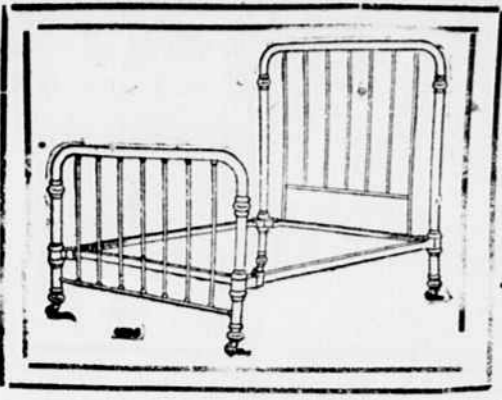


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## THE MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO.

A ROMANCE BY ANN RATCLIFFE

The feeling eloquence of Valancourt, however, at length, made her consent to his every desire. She was now in a happy mood, and she began to work to please, but not to conquer. She had a pleasant surprise when she found that the portrait which she had painted of herself, and which she had shown to the general, had been taken by her admirer. Her admiration of him increased. This was also the more inveterate, because his temperate words and manner were such as, without accusing her, compelled her to accuse herself, and neither left her a hope, that the odious portrait was the caricature of his prejudice, or afforded her an excuse for expressing the violent resentment, with which she contemplated it. At length, her anger rose to such a height, that Valancourt was compelled to leave the house abruptly, lest he should forfeit his own esteem by an impetuous reply. He was then convinced that from Madame Montoni he had nothing to hope, for what of equity or justice could be expected from a person who could feel the pain of guilt, without the humility of repentance?

To Montoni he looked with equal despondency, since it was nearly evident, that this plan of separation, originated with him, and that it was probable, that he would relinquish his own views to entreaties, or demonstrations, which he must have been prepared to resist. Yet, remembering his promise to Emily, and more solicitous, concerning his joy than jealous of his consequence, Valancourt was careful to do nothing, that might unnecessarily irritate Montoni; he wrote to him, therefore, not to demand an interview, but to sue, and, having done this, he endeavored to await with calmness his reply.

Montoni, in his reply to Valancourt, said, that as an interview could neither remove the objections of the one, or overcome the wishes of the other, it would serve only to produce useless altercation between them. He, therefore, thought proper to refuse it.

Montoni, meanwhile, every day more impatient to leave France, gave repeated orders for dispatch to the servants employed in preparations for the journey, and to the persons, with whom he was transacting some particular business. He preserved a sady silence to the letters, in which Valancourt, despairing of greater good, and having subdued the passion that had transgressed against his policy, solicited only the indulgence of being allowed to bid Emily farewell. But, when the latter learned, that she was really to set out in a very few days, and that it was designed he should see her no more, forgetting every consideration of prudence, he dared, in a second letter to Emily to propose a clandestine marriage. This also was transmitted to Madame Montoni, and the last day of Emily's stay at Valancourt arrived, without affording Valancourt even a line to soothe his sufferings, or a hope that he should be allowed a parting interview.

During this period of torturing suspense to Valancourt, Emily was sunk into that kind of stupor, with which children and irremediable misfortune sometimes overwhelms the mind. Loving him with the tenderest affection, and having long been accustomed to consider him as the friend and companion of all her future days, she had no idea of the possibility that she would be separated from him. What, then, must have been her suffering, when suddenly they were to be separated, perhaps for ever, certainly to be thrown into distant parts of the world, where they could scarcely hear of each other's existence; and all this in obedience to the will of a stranger, for such was Montoni, and of a person who had but lately been anxious to hasten their nuptials! It was in vain that she endeavored to subdue her grief, and resign herself to an event which she could not avoid. The silence of Valancourt affected more than it surprised her, since she attributed it to its just occasion; but, when the day proceeded that, on which she was to quit Thionville arrived, and she heard no mention of his being permitted to take leave of her, grief overcame every consideration, that had led her to consent to speak to him, and she was obliged to write to Madame Montoni, to inform her that her consent had been retracted. It might be said that it was adding that, after her provocation she had herself received from Valancourt in their last interview, and the persuasion, which the signor had suffered from his letters, no intrigues should avail to procure it.

### CHAP. XVII.

Nothing could exceed Emily's admiration, on her first view of Venice, with its palaces, and towers rising out of the sea, whose clear surface reflected the tremendous picture in all its colours. The sun sinking in the west, tinted the waves and the sky with a saffron glow, while on the marble porticoes and colonnades of St. Mark were thrown the rich lights and shades of evening. As they glided on, the grandeur of this appeared more distinctly: its terraces, crowded with airy yet majestic fabrics, touched as they now were, with the splendour of the setting sun, appeared as if they had been called up from the ocean by the wand of an enchanter, rather than reared by mortal hands.

She looked round, with anxious enquiry; the deep twilight that had fallen over the scene, admitted only imperfect images to the eye, but, at some distance on the sea, she thought she perceived a gondola; a chorus of voices and instruments now swelled on the air—so sweet, so solemn! it seemed like the hymn of angels descending through the silence of night! Now it died away and tancy almost beheld the holy choir ascending towards heaven; then again it swelled with the breeze, trembled awhile, and again died in silence.

The music they heard before now passed Montoni's barge, in one of the gondolas, of which several were seen skimming along the moon-light sea, full of gay parties, catching the cool breeze. Most of these had music, made sweeter by the waves over which it floated, and by the measured sound of oars, as they dashed the sparkling tide. Emily gazed, and listened, and thought herself in a fairy scene; even Madame Montoni was pleased; Montoni congratulated himself on his return to Venice, which he called the first city in the world, and Cavigni was more gay and animated than ever.

The barge passed on to the grand canal, where Montoni's mansion was situated. And here, other forms of beauty and grandeur, such as her imagination had never painted, were unfolded to Emily in the palaces of San Marco and Palladio, as she glided along the waves. The air bore no sounds, but those of sweetness, echoing along each margin of the canal, and from gondolas on its surface, while groups of masks were seen dancing on the moon-light terraces, and seemed almost to realize the romance of fairy land.

The barge stopped before the portico of a large house, from whence a servant of Montoni crossed the terrace, and immediately the party disembarked. From the portico they passed a noble hall to a stair case of marble, which led to a saloon, fitted up in a style of magnificence that surprised Emily. The walls and ceiling were adorned with historical and allegorical paintings in fresco; silver tripods depending from chains of the same metal, illumined the apartments, the floor of which was covered with Indian mats painted in a variety of colours and devices; the couches and drapery of the lattices were of pale green silk, embroidered and fringed with green and gold. Saloon lattices opened upon the grand canal, whence rose a confusion of voices and of musical instruments, and the breeze that gave freshness to the apartment Emily, considering the gloomy temper of Montoni, looked upon the splendid furniture of his house with surprise, and remembered the report of his being a man of broken fortune with astonishment. Ah! said she to herself, if Valancourt could but see this mansion, what peace would it give him! He would then be convinced that the report was groundless.

Madame Montoni seemed to assume the airs of a princess; but Montoni was restless and discontented, and did not even observe the civility of bidding her welcome to her home.

Soon after his arrival, he ordered his gondola, and with Cavigni, went out to mingle in the scenes of the evening. Madame then became serious and thoughtful. Emily, who was charmed with every thing she saw endeavored to enliven her; but reflection had not, with Madame Montoni, subdued caprice and ill humor, and her answers discovered so much of both, that Emily gave up the attempt of diverting her, and withdrew to a lattice, to amuse herself with the scene without, so new and so enchanting.

The first object that attracted her notice was a group of dancers on the terrace below, led by a guitar, and some other instruments.

Emily, as she listened, caught the sensitive enthusiasm; her tears flowed

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silently, while her fancy bore her far away to France and to Valancourt.

She was recalled from her reverie to a mere mortal supper, and could not forbear smiling at the fancies she had been indulging, and at her conviction of the serious displeasure, which Madame Montoni would have expressed, could she have been made acquainted with them.

### CHAP. XVII.

Montoni and his companion did not return home, till many hours after the dawn had blushed upon the Adriatic. The airy groups, which had danced all night along the colonnade of St. Mark, dispersed before the morning, like so many spirits. Montoni had been otherwise engaged; his soul was little susceptible of light pleasures. He delighted in the energies of the passions; the difficulties and tempests of life which wreck the happiness of others, roused and strengthened all the powers of his mind, and afforded him the highest enjoyments, of which his nature was capable. Without some object of strong interest, life was to him little more than a sleep; and, when pursuits of real interest failed, he substituted artificial ones, till habit changed their nature, and they ceased to be unreal. Of this kind was the habit of gaming, which he had adopted, first, for the purpose of relieving him from the languor of inaction, but had since pursued with the ardour of passion. In this occupation he had passed the night with Cavigni and a party of young men, who had more money than rank, and more vice than either.

To be continued

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