The Monk: A Romance

M. G. (Matthew Gregory) Lewis

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by M. G. Lewis, Esq. M.P.

Somnia, terrores magicos, miracula, sagas, Nocturnos lemures, portentaque.

HORAT.

Dreams, magic terrors, spells of mighty power, Witches, and ghosts who rove at midnight hour.

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PREFACE

IMITATION OF HORACE Ep. 20.—B. 1.

Methinks, Oh! vain ill-judging Book,
I see thee cast a wishful look,
Where reputations won and lost are
In famous row called Paternoster.
Incensed to find your precious olio
Buried in unexplored port-folio,
You scorn the prudent lock and key,
And pant well bound and gilt to see
Your Volume in the window set
Of Stockdale, Hookham, or Debrett.

Go then, and pass that dangerous bourn
Whence never Book can back return:
And when you find, condemned, despised,
Neglected, blamed, and criticised,
Abuse from All who read you fall,
(If haply you be read at all
Sorely will you your folly sigh at,
And wish for me, and home, and quiet.

Assuming now a conjuror’s office, I
Thus on your future Fortune prophesy:—
Soon as your novelty is o’er,
And you are young and new no more,
In some dark dirty corner thrown,
Mouldy with damps, with cobwebs strown,
Your leaves shall be the Book-worm’s prey;

Or sent to Chandler-Shop away,
And doomed to suffer public scandal,
Shall line the trunk, or wrap the candle!

But should you meet with approbation,
And some one find an inclination
To ask, by natural transition
Respecting me and my condition;
That I am one, the enquirer teach,
Nor very poor, nor very rich;
Of passions strong, of hasty nature,
Of graceless form and dwarfish stature;
By few approved, and few approving;
Extreme in hating and in loving;

Abhorring all whom I dislike,
Adoring who my fancy strike;
In forming judgements never long,
And for the most part judging wrong;
In friendship firm, but still believing
Others are treacherous and deceiving,
And thinking in the present aera
That Friendship is a pure chimaera:
More passionate no creature living,
Proud, obstinate, and unforgiving,
But yet for those who kindness show,
Ready through fire and smoke to go.

Again, should it be asked your page,
“Pray, what may be the author’s age?”

Your faults, no doubt, will make it clear,
I scarce have seen my twentieth year,
Which passed, kind Reader, on my word,
While England's Throne held George the Third.

Now then your venturous course pursue: Go, my delight! Dear Book, adieu!

M. G. L.

Hague, Oct. 28, 1794.

ADVERTISEMENT

The first idea of this Romance was suggested by the story of the _Santon Barsisa_, related in The Guardian.—The _Bleeding Nun_ is a tradition still credited in many parts of Germany; and I have been told that the ruins of the Castle of _Lauenstein_, which She is supposed to haunt, may yet be seen upon the borders of _Thuringia.—The Water-King_, from the third to the twelfth stanza, is the fragment of an original Danish Ballad—And _Belerma and Durandarte_ is translated from some stanzas to be found in a collection of old Spanish poetry, which contains also the popular song of _Gayferos and Melesindra_, mentioned in Don Quixote.—I have now made a full avowal of all the plagiarisms of which I am aware myself; but I doubt not, many more may be found, of which I am at present totally unconscious.

CHAPTER I.

——Lord Angelo is precise;
Stands at a guard with envy; Scarce confesses
That his blood flows, or that his appetite
Is more to bread than stone.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

Scarcely had the Abbey Bell tolled for five minutes, and already was the Church of the Capuchins thronged with Auditors. Do not encourage the idea that the Crowd was assembled either from motives of piety or thirst of information. But very few were influenced by those reasons; and in a city where superstition reigns with such despotic sway as in Madrid, to seek for true devotion would be a fruitless attempt. The Audience now assembled in the Capuchin Church was collected by various causes, but all of them were foreign to the ostensible motive. The Women came to show themselves, the Men to see the Women: Some were attracted by curiosity to hear an Orator so celebrated; Some came because they had no better means of employing their time till the play began; Some, from being assured that it would be impossible to find places in the Church; and one half of Madrid was brought thither by expecting to meet the other half. The only persons truly anxious to hear the Preacher were a few antiquated devotees, and half a dozen rival Orators, determined to find fault with and ridicule the discourse. As to the remainder of the Audience, the Sermon might have been omitted altogether, certainly without their being disappointed, and very probably without their perceiving the omission.

Whatever was the occasion, it is at least certain that the Capuchin

Church had never witnessed a more numerous assembly. Every corner was filled, every seat was occupied. The very Statues which ornamented the long aisles were pressed into the service. Boys suspended themselves upon the wings of Cherubims; St. Francis and St. Mark bore each a spectator on his shoulders; and St. Agatha found herself under the necessity of carrying double. The consequence was, that in spite of all their hurry and expedition, our two newcomers, on entering the Church, looked round in vain for places.

However, the old Woman continued to move forwards. In vain were exclamations of displeasure vented against her from all sides: In vain was She addressed with—"I assure you, Segnora, there are no places here."—"I beg, Segnora, that you will not crowd me so intolerably!"—"Segnora, you cannot pass this way. Bless me! How can people be so troublesome!"—The old Woman was obstinate, and on She went. By dint of perseverance and two brawny arms She made a passage through the Crowd, and managed to bustle herself into the very body of the Church, at no great distance from the Pulpit. Her companion had followed her with timidity and in silence, profiting by the exertions of her conductress.

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed the old Woman in a tone of disappointment, while She threw a glance of enquiry round her; "Holy Virgin! What heat! What a Crowd! I wonder what can be the meaning of all this. I believe we must return: There is no such thing as a seat to be had, and nobody seems kind enough to accommodate us with theirs."

This broad hint attracted the notice of two Cavaliers, who occupied stools on the right hand, and were leaning their backs against the

seventh column from the Pulpit. Both were young, and richly habited. Hearing this appeal to their politeness pronounced in a female voice, they interrupted their conversation to look at the speaker. She had thrown up her veil in order to take a clearer look round the Cathedral. Her hair was red, and She squinted. The Cavaliers turned round, and renewed their conversation.

“By all means,” replied the old Woman’s companion; “By all means, Leonella, let us return home immediately; The heat is excessive, and I am terrified at such a crowd.”

These words were pronounced in a tone of unexampled sweetness. The Cavaliers again broke off their discourse, but for this time they were not contented with looking up: Both started involuntarily from their seats, and turned themselves towards the Speaker.

The voice came from a female, the delicacy and elegance of whose figure inspired the Youths with the most lively curiosity to view the face to which it belonged. This satisfaction was denied them. Her features were hidden by a thick veil; But struggling through the crowd had deranged it sufficiently to discover a neck which for symmetry and beauty might have vied with the Medicean Venus. It was of the most dazzling whiteness, and received additional charms from being shaded by the tresses of her long fair hair, which descended in ringlets to her waist. Her figure was rather below than above the middle size: It was light and airy as that of an Hamadryad. Her bosom was carefully veiled. Her dress was white; it was fastened by a blue sash, and just permitted to peep out from under it a little foot of the most delicate proportions. A chaplet of large grains hung upon her arm, and her face was covered with a veil of thick black

gauze. Such was the female, to whom the youngest of the Cavaliers now offered his seat, while the other thought it necessary to pay the same attention to her companion.

The old Lady with many expressions of gratitude, but without much difficulty, accepted the offer, and seated herself: The young one followed her example, but made no other compliment than a simple and graceful reverence. Don Lorenzo (such was the Cavalier's name, whose seat She had accepted) placed himself near her; But first He whispered a few words in his Friend's ear, who immediately took the hint, and endeavoured to draw off the old Woman's attention from her lovely charge.

"You are doubtless lately arrived at Madrid," said Lorenzo to his fair Neighbour; "It is impossible that such charms should have long remained unobserved; and had not this been your first public appearance, the envy of the Women and adoration of the Men would have rendered you already sufficiently remarkable."

He paused, in expectation of an answer. As his speech did not absolutely require one, the Lady did not open her lips: After a few moments He resumed his discourse:

"Am I wrong in supposing you to be a Stranger to Madrid?"

The Lady hesitated; and at last, in so low a voice as to be scarcely intelligible, She made shift to answer,—"No, Segnor."

"Do you intend making a stay of any length?"

"Yes, Segnor."

"I should esteem myself fortunate, were it in my power to contribute

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