

The Wife's Resentment

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When the Duke of Calabria, son to Frederick King of Aragon, was viceroy of the Kingdom of Valencia, he kept his court in the city of Valencia, which was then the chief and only rampart of that part of Spain, esteemed as the seat of justice, faith and humanity. Among its other ornaments, the beauty of their women was deservedly thought the greatest; to which was joined the reputation of understanding, and such a keenness of wit, that it grew into a proverb, *When a fellow was dull and thought a blockhead, that he must go to Valencia*. In the time of this Viceroy lived Seignior Roderigo, knight of Valencia, descended of the ancient, illustrious and rich family of the Ventimiglia. This noble lord was devoted to his pleasures, and besides a handsome person, had an address and behavior that was pleasing to everybody. He did not love his studies; and there being no war at that time to employ an active mind, for want of better business, according to the custom of Spain, he walked up and down the city, wasting his youth in trifles, music, masquerades, courting of ladies, a form of devotion which was very common, and fit for such pilgrims, designing only to conquer, not to be conquered; for as yet all women were equally indifferent to him, he had no more esteem or tenderness for one than another; his business was mere gallantry, he knew not what it was to love; provided he could but triumph, he valued not the conquest. The whole city rang of his inconstancy, and yet he was so handsome, so rich, and of such eminent quality, that he still found a favorable reception amongst the ladies; each one imagining that her charms were sufficient to make a convert of him. His youth, good mien, gay temper and generosity, introduced him everywhere. Some aspired to gain him for a husband, the already married for a gallant, and they succeeded the best. Thus he never thought of the injury he did others, but led a life of pleasure, unthinking and without principles. His conversation did not lie in the road of such persons who either could or cared to teach him. One must love people a good deal whom one takes pains to convince or instruct. Thus Roderigo daily made the tour of the city of Valencia, to the ruin of many an easy damsel; but that was none of his concern, for amongst all the virtues, he was yet wholly unacquainted with that of remorse.

Seignior Roderigo was ranging the city one holiday, that being the time the ladies show themselves at their doors or windows, when he beheld a face that was entirely new to him; neither had he, till then, seen anything so handsome in Valencia. This young maid suddenly cast her eyes upon the Count; his garb was very rich and distinguishing. She met his looks in such a manner that he thought a pistol had been discharged at his heart; he felt as hot and fatal a fire, and which he had never been sensible of before. This fair creature had the greatest luster, the finest water, as we may call it, in her eyes, that was ever seen; her air was modest; her height, inclining rather to tall; her taper waist and exact symmetry well deserved consideration; she was in a habit rather neat than fine, but there was a *je ne sais quoi* that might very well arrest the curiosity of those that passed along: though, her eyes excepted, there was none of her other features so glorious, unless her complexion, which was varnished by Nature with a gloss shining like polished marble, and whiter than imagination, an uncommon charm in Spain, and would, even in England, be looked upon as a very extraordinary beauty.

Roderigo, disarmed by the flashes of her eyes, stayed some time to gaze on her that had wounded him to so dangerous a degree. The maid, perceiving how intent the Count was in beholding her, with a modest blush retired into the house. He passed and repassed before the door several times in hopes of seeing her again, perceiving that she purposely avoided him; and by that means lost the diversion of gazing on the holiday folks, he absconded behind a corner of the street. After some time that ravishing beauty, having no longer seen the person that had by his admiration caused her to withdraw, returned to the door to entertain herself innocently with looking on the passengers, which on Sundays and holidays is almost the only liberty allowed to the Spanish women, and those too of an inferior degree. Roderigo, having watched her every motion, returned to the attack. Finding her again at the door, by which he again encountered the full luster of her lovely eyes, he made a stop before her, and bowed thrice with that submission and languishment, as was able, in a less intelligent country than Spain, where persons from their infancy speak with their eyes and fingers, to convince her, that that cavalier was surprised by her beauty. The young creature, named Violenta, who had more wit than all the women of Valencia besides, considering her years, beheld with delight the extraordinary mien and application of that stranger; from a fatal presentiment she felt something within that made her wish to engage him. She answered his salute in so graceful and peculiar a manner, that he was more and more confirmed her slave. What was now become of that indifference, with which he had triumphed over the foible of the greatest ladies in Valencia? He, whose business had hitherto been to give love,

rather than take it, was in a moment reduced to be one of the order of lovers; to wish, sigh, and desire, in return of those sighs and desires he had caused in others.

Violenta having done enough to engage Roderigo, and show her native civility, once more withdrew. The night coming on, there was no prospect of her returning again that evening, which caused the Count also to depart; but not without taking full notice of the house, the street, and the ways that led to it. When he came home, he sent for one of his agents in amour, who knew all the persons in Valencia, to enquire of him, by description, of the name and quality of such a young maiden, living in such a street, situated at the corner of such a square, near such a church, opposite to such a palace; by which particular account the engine quickly found how it went with the Count; and that he must have made more than ordinary observation, to be able to give him such a true chart of the coast. This person shook his head, and told the Don, "he knew the maiden very well, but feared she was not for his Lordship's turn, for that no virgin in Valencia had so fair and honest a report; that her wit was more commended than her beauty, for she could both read and write, in which she took extreme delight." An accomplishment which, in those days, few ladies aimed at, since they believed all inferior knowledge, as well as the sciences, was reserved for the other sex. This procurator added, "that her name was Violenta, a poor orphan, kept by her mother, who had been some years a widow, her husband no better than a goldsmith; that he had also left two sons, who followed his trade in great obscurity; that Violenta had the reputation of being extreme modest; and though she was sought by many, yet was she defamed for none."

Count Roderigo was so far gone in love, and his first love too, that if his intelligencer had brought him the most disadvantageous character in the world, it could not have cured him. This favorable report did certainly inflame his passion the more; he resolved to send her a declaration of love, which he did in form, but the maid returned him no answer. However, as the letter had been received and read by her, he did not absolutely despair. The next day he sent her another, more passionate than the former, letting her know the name and quality of her lover, together with the present of a pair of bracelets, valued at five hundred gold ducats. She returned the bracelets, and with it this letter:

To Count Roderigo di Ventimiglia, Knight of Valencia

My Lord,

Your person is handsome, your present very well, your letter is witty and extraordinarily well writ; but what are all these accomplishments to a virgin that values nothing but virtue? That which courage is to your sex, chastity is to ours; and indeed more, since the greatest cowardice is retrievable by one act of valor, but modesty is rarely or never to be regained. Neither my eyes nor my vanity shall be entertained at so vast a hazard: yet, that your Lordship may not think me altogether stupid, I do confess that your addresses have flattered both; my sight by your person, my pride by the offer you, make me of your heart. But, illustrious cavalier, 'tis neither by the one nor the other that a maid must conduct herself, who knows the true estimation of virtue, and who would die in the defense of it. This from the humblest of your servants,
Violenta

Roderigo saw the gaining the heart of this fair person must be a work of time; but as he was prodigiously in earnest, and was so far from having any other affair of the heart, that this was the first time his was ever touched, he pursued her with such assiduity that she durst no longer appear either at her windows or door. From thence he traced her to church, where, to be near her, he committed a thousand indecencies. She changed every day the place and hour of her devotions; yet he everywhere found her out, and still it was all the same story: he must perish without her pity, and nothing but her love could preserve him. When he had urged this to her in a letter, with the tautology and true impertinence of a real lover (for when they are really affected, those creatures fly certainly beyond all common sense), she returned him this answer:

To Count Roderigo di Ventimiglia, Knight of Valencia

My Lord,

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You very eloquently tell me you shall die if I continue unkind; but I very plainly tell your Lordship, that I must perish if I prove otherwise: since I know it will be impossible for me to live after the loss of my honor. I conjure you to leave me in repose, lest I be obliged to shut myself up in a cloister to avoid your pursuit. I may justly complain of that moment when first I saw you, for if it has made your Lordship unhappy, I am not less miserable; if it has taught you what it is to love, it has not left me insensible; but I neither must nor will indulge either my heart or eyes! I have a mind truly intrepid in the cause of virtue, which neither the preservation of your precious life, nor that of my mother, brothers, or of my own, can ever induce me to forsake: I would see the whole world in a conflagration, and myself in the middle of it, before I could be brought to do anything contrary to the rules of modesty. Wonder not, that a maid so meanly born and educated, should have such exalted ideas of virtue: I have studied her well, all her ways

are lovely, peace and honor attend her votaries in this life, a fragrant report when they are dead, and a crown of glory hereafter! How despicable are those advantages which you offer me in exchange? Consider of it, and farewell.

This pursuit lasted six months. At length, all that the Count could obtain was a confession that she loved him within the degrees of honor, but not a jot beyond it. Yet as much in love as Roderigo was, during all that time, he never once thought of marrying her: the disparity between them was so great he had no notion of wedlock. In Spain they have other maxims than in England; here a person ennobles his wife, there 'tis a reproach for a man of quality and to his descendants, if he chance to mingle with the people. However, Violenta, as her heart was too haughty to speak first of that union, so she resolved he should never have favors of her without it. One day, he had so well ordered his intelligence that he had notice of a visit she had designed to make to a maiden of the same rank. Roderigo, by the force of presents, got leave of that person to conceal himself in her closet till Violenta came; soon after he surprised her with his sight. Being left together, he said to her, with some coldness, "Considering, Madam, the small regard you have given either to my letters or presents, I may compare your subtlety to that of a serpent, who is said to close his ears, for fear of hearing the voice of the charmer; which has made me forbear writing or sending to you; and I wish I had the same power to desist from seeing you, since my mortal enemy could not more cruelly torment me. If love were not involuntary, I could never submit to such usage. What objection have you to the truest lover, to the most passionate adorer that ever was? Were it possible for you to look into my heart and know what I suffer, you could not persist in your tyranny! I die for you! but you will not pity me!"

"My Lord," answered the discreet maid, "I do more than pity you, I sympathize with you in everything; I feel all your pains, I sigh as much, I lament as much, and perhaps I love as much, but with this difference, which makes me more wretched than you can be, that you have your redress in your own power, which, alas! is not in mine; you may be cured whenever you please, but it is quite otherwise with me! I am ready to be commanded by you, but you will not obey me; you think me too far beneath your quality, whilst I wish you were not so much above mine. But since there is no descending for you, nor any exaltation for me, leave me in repose from this moment, and content yourself with having the first place in my heart, which no other shall ever possess; but for the favors your Lordship expects, they are not mine to bestow. I have devoted myself to virtue; all my thoughts, words and actions are dedicated to that goddess! I cannot take the smallest part from her without an immortal offense; therefore do not be displeased if I never see you more!" Here she broke from his arms that would have retained her; and coming home, she made a vow to make no visit, and to go nowhere, unless to church, till she were released of Roderigo's persecutions for fear of meeting him, as she had done that day.

The Count very well understood what Violenta aimed at in her discourse; but he could not bring himself, notwithstanding the extremity of his love, to debase his blood so far as to mingle by marriage with one of her low degree. Observing the small progress that he had made in fifteen months' courtship, and that there was no probability of advancing farther, he resolved to do all that was in his power towards curing himself of so infamous and uneasy a passion. He began to return to his old practice of gallantry; gave balls, treats, music and entertainments to the ladies, who had very much lamented that alteration in his temper, though they knew not the cause; they did all that was possible to keep up his good humor and engage him amongst them, but in vain; he carried within his breast that which poisoned all his delights. A lover who is not yet in the rank of the happy reserves his heart wholly, without any division, for the cruel person to whom destiny has made a present of it. All the favors upon earth from the greatest beauties could have no taste for Roderigo. Satisfied of this cruel circumstance, he found it impossible for him to live any longer in a state of rebellion against his sovereign mistress; wherefore he returned to her with all the contrition imaginable, full of penitence, for having dared to attempt so impossible a thing as breaking the chains she had imposed upon him. That cruel tyrant of the heart, brought him once again to sue, with all the humble arts of flattery, for the least contemptible, favor; but that prudent maid told him, there was none such in love, the smallest being of equal value to the greatest: as in a ladder of stairs, the lowest step is as necessary as the highest, though the last lands you at the place where you desire to be, and where you could never have arrived but by those degrees. Which rule well observed, a virgin ought never to permit her lover the smallest favor, not the freedom of her hand or lip, for the lover's touch, nay, his very breath, sullies and takes from modesty its native luster, and destroys the merit of being wholly innocent.

Poor Roderigo was not like to make any great progress amidst these exalted notions; at length he bethought him of another expedient. He resolved to change his battery, and knowing they were pretty poor, he made Donna Camilla a visit, Violenta's mother, in which he confessed his passion for her daughter, and complained of the ineffectual eighteen months' courtship he had paid her. The old gentlewoman, to whom this was no great news, though she affected to be ignorant, answered that Violenta was highly honored by those marks of his respect, but that she was a maid unskilled in courts, rude of fashion, and not used to the conversation of persons of his quality. In the end, he

presented her with a thousand ducats toward her occasions, and told her he would assign her daughter a handsome dowry, if she could find any honest man for her husband, where she might be well disposed of, provided she would have some small consideration of his suffering, and afford him a little ease from that intolerable rack he endured! Donna Camilla, whose sense of honor was not inferior to Violenta's, let him know, with all regard to his quality, that she was offended at his proposal; that her house was no place to purchase virtue in, whose price was inestimable! The Count carried back his ducats, which he could not get the good gentlewoman to touch; and fell to debate farther with himself, what was next to be done. He could not abandon the maid, that he had in vain essayed; he could not by diversion drive her out of his thoughts, that was a fruitless project; he could not corrupt her, nor could he live without her! He found he had but lost time in all his enterprises, and prolonged his own torment, which daily augmented: therefore he at last resolved to marry her. And though she was neither of such birth or fortune as his quality deserved, yet her virtue and accomplishments, her beauty and discretion deserved greater advancement! This resolution once taken, he found he was much more at his ease, and even wondered at himself for not coming to the point before. Now he felt mercy and compassion for the maid intrude into his breast, where only self-love had dwelt before. He owned that it was pity so fair an example of virtue should be cast away; that 'twas hard, a life so faultless should be attended with infamy and ruin! and was therefore pleased looking upon himself as a person destined to reward her chastity, raise her abject fortune, and draw forth of obscurity a bright example, which the virgins of the age might imitate. Thus composed, he fell into a slumber, where he thought Violenta appeared to his sight, -with her hair flowing! her dress infinitely disordered! her face sullied with tears! and her breast bruised with the blows she had given herself! She struck a dagger to his heart, and told him, that was the reward of treachery and inconstancy! The blow pained him so much, by imagination, that he awakened in a horrible fright, and giving a great shriek, he found himself upon the floor, where he had fallen in his agony: but having no opinion at all of dreams, he applied this to his restless mind, which always carried Violenta's idea: The next morning, he determined to make her a visit in form, and propose to her the accomplishment, as he hoped of both their desires. He found her at her needle, for she was always employed, according to an inscription at the Villa Benediti:

Donna virtuosa, non sa star otiosa

[A virtuous lady can never be idle]

Violenta flushed red as scarlet at seeing Don Roderigo enter, then turned pale as ashes, with such an universal trembling, that she was unable to support herself without sitting. "Is this aversion, fair creature, or some kinder passion?" said the Count, "that you are always thus disordered when I see you?"

"Say rather," answered the maid, "it is my better angel that warns, and makes me shudder and shrink from you as my evil genius, as the persecutor of virtue, as a tyrant, that would force from me the only treasure I possess! As one that must either leave me in repose, or take away my life. Something whispers my soul that your passion will be fatal to me; I would fly you as an abhorrence to nature, as a destroyer of chastity."

"As the man you love, fair Violenta," interrupted the Count with a smile, "your disorder and invectives are more glorious for me than the favors of others; you could not be thus affected for a person indifferent to you; since in so soft a creature, hatred could never have so great an ascendant, or work you to such a degree; it must be the kinder passion from which I expect advantageous effects."

"If that were true, my Lord," answered the constant maid, "as I will not pretend to convince you of the contrary, I would starve and die a martyr to my desires, rather than gratify the smallest wish at the expense of my virtue! Yes, Count Roderigo, I do love, and have loved you for a long time. I will not presume to say that I retained my indifference a minute after I first beheld you; and from that inauspicious moment I felt other sentiments for your Lordship, than I had ever done for any of your sex. When you had abandoned me, to renew the vicious pursuits of your former gallantries, you left a fury in my breast to supply your place, or a worse tormentor; a fiend, that amidst all your sufferings you have been a stranger to. Jealousy, that cruel tyrant! allowed me not a moment's repose; thus, since I have dared to demonstrate that my pains rather exceed yours, and that I am not at all in debt to you for what you have endured let us make a drawn battle of it, both call off our forces at once, and no more trouble one another with our mutual follies; let us try to cure ourselves as well as we can. As to my part, I have determined to do something, but what, I cannot yet resolve; neither ought I to tell your Lordship, lest it should look like threatening, or a desire of being retained; but certainly, my Lord, this is the last time I will ever allow myself the liberty to converse with you. I beseech your Lordship not to be displeased, when you are refused the door; you shall suddenly hear that I have either taken the veil, or have abandoned my mother, brothers, country, and wandered far from Valencia to seek my bread in a foreign clime, distant from your Lordship's cruel persecution." She ended this discourse with a shower of tears. Roderigo, unable to stand the torment, fell at her feet, and confessed to her the design that brought him thither, and the resolution that he had taken to marry her.

As we have often beheld the sun break out with sudden glory, in the midst of clouds and rain, so darted from Violenta's eyes, rays of light which restored to every charm its native grace; then the Count discovered how truly lovely she was. She gave a loose to joy, and spoke such transporting things, full of gratitude and passion, that Roderigo confessed the greatest pleasure was in pleasing, and how far the transport of virtuous love exceeded the sophisticated pleasures of the vicious. Violenta telling him that though he exceeded her in all other advantages, yet she could not be outdone in love; that she would be emulous to please him, and hoped by her obedience to make him one day confess he would not exchange her for the noblest lady. At which he thanked her for her good intentions, and plucked a diamond ring from his finger of great value, which he gave her as a pledge of their marriage; and then, and not till then, had he ever presumed to kiss her; so sacred and inviolable had that chaste maid preserved herself, amidst the flames of love that had surrounded her from the Count's passion without, and from her own fires within. A pattern worthy the imitation of young virgins, who, though perhaps virtuous in what they call the main, yet prostitute their modesty too far in suffering the touches of the hand, the neck, and the kisses of men. They may assure themselves, that they lose a great degree of their value, by such unwarrantable freedoms; as the luster wears off the richest silks by handling, and the inimitable blue from the plum, which when once lost, can never be restored. A great many things more might be said against so vile a custom; besides the habit and air of lightness that it gives a virgin, by which she is with much greater facility brought to suffer further liberties, and very often loses her character for those she has granted, under the notion that they are but innocent freedoms, inwardly satisfied with being what they call essentially virtuous.

After the Count and Violenta had interchanged their mutual vows, Roderigo begged her to conceal his happiness for some time, because of the inequality of their condition, till he had taken care to inform his relations and friends gradually of their marriage; however, he permitted her to discover it to her mother and her brothers, bidding her invite them to be there in the evening, and he would bring a priest out of the country, who knew them not, with the first valet of his chamber, whom he could trust, that her maid who was brought up by Donna Camilla from her youth might also be admitted, to make up the number of witnesses six, which was sufficient to attest a marriage, if ever it should come by any unforeseen chance to be disputed. You need not ask whether Violenta were very diligent and careful to put all things in order; she dressed up the nuptial chamber and bed, with all the decency the time and her circumstances allowed her. At length, the long looked-for hour approached, the bridegroom came, and brought along with him a priest and his gentleman. They were married in the presence of Violenta's mother and her two brothers, Ianthe the maid, and the Count's valet, without either pomp or preparation, or any expense requisite for the nuptials of a man of his extraction and great possessions.

Roderigo vouchsafed to sit down to eat with the mother and brothers of his new bride, whom he acknowledged and caressed by those appellations. They had prepared a very handsome supper, and were as happy in their own opinions, as persons suddenly raised from poverty to wealth, or from a mean degree to an exalted state of honor. They conducted the new-married pair to the bride-chamber, and then took their leave, recommending them to the mercy of love, and favor of the night: which I shall no otherways describe, than by a person long laboring under the extremity of thirst, who at length arrives to a place where he can quench that violent distress, where he quaffs at liberty in flowing bowls, and unstinted draughts of pleasure.

In the morning, Violenta, without assuming the airs of a countess, begged her lord, since he was now in possession of what he had so long and vehemently desired, that he would prescribe rules to her conduct, assuring him, that she should be as diligent to observe his orders, and as ambitious to please him in whatever he desired, as the poorest slave, who was most faithful, most dutiful, and affectionate to his master. Roderigo said, "Sweet, charming wife, I beg you to use none of those affected airs of humility to me; I am burdened with them, I beseech you let me hear no more of that; you are now my wife, and so you must conduct yourself; I have no less a value for you, than if you were descended from the noblest family in Spain. Hereafter you will be convinced of this truth; but till I have taken order for my affairs, I require you by the obedience of which you boast yourself, to conceal our marriage; and pray be not displeased, if I am often from you in the daytime, but every night shall be yours. As soon as I go home I will send you two thousand ducats, not to buy your wedding-clothes, it is not yet time for that. When we publish our marriage, I will myself take care to provide you what in all respects shall be fit for my bride: but women need trifles as well as essentials, and I would not have my dear Violenta want anything within my power to grant."

Signior Roderigo departed thus from his lady's house, who entertained him with such passionate love and sweetness, that for a year's time he never thought himself happy but when he was in the arms of his dear Violenta; omitting not one night from embracing and sleeping with her; which could not be carried so privately, notwithstanding all the caution he used, but the neighbors discovered his resort to Donna Camilla's house, and were prodigiously scandalized at it. They imagined that Violenta was kept by the Count; some of the well-meaning part

(as to the others they tattled abroad and at home, and were very glad that they had got a piece of scandal to entertain the town with) reproached Donna Camilla and her sons for tolerating that abuse: they even reprimanded Violenta, lamenting her misfortune, whose reputation had flourished twenty years in honor, and been a fair example to all the virgins of Valencia, that she should now fall by the gripes of poverty, involving her mother and brothers in her sin, a prey to shame and dishonesty; deploring those happy days in which she was thought not only the fairest but chastest maid in all that part of Spain; but now degenerating from, her accustomed virtue, her behavior was esteemed light, abandoned to lascivious love, one who was contented, by the price of sin, to support herself and her mother in ease and plenty. Poor Violenta, whose conscience acquitted her from these slanderous reproaches, took less care of their spreading, because she knew her own innocence; yet could not help being very uneasy at the difference she found in the behavior of her friends, the open scoffs and fleers of some of the boldest of them; and which was more sensible, the cold civilities and freezing looks of the better mannered and most charitable. Yet assuring herself that she had an antidote in reserve against all their poison, and that when her marriage was published, it would serve as an excellent moral against the malice of such who were forward to condemn only upon appearances and false opinion. But when those reproaches were most cutting, though her husband were "the Lord of her idolatry"³ and whom she would much rather die than displease, she could not forbear telling him her sufferings, and begged him very earnestly to take her home to his house, since it was as much to the injury of his reputation, that such infamous reports should be spread of a woman, whom they would one day find had the honor to be his wife.

Count Roderigo knew very well how to delay Violenta's request, having found the great secret of her passion, that she dreaded nothing so much as his displeasure; he could cunningly give her cause to apprehend the effects of it, since she had rather have offended the whole world together, than in the smallest matter displease her lord. Her humble manner of education had not yet given place to a desire of rank or greatness; she knew no ambition but that of retaining Roderigo by her charms and goodness; and whereas she had been slow to receive the fire of love, so much the fiercer and surer it burnt in her heart, which had not the least taste of delight, but in the enjoyment of Roderigo, an eager thirst of virtue being the only thing that could ever rival her lord in her esteem. The Count's observation soon rendered him master of this secret; and seeing there was nothing new for his desires; that he had even surfeited with the delicious banquet; that it was all but a repetition of the same delight; he first began to wonder how he could so eagerly pursue a common pleasure, and then enquired of his memory, which was but too faithful, whether he had ever done so or no? And when by melancholy proof he was too well convinced of the state of his affairs, he grew from cool to more cold, from frost to ice, from ice to aversion, and a hatred of his own folly for so unworthily matching himself with the lees of the people. In fluctuation of his thoughts, he often forbore her bed; which, when he approached, it was rather like a sinner than a husband, to gratify the call of nature, and in which a common strumpet might as easily have assisted, than from the first motive of generous love and husbandly tenderness and affection.

Violenta's duty and sense of gratitude had so far enslaved her will to his pleasure, that she durst not even complain of his neglect; and when, after several days' absence, she presumed to send a letter to him to his palace, to enquire of his health, and the cause why she did not see him, he acted the tyrant to the life; and at their next meeting gave her to understand, that if she any more presumed to enquire into his recesses, he would never forgive, nor own her for his wife. This was as a dagger to pierce the heart of the miserable Violenta. Her complaints rather wearied, than softened him; he looked upon her as a despicable creature, whose reputation being lost, not one of any figure would appear in her defense, or imagine her to be married to him, especially if they should see him married to another. There are many vices which are not believed because of their magnitude; such Roderigo thought would be his double marriage, forgetting that he had ever heard of religion; forgetting the call of his own conscience, for certainly there must be a remorse for betraying so virtuous a creature. He took up his old haunts of gallantry and luxury, which terminated in a violent passion for a fair young creature called Aurelia, the sole daughter and heiress of Don Ramires, one of the chiefest knights and most honorable families in all Valencia.

Count Roderigo was considerable for estate and quality, without any alloy but a flirt of youthful pleasure which was imagined would pass away with his youth, if not sooner, should he once marry and settle; and who was incomparably the most advantageous match in the city. Don Ramires quickly came to an accommodation with his proposals, offering a very large dowry with his daughter in present, and the rest of his estate in reversion, after the death of himself and his wife. Count Roderigo settled all things to their satisfaction, and the marriage was solemnized to the pleasure of all persons concerned, and the good will of those, who having no immediate interest in those nuptials, were delighted with any public occasion of mirth and joy.

The marriage done and ended, the bride and bridegroom continued at Don Ramires's house, where they lived in all the pleasures of the happy, such as new married persons of high rank and prosperous fortunes enjoy, without any remorse for what Violenta might suffer when she should hear the news of his inconstancy. He looked upon her as an

idle girl, a creature of low degree, the favorite of an hour, a little mistress with whom he had condescended to squander away some superfluous hours of youth but unworthy his regard when in cooler thoughts, or to expect the continuance of his noble name and family from. In short, he forgot that ever she had been of any consequence to his happiness! He forgot he had married her; and hearing so many people talk of her as a mistress he kept, he imagined it was so, and no more; never fearing, from her excessive love and humble behavior, that he needed to apprehend anything from her resentment; more especially from those mechanics her brothers, who indeed had no part of their sister's spirit or understanding; and who dreamt of no other notions of honor but what they expected to find in their customers. Donna Camilla, her mother, he looked upon as a piece of old household stuff quite out of date; poor and independent as she was, he knew it would be very difficult for her, at that time of day, to find any one to espouse her interests against his in Valencia.

Thus Seignior Roderigo, fearless of the reproaches of Violenta, publicly espoused Donna Aurelia in the face of the sun, in the great church of Valencia; immediately the report of such a fine wedding was carried to all parts of the city. Violenta's brothers were first informed of it, they ran to their mother to let her know the disaster; yet without that honorable resentment which is always found in the well-born. According to the custom of Spain, they should immediately have made the villain's blood atone, for the injury he had done their sister, and to which they were witnesses; but their souls were of a piece with their profession, they did not dream of honor and revenge, provided they could sell their plate; nay, they were so sordid as to comply with the orders Roderigo had given his intendant to go to such persons, meaning Violenta's brothers, and bespeak from them all the necessary vessels and utensils, whether of silver, silver-gilt, or gold plate, that was necessary for his degree, to furnish his house and table upon his nuptials with a person of Aurelia's quality and fortune.

Donna Camilla indeed resented the abuse, not only as a person of a high heart, but as one who wept drops of blood for the dishonor of her daughter; she sent for her sons, reproaching them with the pitifulness of their spirit, to take employment from the man they should much sooner destroy. They protested to her that they knew not when the plate was bespoke, but that it was for the publication of their sister's marriage; and afterwards could not go back from their word, the gentleman only designing to oblige them for their sister's sake. Camilla, seeing them to be such stocks and stones, sent them away and was contented to mourn alone. This wretched dame lived in great anguish, because she durst not make her complaint to any, and was ignorant of the name of the priest who had married her daughter; neither would she impart her sorrow to Violenta, imagining she would too soon hear of the fatal disaster that was befallen her.

And indeed, this virtuous lady, only tantalized with the hopes of greatness, with the mock scene or airy idea of grandeur, which like a golden bough hung far out of her reach, was the last in knowing what was now stale news in Valencia. A person of her penetration, however blinded she was by love and Roderigo's continual pretenses, thought there must be something extraordinary to make him absent himself so frequently as he did. At first she used to write him the kindest letters to enquire of his health; but the airs he took to himself, as we have before related, soon gave her enough of presuming to enquire after him. He had carried all things with a high hand; her humble spirit durst not dispute the pleasure of so great a man. He might lie away as long as he thought fit, the joy she had when he came again made her forget the pain she had suffered by his absence. She always received him with smiles, and never with cold looks or reproaches. Having lately used her to stay away several nights together, she did not wonder at it now; but she was not left long in ignorance. Her next neighbors, merely to insult her, asked what she would do for a sweetheart now her lord was married? how came it that she was not at the wedding? especially since it was so public, and the finest that was ever seen in Valencia? Donna Aurelia was a charming bride!

Violenta having very well examined these reports, for she at first regarded them as stories designed by malicious persons only to insult her, when she grew confirmed in the truth, her heart was immediately open to wrath, indignation, madness and revenge. All the furies of hell entered like a torrent into her breast, and in a moment expelled her native softness; Love hid his face and would be seen no more; he took wing with all his train and dependents, and flew forever away from that hospitable heart where he had been so fondled and tenderly entertained. The sense of honor lost, of her virtue demolished, her chastity overthrown, her ruined reputation swelled her to an extremity of resentment; she tore her ornaments, her dress, her hair; she stamped, and traversed her apartment like a raging bacchanal; like Medea, furious in her revenge; like the fiends with fatal torches in their hands, to set the world on fire: she was more than all these, she was herself, that is to say, most miserable and most outrageous. She could not weep, that distress was too soft for her obdurate grief; she could not in a long time speak, even the relief of words were denied her; she could only beat her breast, groan, and puff her breath out, as if flames had come at every blast. At length, nature, unable longer to maintain so cruel a war against itself, suffered this wretched creature to sink down on the carpet for an interval of time, that she might recover strength enough to renew the conflict; essaying several times to rise, she sunk again, and with groans poured forth this torrent of complaints.

"Alas! alas! what inexpressible torture does my poor heart endure without the least prospect of relief? No one creature on the whole earth can give me ease! what ruin do I suffer for no offense of mine? Ah Fortune! Fortune! thou art so totally my enemy, that thou hast not left me so much as the prospect of a friend to revenge my injury. Oh blood! blood! a villain's blood! too small an expiation for ruined chastity! Oh cruel husband! Do not my groans echo in thy ears? Dost thou not hear my voice crying aloud for vengeance? Canst thou regard any other object but thy first, thy lawful wife? dishonored by thy cruelty, and suffering a thousand furious martyrdoms for thy adulterous crime! Ah ungrateful! Is this, thou monstrous wretch, all the return that thy base heart can make for excessive love, unshaken fidelity and obedient humility? Since this is all that thou canst bestow upon me, I will pay myself, be sure I will. Thy blood shall be the atonement, that I may die with joy, insensible of pain."

Donna Camilla and her sons, with Ianthe, hearing her voice so outrageous, talking loudly to herself like a tempest or a whirlwind, went up to her chamber, where they found her so deformed with rage and fury, that she was almost out of their knowledge; they feared she would run mad, and said whatever they could to reduce her from those violent pangs; but their endeavors increased rather than allayed the storm. Reason was utterly lost upon her, she was insensible to all things but revenge, which she insatiably thirsted after; then, as she said, she should be at rest. Finding they could make no impression upon her obdurate mind, Donna Camilla and her sons withdrew, leaving the old maid Ianthe, whom Violenta loved more than any other, to take care she did herself no hurt. This poor creature had from her childhood, when she was first made a slave, been bred up by Donna Camilla. The slave had brought up Violenta, and so tenderly loved her, that she would have done anything for her relief. After she had flattered and humored her rage awhile, she told her lady, that if she would suspend her fury for a little time, she would go herself and seek out Count Roderigo and hear what he had to say, and she doubted not but to order the matter so well, that she would bring him along with her, where, if he did not give her the satisfaction she desired, she might do with him as she pleased, and wreak upon him her just revenge.

"No! no, Ianthe!" said Violenta, "those are light and small offenses that we can be reasoned out of the sense of; what Roderigo had committed against me, Reason itself supports me in my desire of vengeance! And should my heart give way to any other thoughts, I would with my own hands divide it from this wretched body! Nothing but his life alone can satisfy me! God caused me to be born his instrument of wrath to punish the injury done my honor; what reputation remains to me but that of an abominable whore? Shall he live who has bestowed so vile a quality upon me? Shall he breathe in pleasure whilst I hourly pine away in infamy? That base seducer, that wretch without principles or honor, who used laughingly to say, as I then thought in jest, but the villain was too much in earnest, that maids of my base birth had no pretensions to honor, what had we to do with such fantastic notions? Virtue and chastity were pretty names indeed for boors to play with! As if courage were only appropriated to men of quality, or modesty to noble women— Yes, Roderigo, thou shalt know that my sentiments were worthy the most exalted birth! Thou shalt feel it by the ardor of thy wife's resentment! by that height of vengeance with which I will appease and vindicate my honor! and if thou, Ianthe, dost deny to assist me, I will do the work alone. Thou art a stranger born, and leadest the life of a poor wretched slave, condemned all thy days to drudgery; I have here two thousand ducats and several jewels which that false traitor gave me; they are destined by Heaven to reward that person who shall assist me in my revenge. I will now put that treasure in thy hands, I will give all to thee, if thou wilt help me to sacrifice Roderigo to my injured honor. Too well I know there is but little redress for so mean a person as I am, to expect by law, against two the most potent families in Valencia. When the question is, which shall be proved the wife, and which the whore! most certain, Don Ramires's daughter must have the honorable and I the infamous appellation. Justice waits upon the great, Interest holds the scale, and Riches turns the balance. Besides, I know not even the priest who married us, perhaps he was not a priest, and my ruin was originally designed; or if he be, Roderigo will take care to keep him far from my knowledge. Wherefore, my dear Ianthe, if from my youth thou didst ever love me, or that thou wert ever sensible of the love I had for thee, show me the effects now, when thy help is most necessary. If thou dost deny me, I will execute my purpose alone; the first time I ever behold him, with these enraged, accursed eyes, I will strike him dead, or murder him with these two trembling hands, without any other assistance."

Ianthe hearing what Violenta said, and well knowing her undaunted resolution and heroic spirit, after she had revolved and debated several things in her mind, resolved at length to devote herself wholly to her mistress's infernal commands, potently moved at her being defamed and dishonored by the pretense of marriage; and partly prompted by covetousness and the desire of liberty, by which she should gain so great a reward; with which she meant to fly away to her own land, and seek her kindred and parents, if they were yet alive or to be found. When she was thoroughly resolved, she embraced Violenta and said to her, "Madam, here I plight my faith and hand to you. Your poor Ianthe shall follow your commands in life and death! I have as great an appetite to revenge your dishonor as yourself can desire; but that we may be sure to effect it, you must disguise your rage, and put on you the habit of

dissimulation. You shall write the Count a letter, as you well can do, to invite him hither; as if you only grieved at the loss of his heart, and did not dispute Aurelia's title to his bed. Leave the rest to my management. When we have him here fast, we will send him to rest in a more assured place, where he shall everlastingly continue to curse the time whenever he betrayed poor virgins by the sacred pretense of marriage."

Violenta harkened to her as the oracle that was to resolve her destiny, and feed her bloody and cruel vengeance. That fair prospect, which stood before her, of revenge, caused her, like ebbing seas after the workings of a mighty storm, to sink appeased, though within she stood collected and ready to execute what the most cruel hatred can inspire. She gave herself so much respite as to write him a letter, which fully expressed all she suffered, and what more she was like to suffer; and then she rose into distant threatenings of what a lover forsaken might attempt; yet soon sunk again into the more humble necessities of a lover, who could not live without the sight of the person beloved; which as a reward of all her sufferings she beseeched him to grant her; in an indirect manner, seeming to give up her title to marriage, if she could hope to preserve what she much more valued, that which once she had to his heart.

"Take there, Ianthe," says the afflicted Violenta, "thy passport to Roderigo; if thou canst play thy part as well as I have done mine, we may then assure ourselves that my vengeance will be complete. I may rest satisfied my date of life shall not be long, since life is more insupportable to me than a thousand deaths, and yet I cannot die unrevenged."

Ianthe having the letter, rose early the next morning, and rendered herself with great diligence at the house of Don Ramires, where she waited obsequiously till she could speak with some person belonging to the Count, which was not long after. Ianthe seeing that gentleman who was present at Roderigo's first marriage, he blushed, and would have avoided her, pretending to go about affairs for his master. The old slave, who was not to learn her business at that time of day, bore up briskly to him, whisper-ing him in the ear, asked how the Count did! and if she might be admitted to the honor of speaking with him alone, for her business required privacy? Don Roderigo being soon advertised of this by his servant, came forth, and pointed her towards the street, where he presently followed her; to whom smilingly she said, having made him a feigned courtesy and presented him the letter, "I am a poor slave, my Lord, and can neither write nor read, yet I dare lay my life, there is humble suit made to you in that paper for the sight of your sweet person; and to say the truth, my poor mistress has been very much injured by you—not in the point of marriage, for I never thought Madam Violenta, a beggarly tradesman's daughter, was a fit wife for the great Count Roderigo, but that you will not vouchsafe to visit her, That she may not be miserable all at once; you take no care to cure her dishonor, by providing her a husband in some other place, which would prevent the infamy she will meet with from being a forsaken mistress. She loves you in a lost manner, she is ready to die, and no longer than last night said to me, 'Dear Ianthe, I cannot possibly live without the sight of him; though I must not pretend, after his marriage with the Lady Aurelia, to have him for my husband, I wish he would still regard me as his friend, and provide for me that I fall not into poverty, and would set apart but one day in the week, or rather night, for fear of the neighbors, that I might be happy in his love.' And sure my Lord," added the old impertinent, "you cannot do a better thing, if it were but for the pleasure of telling yourself that you have the fairest wife, and most beautiful mistress of any nobleman in all Spain."

Roderigo listening with profound attention to what the slave said, as gathering from thence the pacific sentiments of her mistress, took and opened the letter, which when he had read, he fell to consider what it contained. The warring passions rose in his breast, as heat and cold meet and jostle together, pent up in the same cloud; love and hatred, compassion and disdain, combatted in his heart, and vexed him with contrarieties. Then pausing upon an answer, he thought it necessary to flatter her despair, till he could see her to take his measures, that she might not by her offensive fondness give any disturbance to his new enjoyments. "My dear friend, Ianthe," said the dissembling Count, "recommend me to the good grace and favor of thy charming mistress; for this time I will write her no answer, but tomorrow' night at eight o'clock I will be sure to wait upon her, and give her an account of this ugly matter, and of what has happened since I had the happiness of seeing her last; when I shall have told her the necessity that urged me to what I have done, she will certainly pity rather than condemn me."

Ianthe posted away with her good news to Violenta. They quickly set themselves to prepare all things for Roderigo's reception; whilst he told his new bride he was called away by certain affairs to his villa, where he was obliged to remain a whole night, but he would return the morning after. Then ordering his gentleman of the chamber, who was the confidant of all his amours, he bade him command two horses to be got ready, upon which they rode forth out of the city till it was duskish; then the Count fetched a compass, and entered Valencia by another gate; he ordered his servant to put up the horses in a strange inn, and stay for him there till he returned from Violenta in the morning. When he came to the house, he found Ianthe, with great devotion, waiting his arrival, with a settled purpose to use him according to his deserts. She conveyed him to the chamber of her expecting mistress; their

meeting was such as might be well supposed between two persons that had once desperately loved, and now as perfectly hated one another, but who yet with cold and dissembled flattery now sought to deceive each other. Violenta represented to him her despair when she heard of his marriage, the sorrow that she endured, having neither been able to eat nor sleep since the fatal tidings of her dishonor, and the loss of his heart. Roderigo took her in his arms, and protested to her he was still the same, but that the late Count his father had left so vast a debt upon the estate, which was all mortgaged to Don Ramires, that if it had not been in consideration of this marriage with his daughter he would have seized upon his whole inheritance, and then he must have been a beggar, and unable to assist her whom he valued more than his life; for though he were wedded to Aurelia, he loved none but Violenta, assuring her, that after a little time he meant to poison his new wife, and return to end his days with her in love and happiness. He concluded this discourse, which was only framed to appease her, with protestations of his love, and ten thousand vows of constancy, which are easily sworn by those who intend only to deceive. Doubtless, if this miserable woman had credited his words and oaths, and from thence have whispered peace to her deluded heart, he would have changed his mind, and not thought himself tied to the performance of his vows, since he could so manifestly break that which he had made in the sight of Heaven, when in the sacred bands of wedlock he had plighted his faith indissolubly to hers.

The Count was very well satisfied that he found Violenta so well appeased; he thought he need not give himself much trouble about that little maid, a creature of no consequence, whom he might use as he pleased. She was careful not to mention anything of her own marriage, nor a word of revenge for her dishonor. Her complaints were wholly directed to her fears of losing his heart, which he could soothe without much difficulty, since it was her business to believe. After supper, the Count not having taken much rest for several nights before, grew sleepy and ordered his bed to be made ready. We need not enquire whether Violenta and Ianthe obeyed his commands with diligence, in which consisted the good or evil fortune of their enterprise.

Violenta, to show herself most affectionate, went first to bed; as soon as they were laid, Ianthe drew the curtains and took away the Count's sword, his dagger she laid Upon a stool by her mistress' bedside; for though they had provided a large knife for that purpose, the slave thought the justice would be more remarkable if he fell by his own weapon, but to make sure work, she placed them both together; then taking away the candles, she feigned to go out of the chamber, but returned again, and locked the door on the inside, as if she had been gone away, and rested herself against the door, waiting for the cruel minute when her mistress would want her assistance. The destined Count thinking himself alone in the chamber with Violenta, began to embrace and kiss her; but she begged him to desist till she awoke again, for having never rested since the news of his fatal marriage, her heart being now somewhat more at ease, she found herself so sleepy she was not able to speak; and then she turned herself away from him to her repose. Roderigo, who had had as little sleep as possible, and perhaps stood more in need of rest, very gladly complied with her request, his designed caresses were more in the prospect of pleasing her than himself; soon after he fell into a profound sleep, which they were very well assured of by the manner of taking his breath. Violenta reached the dagger, and feeling softly for the place where she could most commodiously strike, raising herself in the bed, and transported with wrath, struck the poniard into his throat: Ianthe hearing him groan, leaped briskly upon the bed, and getting upon him with her knees and hands kept him down; he struggled, but Violenta, like another Medea, mad with rage and fury, redoubled her stroke, and thrust the point of the dagger with such force into his throat that she pierced it through on the other side. The wretched Count, thinking to make some resistance against his cruel destiny, received another wound; being held down by Ianthe he could not use hand nor foot. Through the excessive violence of his pain, he had not power to cry out or speak a word. After he had received ten or twelve mortal wounds, his soul flew away from his martyred body, in all probability to a dreadful audit, since he was taken away in the fullness of his sins, without a moment's space for repentance.

Violenta having finished this cruel enterprise, commanded Ianthe to light a candle. She approached with it near the Count's face, and saw that he was without life. "Ah traitor!" said she, "thou oughtest to have been years a-dying, if I had enjoyed power sufficient thou certainly should'st; yet some comfort it is to me to think, though I could not devote thy body to suffer such torments as thou did'st deserve, thy immortal soul is fled without a moment's warning to deprecate the divine vengeance!" Not able to quench her hate, nor satisfy the furious rage that burnt in her breast, with the point of the dagger she tore the eyes out of his head, speaking to them with a hideous voice, as if they were still alive, "Ah traitorous eyes, the interpreters of a villainous mind! come out of your shameful seat for ever! the spring of your false tears is now exhausted and dried up, so that ye shall weep no more! no more deceive chaste virgins with your feigned and falling showers." Her rage rather increased than abated, she seized upon his tongue, which with her bloody hands she plucked from the root; and beholding it with an unrelenting eye, said, as she was tearing it out, "Oh perjured and abominable tongue! false and cruel as thou wed, how many lies didst thou tell,

before with the chain-shoe^o of this cursed member, thou could'st make a breach to overthrow my honor? Of which being robbed by thy traitorous means, I must devote myself to death, to which I have now shown thee the way."

Then, insatiable of cruelty (like a wolf fleshed upon his prey, . irritated the more by the taste of blood), with the knife she violently ripped up his stomach; then launching her daring hands upon his heart tore it from the seat, and gashed it with a thousand wounds, cried, "Ah, vile heart, more obdurate and harder than adamant! upon this cruel anvil was forged the chains that bound up my unlucky destiny! What did I mean by wreaking my vengeance upon the eyes and tongue of this insatiable monster? The heart! This infamous heart of thine was the original of all my misery! It was by this the traitor was taught to flatter and betray! Oh that I could erst have discovered thy base imaginations, as now I do thy material substance, I might then have preserved myself from thy abominable treason and infidelity! yet shall not the hand only have reason to complain that it made no part of my revenge, when it had so great a one in my ruin! Take, cursed instrument," said she, dismembering his right hand from his body, "take thy reward for the faith thou didst dare to plight to me in the face of Heaven! Extreme provocations must have extreme punishment, my only grief is that thou art dead and cannot feel the torture." When she had mangled the body all over, with an infinite number of gashes, she cried out, "Oh infected carrion, once the organ and instrument of a most vile and traitorous mind, now thou are repaid as thy merits did deserve."

Ianthe, with horror and exceeding terror, had immovably beheld her butchery, when she said to her, "Ianthe, now I am at ease! my poor laboring heart is lightened of its burden! Come Death when thou wilt, thou shalt find me able to bear thy strongest assaults! I have daily proved thy torture, lest I should not bring my full revenge to the desired period! Help me then to drag this unworthy wretch out of my father's house, where I was first dishonored, where the odor of my chaste name was exchanged for poisonous infamy! Since my virtue is traduced abroad, my revenge shall be as manifest, and this carcass be exposed as publicly as was my reputation."

Violenta and Ianthe dragged the body to a chamber window and threw it out upon the pavement in the street, with the several parts that she had cut off. That done, she said to Ianthe, "Take this casket, there is in it all my jewels and two thousand ducats in gold, which I promised thee; ship thyself at the next port thou shalt come at, get thee over into Africa to save thy life as speedily as thou canst, and never return into these parts again, nor to any other where thou art known." Which Ianthe purposed to have done though Violenta had not counseled her to it. The poor slave, being just ready to depart, embraced and kissed her mistress; she took her leave with a doleful farewell, and went in search of better fortune; and from that time was never heard no more. All the pursuit that was made after her proved ineffectual, since no creature in Valencia could ever recover the least knowledge of the way she had taken.

Soon as day appeared, the first that passed through the street discovered the dead body; one told another of the strange spectacle that lay there to be seen, but no man knew who it was, because the eyes were picked out, and the other members mutilated and deformed. By that time it came to be eight o'clock, there was such a multitude of people assembled that it was almost impossible to come near the body. The generality thought thieves had murdered and stripped the dead person, because he was found in his shirt; others were of a contrary opinion. Violenta, who was at her window, hearing them give their several judgments, came down and with a firm voice said to the multitude, "Gentlemen, you dispute about a thing which if I were examined by the lawful magistrate, I could give undoubted evidence of. This murder cannot be discovered by any other, than by me, without great difficulty." Which words her neighbors easily believed, thinking this was a person slain by some of her lovers that were jealous of her; for poor Violenta had lost her former good reputation since the report that Count Roderigo kept her.

These words were carried to the magistrates, who, with their officers of justice, soon came to the place, where they found Violenta more undaunted than any of the spectators! They enquired of her immediately, "What account she could give of that murder?" Without fear or hesitation she readily answered, "My Lords, he that you see here dead is Count Roderigo di Ventimiglia: and because many persons are concerned in his death, as, his father-in-law Don Ramires, his new wife Donna Aurelia, and all. his own relations, if your Lordships please, I would, in their presence, before our most noble viceroy the Duke of Calabria, freely declare what I know of this unhappy affair."

The magistrates, amazed to see so great a man as Roderigo lie there, inhumanly slain and butchered, took Violenta into custody till the viceroy's pleasure was known; who being urged by his own curiosity, and the importunity of Don Ramires, Donna Aurelia his daughter, and the kindred of the deceased, com-manded, after dinner, she should be brought to her examination in the great hall of the palace; where the viceroy, the judges, the evidence and all persons being met, there was so great a crowd, that it was not possible to thrust in another creature. Violenta, as if she were conscious of well doing, and glowed with the pride of some worthy action performed, in the presence of them all, with a loud and clear voice, without either rage or passion, first recounted the chaste love between Count Roderigo and herself during the space of eighteen months, though without receiving the returns he expected: that within a while after, quite vanquished with love, he married her secretly in her own house: that the nuptials were solemnized by a priest unknown, in the presence of her mother, brothers, and two servants, whereof

one of them was the Count's gentleman, and still in his service: that she had been more than a year his most obedient wife, without the least offense given on her part. Then she repeated to them his second marriage with Donna Aurelia, there present. Adding, that as he had deprived her of her reputation of honor, she had sought means to deprive him of his life; which she had effected by the assistance of her maid Ianthe, who, being filled with remorse, had drowned herself in the sea. "Think not, most noble Duke," added she, "that I have given you this plain relation to move your pity and prolong my life; I could for ever have escaped your justice, if I had so intended! my purpose was to have my honor as publicly cleared as it was aspersed; for a terror to all young virgins, how they receive the addresses of persons so greatly above them; and to warn them how they consent to a clandestine marriage, as I have done, by which I am this day brought to ruin. I hold myself unworthy to live, after being stained with blood; though that blood was shed to wash away my stain. So far am I from desiring life that I cannot endure to live. I beg death of your justice, lest in saving my body you condemn my soul, and force me with my own hands to commit the most unpardonable sin, that of self-murder!"

The Duke, the magistrates, and all the spectators were amazed at the courage and magnanimity of the maid; and that one of so little rank should have so great a sense of her dishonor. The people were so far moved with pity that they wept with lukewarm tears, to think so fair and chaste a creature should meet with such great misfortunes. Detesting the memory of Count Roderigo, they thought his death too small an expiation for a wretch, who, under the pretense of sacred marriage, could enjoy her love, and then traitorously wed himself to another. The viceroy resolving not to give too hasty a judgment, remitted back Violenta to prison; and gave orders for the dead Count to be interred as obscurely as his crime deserved; taking from Violenta all weapons by which she might do herself an injury. They used such diligence, that the priest who married them was sought out and found. The Count's gentleman also deposed what he knew of the nuptials, and his Lord's designed visit to Violenta the night before the murder was committed. All things were so fully proved, that nothing could be more plain, unless they could have had the confession of the dead lord himself. Violenta, notwithstanding the pity of the people, the intercession of the ladies, and the applause her chastity and magnanimity deserved, was condemned to be beheaded; not only for that she had presumed to punish the Count's offense by her own hand, without the help of justice, but for the unexampled cruelty committed afterwards upon the dead body.

Thus the fair and virtuous Violenta ended her life; her mother and brothers being acquitted. She died with the same spirit and resolution with which she had defended her chastity; and was executed in the presence of the Duke of Calabria, who caused this history to be registered, with other things worthy remembrance, that happened at Valencia in his viceroyalty. Bandwell reports that Ianthe was put to death with her mistress, but Paludanus, a noble Spaniard alive at that time, who wrote an excellent history in Latin, positively declares that she was never apprehended; which opinion I have followed, as that which seemed to be the most probable.