

GOTHIC BOURNES

**THE NOCTURNAL ASSASSIN; OR,
SPANISH JEALOUSY.**

By Isaac Crookenden

(1808)

TRANSCRIPTION BY
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**EDITING GOTHIC TEXTS
ELEVENTH SERIES, 2024**

Nº 4

THE
MYSTERIOUS MURDER;
OR THE
USURPER OF NAPLES:
AN ORIGINAL ROMANCE.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,
THE
NOCTURNAL ASSASSIN;
OR,
SPANISH JEALOUSY.

BY ISAAC CROOKENDEN,
AUTHOR OF FATAL SECRETS &c.

*“What need I fear thee? and yet I’ll make Assurance
Double sure: he shall not live! that I may tell
Pale-hearted Fear it lies, and sleep in spite of Thunder!”*

SHAKESPEARE

LONDON:
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED,
BY J. LEE,
24, HALF-MOON STREET, BISHOPSGATE WITHOUT:
AND SOLD BY ALL THE BOOKSELLERS

Source text:

https://epublications.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=english_gothic (pages 29-36)

The Nocturnal Assassin;

OR,

SPANISH JEALOUSY.

Enveloped in the darkest horrors of an hideous dungeon lay the young and unfortunate Don Lopez de Palatina; who had been imprisoned by his unnatural uncle, Count Malco, in an old moorish castle, on the banks of the Tagus, in Spain. He was betrothed to the young and lovely Donna Floriela, whose father, an old Castilian by birth, had recently met his death in the field of battle.

Malco had been the guardian of his nephew; but thirsting after his riches; and moreover burning with desire for the early beauties of Floriela, he hired two ruffians to intercept young Palatina, while he was returning from her house, who, according to the secret directions of Malco, threw him into the dungeons of one of his own estates. He lay with no other comfort than what a straw bed, and a solitary lamp afforded; on the third day of his confinement, his uncle made his appearance, and then it was that this unhappy youth comprehended the motive of his extraordinary captivity. The discovered perfidy of his unnatural relation shock[30]ed him to that degree, that it was a considerable time before he could utter a word, or even believe the evidences of his senses. Malco, after representing himself to be in very embarrassed circumstances, unfolded a parchment and offered him instant liberty, if he would make over to him the half of his estates. This Palatina refused to do; and being again urged, he once more rejected the proposal with indignation, "Use me as you please," said he, "you will find I am not that pusillanimous wretch as to be thus easily scared by the threats of a villain: neither will I purchase my liberty by such a tame renunciation of my rights!" "Then you shall soon curse your obstiancy [sic]," said Malco, "I have hit on a scheme of revenge that will harrow up your very soul: when you see me again, it shall be in *blood!*" As he said the last word, his lips parted, and discovered his teeth firmly closed together; and he left the place with fury in his countenance. Palatina pondered on his mysterious menace, and it taught him to expect something horrible: "Perhaps," said he to himself, "he has resolved on my own death!" This thought made him start, and he began to reflect whether he had not better sign the deed. If there had been but himself in the case, perhaps, he might have done it: but his beloved Floriela! he could not bear the idea of parting with any of his property, which, on their marriage, would become her own: yet his refusing might be the very reason of his union being prevented: However, Providence might at last open a way for his deliverance, though he saw no such way at present: at any rate, he could but sign when reduced to the last extremity. But now, another thought occurred: "Will my signing be of any use?" and he paused; "yes, it may be of use to him, but not to myself: will the man who has been guilty of *injustice*, stick at *treachery*? I may sign my property away; but

be a prisoner notwithstanding: besides, will he not be afraid that I shall expose his villainy?" The result of these reflections was, that young Lopez felt more repugnance than before, to sign the deed which his uncle had made the condition of his liberation. He resolved to search minutely, every corner of his dungeon, in hopes of finding some means of escape; he therefore took the lamp, and began to explore the dark [31] and dismal abode; in doing this, his foot struck against something, which, on taking up, he discovered was a dagger, the blade of which was stained with blood! Horrid ideas crossed his mind, as he gazed on this murderous instrument: the convexity of his eyes, his lengthened face, and open mouth, indicated horror and affright; and the vacant stare which his eyes assumed, shewed that his thoughts had retired within themselves. Coming a little to himself, he heaved a deep sigh, "Who can tell," exclaimed he, "the dreadful deed which this instrument has perpetrated!" He yet proceeded in his examinations; and, soon after, came to a part of the wall where was an arched recess; he entered this, and, to his surprise, discovered an inner recess: into this also he went, and holding forward the lamp, he saw a large chest, at one end of the place; he endeavoured to open it, but found it was locked; he then bent his head over the lid, and seemed as if he would pierce the boards with his eye, to come at the contents; at last he applied the dagger to the lock, and, with a kind of desperation, forced it open; but no sooner did he look in it, than the lid escaped his hand and closed again, while Lopez stood the statue of horror! The chest contained the body of a woman in the last stage of putrescence! Our young nobleman was struck with terror at the confirmation of those fears which his heart imbibed when he found the dagger: All his subsequent search after an outlet was ineffectual; and he threw himself on his bed of straw, in a state of mind easier conceived than described: ghastly train of images haunted his fancy: the "blood-stained dagger," and the horrible object which the chest disclosed, were perpetually presented to his mind. These thoughts were succeeded by the image of the young and blooming Floriela—she made him feel all the weight of his captivity.— "Alas!" cried the agonized lover, "she is completely lost to me! her modest beauties will never bless my arms, nor shall my soul ever more extract delight from gazing on her face, or listening to her conversation; that eye, whose rays formed my sun and gave animation to my existence, will no more shine on the unhappy Lopez, whose days are now doomed to wear away in darkness and despair, not unaccompanied with horror!"

[32] While Don Lopez was experiencing the fiercest extremes of sorrow in this dungeon, Donna Floriela could not but be very much astonished at his unaccountable absence. As she loved him with sincere affection, her heart was tortured with anxiety concerning his welfare: "O my Lopez!" she cried, "till I hear or see from you, I shall not taste of bliss!" At this moment her maid, Elvira, entered the garden, and her heart being ready to burst, sought to relieve itself by unburdening its woes: "O Elvira!" said the lovely girl, with a mournful voice, "no news yet from Don Lopez; ah! how dark and gloomy every object seems! tinged with the sable hue of my sad thoughts: how I envy thy happiness, Elvira"— "Envy me, Signora!"¹ said the maid, "Indeed *you* are a *real* object of envy: young, rich, beautiful, and in

¹ "Signora" is Italian, the Spanish term for this word is "Señora". This might reflect the author's lack of knowledge of Spanish culture

love with such a nobleman, as Don Lopez! I've been told, my lady, that *love* is the sweetest passion of the heart," she sighed as she spoke, "and that no persons are so happy as those mutually in love." Here Elvira sighed again. "And pray," asked her lady, smiling at the girl's simplicity, "who told you so, Elvira?"—"O, my lady," replied she, blushing and playing with her fingers, "that I must keep a secret, even from you."—"Indeed! then I will not seek to know; but listen to me, Elvira; if yet thy heart is retained within its zone, of which however I have my doubts," added she, archly: "but, if so, 'tis prudent that you keep it there; guard well its movements; they cannot be recalled at pleasure; discretion's voice in vain will bid its wanderings cease; nor will the beck of reason stay its operations; the sweets of love are fully balanced by its pangs: when scorned, or unreturned, it opens the vein where wild distraction reigns!"—"My lady does not speak from experience?" said the maid.—"No, Elvira, thank heaven I do not: Don Lopez has a noble, generous soul; 'twas his numerous virtues first won my heart, and he must change his nature before he can be false: O that I could hear from him!"

As they thus discoursed, they had unconsciously strayed to the borders of a wood, and the approaching darkness indicated the necessity of their return. At that moment two ruffians darted [33] from the wood, and one of them replied to her words, said, "You shall see him within these six hours, and in all the misery that hell can devise!" At the same time he seized the screaming beauty, and conveyed her to a carriage concealed among the trees: while the other villain bound the maid to the trunk of a large beach. Here she was discovered in the morning by one of the servants of the castle; but, alas! her young lady seemed to be irrecoverably gone.

To let the reader into a secret, the man who seized Donna Floriela was no other than Count Malco, who brought her to the Moorish castle on the banks of the Tagus, where her lover was confined. When she arrived there, he assigned her a room in one of the towers; she had not been here long, before she discovered a light moving along the mountains that her window overlooked; at the same time she heard the Ceverro² bells, by which she knew some muleteer was driving his beasts down the mountains.

The night seemed dark and mysterious as the fate of our heroine: for one time it appeared to smile on the inhabitants of the world; and at another period it would hang out a face of determined hostility. In the room where Floriela now was, she found an old Spanish romance, and she endeavoured to prevent her mind from dwelling on her mysterious and critical situation, by reading a page or two of fabled history: A few of the first leaves were destroyed, and other parts of the paper stained by the hand of time; about the middle of the book engaged her attention to such a degree, that, impatient to see the conclusion, she turned to the latter end, and had just discovered the catastrophe was fatal, when the door of her apartment slowly opened, and Count Malco entered. A malignant delight dwelt on his features, while he proceeded to lead the astonished girl from the chamber; and as she mechanically drew back, the unfeeling monster dragged her along. "For mercy's sake!"

² "Ceverro" does not exist either in English or in Spanish. The author might have wanted to refer to the "cencerro," the bell which livestock wear around their necks.

exclaimed the agonized girl, "whither am I going?" But he answered not a word. In this barbarous manner he drew her into the very dungeon where her unfortunate lover was confined; when she saw him in this mournful state, her sorrow received a distracting emphasis. As soon as Don Lopez saw her, [34] "O!" cried he, "the first ray of light darting into chaos, looked not more bright than does that angelic form in this horrid gloom!" "Don Lopez," said Malco, "the last time we parted, I promised, when we met again, it should surely be in blood! behold me now how I *perform* that promise." He then suddenly drew a poinard, and raised his hand to strike the fatal blow. "O my dear uncle! only hear me: all my estates shall be your's;³ but spare, O spare her precious life;" cried Lopez. At that moment, Malco received a desperate wound in the breast, from one of the men whom he had employed in this business, and who had conceived himself not sufficiently rewarded for his services. The vicious Count fell instantly to the earth, and, ere he expired, disclosed crimes of which he was not suspected.

"O Lopez," said the dying man, "how just is the hand of heaven! In a few moments my guilty soul will be forced to appear at the bar of its incensed Maker: let me, therefore, hasten to confess those enormities which hang such a leaden weight on its hopes of heavenly bliss. Your father was my elder brother, and as my early extravagance had left me very slenderly provided with pecuniary resources, his fraternal affection induced him to assist me in my necessities: I frequently received ample supplies at his generous hands, accompanied with salutary advice concerning my future conduct, which, had I taken, my conscience would not have been contaminated with guilt: As the venomous [sic] spider embibes [sic] poison from the sweetest flower, so did my depraved heart extract infernal designs from my noble brother's liberality; and I, at length, laid the horrible plan of having him privately assassinated! To accomplish this unnatural purpose, I hired two villains, and by promises of large rewards, engaged them to perpetrate the dreadful act. The time arriving when he usually visited his estate near the Escureal;⁴ I watched narrowly his motions, and he was intercepted while passing through a forest: one of the ruffians dragged him from his horse, and the other pierced him to the heart with a sword!"

No sooner did Lopez hear this tragical tale, than he clasped [35] his hands before his eyes, in the agony of suffocating sorrow; his dying uncle thus went on.

"They buried the murdered body in a cavity of the forest, and I gave them the reward I promised. My next care was how to deceive your mother, with respect to his death; at length I contrived to spread it abroad that he had been murdered by a banditti: She was, for a considerable time, inconsolable for his loss, as I believe no one couple, since the creation of man, ever lived in greater happiness, 'till I, like the arch fiend of old, envied their felicity, and resolved to annihilate it. Before my deceased brother had married his wife, I myself had conceived a passion for her, which, as she did not return, my soul endured the stings of mortified pride: my brother knew not of my love, neither would I condescend to tell him. I therefore suffered them to be married in peace; but my revengeful soul resolved 'ere long to

³ Curious choice of spelling for the word "yours"

⁴ A reference to the town of El Escorial.

give them both a horrible specimen of Spanish Jealousy. I had reason to think that your mother soon suspected that I was concerned in the dark transaction of your father's murder, and she now looked on me with eyes of horror and aversion. I therefore resolved to bear her scorn no longer, but, as I had her in my power, to avail myself of it. But, O heaven! with what indignant astonishment did she receive my first professions of love! it seemed as if the mention of it, had raked up anew the ashes of her beloved Lord: her tears flowed afresh; her bosom was convulsed with tumultuous heavings, the exquisite distress she was in, enhanced [sic] the value of her charms; night and silence conspired to heighten my illegal desires; my evil genius whispered that this was the moment of my triumph; I drew near, and caught her in my arms; her screams were uttered in vain, for nobody was within hearing; my sacriligious [sic] hand invaded the sacred treasures of her bosom; but my infuriated passion went farther than this, for amidst sighs, tears, and heart-rending anguish, during agonizing exclamations on the name of her murdered Lord, I obtained an inglorious conquest over her honor! Diabolical as the dark deed was, yet my depraved soul conceived new horrors for her: I had her privately conveyed to this dreadful dungeon, and imposed on the world by a [36] fictitious account of her death. While here, I several times endeavoured, by alternate promises of emancipation, and threats of immolation, to extort from her, a written renunciation of her estates, but to no purpose: she was as firm in her refusal to part with them, as you have been. Enraged at her obstinacy [sic], I suddenly gave the fatal orders for her execution, and she was murdered by one of my infernal instruments; who had before done me a similar horrible service: her body was inclosed in a chest and secreted in an obscure recess in this very place."

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed Don Lopez, "was it then my own mother whom I saw!" The dying Malco turned an eye upon him of confusion and surprize [sic]; it was his last look, his face became convulsed, and he expired with a deep groan.

In consequence of his dying confessions, it appeared that the putrid corpse our hero discovered in the chest, was that of his *own mother!* who had been debauched and imprisoned by his depraved uncle and at last murdered!

Thus died a man, whose life had a whole scene of iniquity, flowing from three impure sources: *prodigality, jealousy, and illicit love!* how necessary is it, therefore, my reader, to guard thine heart against the allurements of fashionable depravity! and to resist with virtuous indignation, the groveling [sic] joys of terrestrial sensuality! the unsullid [sic] purity of your great original, teaches you to refuse to pinion your affection to this sublunary scene; but to mount, with divine ambition, up to that glorious Being, who has opened in your soul, an insatiable thirst after happiness, on purpose to lead you to him, who is the inexhaustable [sic] fountain of true felicity!

After these mournful scenes were worn off their minds, Lopez and Floriela were united at the altar of [sic] Hymen, which event, as it had its origin in real love, produced a felicity, that, during their whole lives was never once embittered by SPANISH JEALOUSY!

THE END.

Lee, Printer, Half Moon Street, Bishopsgate.