

*Countess.* Unhappy girl!

*Zaida.* The very happiest in the world.

*Countess.* Ah! inexperienced creature!

*Zaida.* The happier for that perhaps.

*Countess.* But the sin!

*Zaida.* Where sin is, there must be sorrow: and I, my sweet sister, feel none whatever. Even when tears fall from my eyes, they fall only to cool my breast: I would not have one the fewer: they all are for him: whatever he does, whatever he causes, is dear to me.

*Countess (aside).* This is too much. I could hardly endure to have him so beloved by another, even at the extremity of the earth. (*To Zaida.*) You would not lead him into perdition.

*Zaida.* I have led him (Allah be praised!) to his wife and children. It was for those I left my father. He whom we love might have stayed with me at home: but there he would have been only half happy, even had he been free. I could not often let him see me through the lattice; I was too afraid: and I dared only once let fall the water-melon; it made such a noise in dropping and rolling on the terrace: but, another day, when I had pared it nicely, and had swathed it up well among vine-leaves, dipped in sugar and sherbet, I was quite happy. I leaped and danced to have been so ingenious. I wonder what creature could have found and eaten it. I wish he were here, that I might ask him if he knew.

*Countess.* He quite forgot home then!

*Zaida.* When we could speak together at all, he spoke perpetually of those whom the calamity of war had separated from him.

*Countess.* It appears that you could comfort him in his distress, and did it willingly.

*Zaida.* It is delightful to kiss the eye-lashes of the beloved: is it not? but never so delightful as when fresh tears are on them.

*Countess.* And even this too? you did this?

*Zaida.* Fifty times.

*Countess.* Insupportable!

He often then spoke about me?

*Zaida.* As sure as ever we met: for he knew I loved him the better when I heard him speak so fondly.

*Countess (to herself).* Is this possible? It may be . . . of the absent, the unknown, the unfearful, the unsuspected.

*Zaida.* We shall now be so happy, all three.

*Countess.* How can we all live together?

*Zaida.* Now he is here, is there no bond of union?

*Countess.* Of union? of union? (*Aside.*) Slavery is a frightful thing! slavery for life too! And she released him from it. What then? Impossible! impossible! (*To Zaida.*) We are rich . .

*Zaida.* I am glad to hear it. Nothing any where goes on well without riches.

*Countess.* We can provide for you amply . .

*Zaida.* Our husband . .

*Countess.* Our! . . husband! . .

*Zaida.* Yes, yes; I know he is yours too; and you, being the elder and having children, are lady above all. He can tell you how little I want: a bath, a slave, a dish of pilau, one jonquil every morning, as usual; nothing more. But he must swear that he has kissed it first. No, he need not swear it; I may always see him do it, now.

*Countess (aside).* She agonizes me. (*To Zaida.*) Will you never be induced to return to your own country? Could not Ludolph persuade you?

*Zaida.* He who could once persuade me anything, may now command me everything: when he says I must go, I go. But he knows what awaits me.

*Countess.* No, child! he never shall say it.

*Zaida.* Thanks, lady! eternal thanks! The breaking of his word would break my heart; and better that break first. Let the command come from you, and not from him.

*Countess (calling aloud).* Ludolph! Ludolph! hither! Kiss the hand I present to you, and never forget it is the hand of a preserver.

#### DANTE AND GEMMA DONATI.

*Gemma.* We have now been blessed with seven children, my dear husband!

*Dante.* And the newly-born, as always happens, is the fairest, lovely as were all the rest.

*Gemma.* Whether it so happens or not, we always think so, the mother in particular. And your tenderness is like a mother's.

*Dante.* What a sweet smile is that, my Gemma! But do not talk long, although you talk with the voice and the serenity of an angel. How fresh you look! escaped from so great a danger, and so recently. A smile is ever the most bright and beautiful with a tear upon it. What is the dawn without its dew? The tear is rendered by the smile precious above the smile itself.

There is something playful, I perceive, in your thoughts, my little wife! Can not you as readily

trust me with them as with the playfulness about them?

*Gemma.* I do not know whether I can.

*Dante.* Beware! I shall steady those lips with kisses if they are not soon more quiet. Irresolute! why do not you tell me at once what is thrilling and quivering at each corner of your beautiful mouth?

*Gemma.* I will, my Dante! But already it makes me graver.

Healthy as is the infant, it was predicted by the astrologer and caster of nativities, and the prediction has been confirmed by the most intelligent of nurses, that it must be our last.

*Dante.* While I look on it, I think I could not love another so well.

*Gemma.* And yet you have loved them

all equally, tenderest of fathers, best of husbands!

*Dante.* Say *happiest*, my Gemma! It was not always that you could have said it; and it may not be always; but it shall be now.

*Gemma.* Well spoken! yes, it shall. Therefore promise me that henceforward you will never again be a suitor for embassies abroad, or nail down your noble intellect to the coarse-grained wood of council-boards.

*Dante.* I can easily and willingly make that promise.

*Gemma.* Recollecting that they have caused you trouble enough already.

*Dante.* If they alone had occupied my mind, they would have contracted and abased it. The larger a plant is, the sooner it sickens and withers in close confinement, and in a place too low for it. But a mind that has never been strained to exertions, and troubled by anxieties, will never project far any useful faculty. The stream must swell before it fertilises. It is pleasant to gaze on green meadows and gentle declivities: but the soul, O my Gemma, that men look up to with long wonder, is suspended on rocks, and exposed to be riven by lightning. The eagle neither builds his nest nor pursues his quarry in the marsh.

*Gemma.* Should my Dante then in the piazza?

*Dante.* However, we must all, when called upon, serve our country as we can best.

*Gemma.* Despicable is the man who loveth not his country: but detestable is he who prefers even his country to her who worships him, supremely on earth, and solely.

*Dante.* To me a city is less than a home. The world around me is but narrow; the present age is but annual. I will plant my Tree in Paradise; I will water it with the waters of immortality; and my beloved shall repose beneath its shadow.

*Gemma.* O Dante! there are many who would be contented to die early, that after-ages might contemplate them as the lover did; young, ardent, radiant, uncrossed by fortune, and undisturbed by any anxiety but the gentlest. I am happier than poetry, with all its praise and all its fiction, could render me: let another be glorious. I have been truly blessed.

If Florence had never exiled you, if she had honoured you as highly as she must honour you hereafter, tell me, could you have loved her as you loved your Bice?

*Dante.* You also loved Bice.

*Gemma.* Answer me plainly and directly, sly evader!

*Dante.* We can hardly love the terrestrial as we love the heavenly. The stars that fall on the earth are not stars of eternal light; they are not our hope; they are not our guidance; they often blight, they never purify. Distinctions might have become too precious in my sight, if never a thought of her had intervened.

*Gemma.* Indignant as you were at the injustice of your fellow-citizens, did not the recollection

of the little maid honey your bitter bread, and quite console you?

*Dante.* I will pour into your faithful bosom not only all my present love, but all my past. I lost my country; I went into another; into many others. To men like me, irksome is it, O Gemma! to mount the stairs of princes; hard to beseech their favour; harder to feel the impossibility of requiting it; hardest of all to share it with the worthless. But I carried with me everywhere the memory of Bice: I carried with me that palladium which had preserved the citadel of my soul. Under her guard what evil could enter it? Before her image how faintly and evanescently fell on me the shadows of injury and grief!

*Gemma.* Brave, brave Dante! I love you for all things; nor least for your love of her. It was she, under God, who rendered you the perfect creature I behold in you. She animated you with true glory when she inspired you with the purity of her love. Worthier of it than I am, she left you on earth for me.

*Dante.* And with nothing on earth to wish beyond.

Ought I to be indignant that my country has neglected me? Do not men in all countries like those best who most resemble them? And would you wish me to resemble the multitude who are deluded? or would you rather that I were seated among the select who are in a situation to delude? My Gemma! I could never, by any knowledge or discipline, teach foxes to be honest, wolves to be abstemious, or vipers to be grateful. For the more ravenous I have excavated a pitfall, deep and durable as the foundations of the earth; to the reptile I toss the file. Let us love those who love us, and be contented to teach those who will hear us. Neither the voice nor the affections can extend beyond a contracted circle. But we may carry a wand with us and mark out with it that circle in every path of life. Never in future will I let men approach too near me. Familiarities are the aphides that imperceptibly suck out the juices intended for the germ of love. Contented with the few who can read my heart, and proud, my sweet Gemma, of the precious casket that encloses it, I am certainly this day the happiest of men.

*Gemma.* To-morrow you shall be happier.

*Dante.* By what possibility?

*Gemma.* It is too late in the evening to carry our infant to the baptismal font: but to-morrow, early in the morning, in the presence of God and angels, in the presence of the blessed Virgin, I name it Beatrice.

*Dante.* Gemma! she hears thee. Gemma! she loves thee for it more than she ever could love me: for this is heavenly.

*Gemma.* How much I owe her! Under her influence hath grown up into full maturity the happiness of my existence.

*Dante.* And of mine. Modesty is the bride-maid of Concord. She not only hangs her garland on the door of the nuptial chamber, but she bestrews with refreshing herbs the whole apartment

every day of life. Without her where is Harmony? or what is Beauty? Without her, the sight of returning spring has bitter pangs in it: without her, the songs of love in the woodland, and the symbols of mated innocence on the tree apart, afflict the bosom, sensitive no longer but to reminiscences and wrath. Can it be wondered that she who held my first affections holds them yet? the same spirit in another form, the same beauty in another countenance, the same expression in another

voice . . the girl Beatrice in the bride Gemma. O how much more than bride! but bride still!

*Gemma.* Kiss me, Dante! And now let me sleep! Gently! Do not disturb the child . . your Beatrice to-morrow. Further, further from the cradle! Your eyes upon her would surely awaken her. Beloved! beloved! how considerate and careful! I am sleepy . . can I sleep? I am too happy.

### GALILEO, MILTON, AND A DOMINICAN.

*Milton.* Friend! let me pass.

*Dominican.* Whither? To whom?

*Milton.* Into the prison; to Galileo Galilei.

*Dominican.* Prison! we have no prison.

*Milton.* No prison here! What sayest thou?

*Dominican.* Son! For heretical pravity indeed, and some other less atrocious crimes, we have a seclusion, a confinement, a penitentiary: we have a locality for softening the obdurate, and furnishing them copiously with reflection and recollection: but prison we have none.

*Milton.* Open!

*Dominican (to himself).* What sweetness! what authority! what a form! what an attitude! what a voice!

*Milton.* Open! delay me no longer.

*Dominican.* In whose name?

*Milton.* In the name of humanity and of God.

*Dominican.* My sight staggers: the walls shake: he must be . . . Do angels ever come hither?

*Milton.* Be reverent, and stand apart. [*To Galileo.*] Pardon me, sir, an intrusion.

*Galileo.* Young man! if I may judge by your voice and manner, you are little apt to ask pardon or to want it. I am as happy at hearing you as you seem unhappy at seeing me. I perceive at once that you are an Englishman.

*Milton.* I am.

*Galileo.* Speak then freely; and I will speak freely too. In no other man's presence, for these many years, indeed from my very childhood, have I done it.

*Milton.* Sad fate for any man! most sad for one like you! the follower of Truth, the companion of Reason in her wanderings on earth!

*Galileo.* We live among priests and princes and empoisoners. Your dog, by his growling, seems to be taking up the quarrel against them.

*Milton.* We think and feel alike in many things. I have observed that the horses and dogs of every country, bear a resemblance in character to the men. We English have a wonderful variety of both creatures. To begin with the horses: some are remarkable for strength, others for spirit; while in France there is little diversity of race; all are noisy and windy, skittish and mordacious, prancing and libidinous, fit only for a rope, and fond only of a riband. Where the riband is not to be had, the jowl of a badger will do: anything but what is native to the creature

is a decoration. In Flanders you find them slow and safe, tractable and substantial. In Italy there are few good for work, none for battle; many for light carriages, for standing at doors, and for every kind of street-work.

*Galileo.* Do let us get among the dogs.

*Milton.* In France they are finely combed and pert and pettish; ready to bite if hurt, and to fondle if caressed; without fear, without animosity, without affection. In Italy they creep and shiver and rub their skins against you, and insinuate their slender beaks into the patronage of your hand, and lick it, and look up modestly, and whine decorously, and supplicate with grace. The moment you give them anything, they grow importunate; and the moment you refuse them, they bite. In Spain and England the races are similar; so indeed are those of the men. Spaniards are Englishmen in an ungrafted state, however with this great difference, that the English have ever been the least cruel of nations, excepting the Swedes; and the Spaniards the most cruel, excepting the French. Then they were under one and the same religion, the most sanguinary and sordid of all the institutions that ever pressed upon mankind.

*Galileo.* To the dogs, to the dogs again, be they of what breed they may.

*Milton.* The worst of them could never have driven you up into this corner, merely because he had been dreaming, and you had disturbed his dream. How long shall this endure?

*Galileo.* I sometimes ask God how long. I should repine, and almost despair, in putting the question to myself or another.

*Milton.* Be strong in Him, through reason, his great gift.

*Galileo.* I fail not, and shall not fail. I can fancy that the heaviest link in my heavy chain has dropped off me since you entered.

*Milton.* Let me then praise our God for it! Not those alone are criminal who placed you here, but those no less who left unto them the power of doing it. If the learned and intelligent in all the regions of Europe would unite their learning and intellect, and would exert their energy in disseminating the truth throughout the countries they inhabit, soon must the ignorant and oppressive, now at the summit of power, resign their offices; and the most versatile nations, after this purify-