, most assuredly."

"Not now? Then you did once believe it?"

"I confess I was tempted for a moment to believe it something more than the contrivance of a juggler."

"And I could wish to see the man who under similar circumstances would not have had the same impression. But what reasons have you for retracting your opinion? What the prisoner has related of the Armenian ought to increase rather than diminish your belief in his super natural powers."

"What this wretch has related of him," said the prince, interrupting me very gravely. "I hope," continued he, "you have now no doubt but that we have had to do with a villain."

"No; but must his evidence on that account—"

"The evidence of a villain, even supposing I had no other reason for doubt, can have no weight against common sense and established truth. Does a man who has already deceived me several times, and whose trade it is to deceive, does he deserve to be heard in a cause in which the unsupported testimony of even the most sincere adherent to truth could not be received? Ought we to believe a man who perhaps never once spoke truth for its own sake? Does such a man deserve credit, when he appears as evidence against human reason and the eternal laws of nature? Would it not be as absurd as to admit the accusation of a person notoriously infamous against unblemished and irreproachable innocence?"

"But what motives could he have for giving so great a character to a man whom he has so many reasons to hate?"

"I am not to conclude that he can have no motives for doing this because I am unable to comprehend them. Do I know who has bribed him to deceive me? I confess I cannot penetrate the whole contexture of his plan; but he has certainly done a material injury to the cause he advocates by proving himself to be at least an impostor, and perhaps something worse."

"The circumstance of the ring, I allow, appears somewhat suspicious."

"It is more than suspicious," answered the prince; "it is decisive. He received this ring from the murderer, and at the moment he received it he must have been certain that it was from the murderer. Who but the assassin, could have taken from the finger of the deceased a ring which he undoubtedly never took off himself? Throughout the whole of his narration the Sicilian has labored to persuade us that while he was endeavoring to deceive Lorenzo, Lorenzo was in reality deceiving him. Would he have had recourse to this subterfuge if he had not been sensible how much he should lose in our estimation by confessing himself an accomplice with the



assassin? The whole story is visibly nothing but a series of impostures, invented merely to connect the few truths he has thought proper to give us. Ought I then to hesitate in disbelieving the eleventh assertion of a person who has already deceived me ten times, rather than admit a violation of the fundamental laws of nature, which I have ever found in the most perfect harmony?"

"I have nothing to reply to all this, but the apparition we saw yesterday is to me not the less incomprehensible."

"It is also incomprehensible to me, although I have been tempted to believe that I have found a key to it."

"How so?" asked I.

"Do not you recollect that the second apparition, as soon as he entered, walked directly up to the altar, took the crucifix in his hand, and placed himself upon the carpet?"

"It appeared so to me."

"And this crucifix, according to the Sicilian's confession, was a conductor. You see that the apparition hastened to make himself electrical. Thus the blow which Lord Seymour struck him with a sword was of course ineffectual; the electric stroke disabled his arm."

"This is true with respect to the sword. But the pistol fired by the Sicilian, the ball of which we heard roll slowly upon the altar?"

"Are you convinced that this was the same ball which was fired from the pistol?" replied the prince. "Not to mention that the puppet, or the man who represented the ghost, may have been so well accoutred as to be invulnerable by sword or bullet; but consider who it was that loaded the pistols."

"True," said I, and a sudden light broke upon my mind; "the Russian officer had loaded them, but it was in our presence. How could he have deceived us?"

"Why should he not have deceived us? Did you suspect him sufficiently to observe him? Did you examine the ball before it was

put into the pistol? May it not have been one of quicksilver or clay? Did you take notice whether the Russian officer really put it into the barrel, or dropped it into his other hand? But supposing that he actually loaded the pistols, what is to convince you that he really took the loaded ones into the room where the ghost appeared, and did not change them for another pair, which he might have done the more easily as nobody ever thought of noticing him, and we were besides occupied in undressing? And could not the figure, at the moment when we were prevented from seeing it by the smoke of the pistol, have dropped another ball, with which it had been beforehand provided, on the the altar? Which of these conjectures is impossible?"

"You are right. But that striking resemblance to your deceased friend! I have often seen him with you, and I immediately recognized him in the apparition."

"I did the same, and I must confess the illusion was complete. But if the juggler from a few stolen glances at my snuff-box was able to give to his apparition a resemblance, what was to prevent the Russian officer, who had used the box during the whole time of supper, who had had liberty to observe the picture unnoticed, and to whom I had discovered in confidence whom it represented, what was to prevent him from doing the same? Add to this what has been before observed by the Sicilian, that the prominent features of the marquis were so striking as to be easily imitated; what is there so inexplicable in this second ghost?"

"But the words he uttered? The information he gave you about your friend?"

"What?" said the prince, "Did not the Sicilian assure us, that from the little which he had learnt from me he had composed a similar story? Does not this prove that the invention was obvious and natural? Besides, the answers of the ghost, like those of an oracle, were so obscure that he was in no danger of being detected in a falsehood. If the man who personated the ghost possessed sagacity and presence of mind, and knew ever-so-little of the affair on which he was consulted, to what length might not he have carried the deception?"

"Pray consider, your highness, how much preparation such a complicated artifice would have required from the Armenian; how much time it takes to paint a face with sufficient exactness; how much time would have been requisite to instruct the pretended ghost, so as to guard him against gross errors; what a degree of minute attention to regulate every minor attendant or adventitious circumstance, which must be answered in some manner, lest they should prove detrimental! And remember that the Russian officer was absent but half an hour. Was that short space of time sufficient to make even such arrangements as were most indispensable? Surely, my prince, not even a dramatic writer, who has the least desire to preserve the three terrible unities of Aristotle, durst venture to load the interval between one act and another with such a variety of action, or to presume upon such a facility of belief in his audience."

"What! You think it absolutely impossible that every necessary preparation should have been made in the space of half an hour?"

"Indeed, I look upon it as almost impossible."

"I do not understand this expression. Does it militate against the physical laws of time and space, or of matter and motion, that a man so ingenious and so expert as this Armenian must undoubtedly be, assisted by agents whose dexterity and acuteness are probably not inferior to his own; favored by the time of night, and watched by no one, provided with such means and instruments as a man of this profession is never without – is it impossible that such a man, favored by such circumstances, should be able to effect so much in so short a time? Is it ridiculous or absurd to suppose, that by a very small number of words or signs he can convey to his assistants very extensive commissions, and direct very complex operations? Nothing ought to be admitted that is contrary to the established laws of nature, unless it is something with which these laws are absolutely incompatible. Would you rather give credit to a miracle than admit an improbability? Would you solve a difficulty rather by overturning the powers of nature than by believing an artful and uncommon combination of them?"

"Though the fact will not justify a conclusion such as you have condemned, you must, however, grant that it is far beyond our conception."

"I am almost tempted to dispute even this," said the prince, with a quiet smile. "What would you say, my dear count, if it should be proved, for instance, that the operations of the Armenian were prepared and carried on, not only during the half-hour that he was absent from us, not only in haste and incidentally, but during the whole evening and the whole night? You recollect that the Sicilian employed nearly three hours in preparation."

"The Sicilian? Yes, my prince."

"And how will you convince me that this juggler had not as much concern in the second apparition as in the first?"

"How so, your highness?"

"That he was not the principal assistant of the Armenian? In a word, how will you convince me that they did not co-operate?"

"It would be a difficult task to prove that," exclaimed I, with no little surprise.

"Not so difficult, my dear count, as you imagine. What! Could it have happened by mere chance that these two men should form a design so extraordinary and so complicated upon the same person, at the same time, and in the same place? Could mere chance have produced such an exact harmony between their operations, that one of them should play so exactly the game of the other? Suppose for a moment that the Armenian intended to heighten the effect of his deception, by introducing it after a less refined one – that he created a Hector to make himself his Achilles. Suppose that he has done all this to discover what degree of credulity he could expect to find in me, to examine the readiest way to gain my confidence, to familiarize himself with his subject by an attempt that might have miscarried without any prejudice to his plan; in a word, to tune the instrument on which he intended to play. Suppose he did this with the view of exciting my suspicions on one subject in order to divert my attention from another more important to his design. Lastly,

suppose he wishes to have some indirect methods of information, which he had himself occasion to practise, imputed to the sorcerer, in order to divert suspicion from the true channel."

"How do you mean?" said I.

"Suppose, for instance, that he may have bribed some of my servants to give him secret intelligence, or, perhaps, even some papers which may serve his purpose. I have missed one of my domestics. What reason have I to think that the Armenian is not concerned in his leaving me? Such a connection, however, if it existed, may be accidentally discovered; a letter may be intercepted; a servant, who is in the secret, may betray his trust. Now all the consequence of the Armenian is destroyed if I detect the source of his omniscience. He therefore introduces this sorcerer, who must be supposed to have some design upon me. He takes care to give me early notice of him and his intentions, so that whatever I may hereafter discover my suspicions must necessarily rest upon the Sicilian. This is the puppet with which he amuses me, whilst he himself, unobserved and unsuspected, is entangling me in invisible snares."

"We will allow this. But is it consistent with the Armenian's plan that he himself should destroy the illusion which he has created, and disclose the mysteries of his science to the eyes of the uninitiated?"

"What mysteries does he disclose? None, surely, which he intends to practise on me. He therefore loses nothing by the discovery. But, on the other hand, what an advantage will he gain, if this pretended victory over juggling and deception should render me secure and unsuspecting; if he succeeds in diverting my attention from the right quarter, and in fixing my wavering suspicions on an object the most remote from the real one! He could naturally expect that, sooner or later, either from my own doubts, or at the suggestion of another, I should be tempted to seek a key to his mysterious wonders, in the mere art of a juggler; how could he better provide against such an inquiry than by contrasting his prodigies with juggling tricks. By confining the latter within artificial limits, and by delivering, as it were, into my hands a scale by which to appreciate them, he naturally exalts and perplexes my ideas of the former. How many

suspicious he precludes by this single contrivance! How many methods of accounting for his miracles, which afterwards have occurred to me, does he refute beforehand!"

"But in exposing such a finished deception he has acted very much against his own interest, both by quickening the penetration of those whom he meant to impose upon, and by staggering their belief in miracles in general. Your highness' self is the best proof of the insufficiency of his plan, if indeed he ever had one."

"Perhaps he has been mistaken in respect to myself," said the prince; "but his conclusions have nevertheless been well founded. Could he foresee that I should exactly notice the very circumstance which threatens to become the key to the whole artifice? Was it in his plan that the creature he employed should render himself thus vulnerable? Are we certain that the Sicilian has not far exceeded his commission? He has undoubtedly done so with respect to the ring, and yet it is chiefly this single circumstance which determined my distrust in him. How easily may a plan, whose contexture is most artful and refined, be spoiled in the execution by an awkward instrument. It certainly was not the Armenian's intention that the sorcerer should trumpet his fame to us in the style of a mountebank, that he should endeavor to impose upon us such fables as are too gross to bear the least reflection. For instance, with what countenance could this impostor affirm that the miraculous being he spoke of must renounce all commerce with mankind at twelve in the night? Did we not see him among us at that very hour?"

"That is true," cried I. "He must have forgotten it."

"It often happens, to people of this description, that they overact their parts; and, by aiming at too much, mar the effects which a well-managed deception is calculated to produce."

"I cannot, however, yet prevail on myself to look upon the whole as a mere preconcerted scheme. What! the Sicilian's terror, his convulsive fits, his swoon, the deplorable situation in which we saw him, and which was even such as to move our pity, were all these nothing more than a studied part? I allow that a skilful performer may carry imitation to a very high pitch, but he certainly has no power over the organs of life."

"As for that, my friend," replied the prince, "I have seen Richard III. performed by Garrick. But were we at that moment sufficiently cool to be capable of observing dispassionately? Could we judge of the emotion of the Sicilian when we were almost overcome by our own? Besides, the decisive crisis even of a deception is so momentous to the deceiver himself that excessive anxiety may produce in him symptoms as violent as those which surprise excites in the deceived. Add to this the unexpected entrance of the watch."

"I am glad you remind me of that, prince. Would the Armenian have ventured to discover such a dangerous scheme to the eye of justice; to expose the fidelity of his creature to so severe a test? And for what purpose?"

"Leave that matter to him; he is no doubt acquainted with the people he employs. Do we know what secret crimes may have secured him the silence of this man? You have been informed of the office he holds in Venice; what difficulty will he find in saving a man of whom he himself is the only accuser?"

[This suggestion of the prince was but too well justified by the event. For, some days after, on inquiring after the prisoner, we were told that he had escaped, and had not since been heard of.]

"You ask what could be his motives for delivering this man into the hands of justice?" continued the prince. "By what other method, except this violent one, could he have wrested from the Sicilian such an infamous and improbable confession, which, however, was so material to the success of his plan? Who but a man whose case is desperate, and who has nothing to lose, would consent to give so humiliating an account of himself? Under what other circumstances could we have believed such a confession?"

"I grant all this, my prince. That the two apparitions were mere contrivances of art; that the Sicilian has imposed upon us a tale which the Armenian his master, had previously taught him; that the efforts of both have been directed to the same end, and, from this mutual intelligence all the wonderful incidents which have astonished us in this adventure may be easily explained. But the prophecy in the square of St. Mark, that first miracle, which, as it were, opened the door to all the rest, still remains unexplained; and

of what use is the key to all his other wonders if we despair of resolving this single one?"

"Rather invert the proposition, my dear count," answered the prince, "and say what do all these wonders prove if I can demonstrate that a single one among them is a juggling trick? The prediction, I own, is totally beyond my conception. If it stood alone; if the Armenian had closed the scene with it, instead of beginning it, I confess I do not know how far I might have been carried. But in the base alloy with which it is mixed it is certainly rather suspicious. Time may explain, or not explain it; but believe me, my friend!" added the prince, taking my hand, with a grave countenance,—"a man who can command supernatural powers has no occasion to employ the arts of a juggler; he despises them."

"Thus," says Count O— — —, "ended a conversation which I have related word for word, because it shows the difficulties which were to be overcome before the prince could be effectually imposed upon; and I hope it may free his memory from the imputation of having blindly and inconsiderately thrown himself into a snare, which was spread for his destruction by the most unexampled and diabolical wickedness. Not all," continues Count O— — —, "who, at the moment I am writing, smile contemptuously at the prince's credulity, and, in the fancied superiority of their own yet untempted understanding, unconditionally condemn him; not all of these, I apprehend, would have stood his first trial so courageously. If afterwards, notwithstanding this providential warning, we witness his downfall; if we see that the black design against which, at the very outset, he was thus cautioned, is finally successful, we shall be less inclined to ridicule his weakness than to be astonished at the infamous ingenuity of a plot which could seduce an understanding so fully prepared. Considerations of worldly interest can have no influence upon my testimony; he, who alone would be thankful for it, is now no more. His dreadful destiny is accomplished; his soul has long since been purified before the throne of truth, where mine will likewise have appeared before these passages meet the eyes of the world. Pardon the involuntary tears which now flow at the remembrance of my dearest friend. But for the sake of justice I must write this. His was a noble character, and would have adorned a



throne which, seduced by the most atrocious artifice, he attempted to ascend by the commission of a crime.

***Freeditorial*** 