

This dissatisfaction, at once grave and ludicrous, gave the count a lofty idea of the merit of the pupil from the high value which the severe master attached to it.

"So, so, my dear maestro," he exclaimed, "is that indeed your opinion? is this Consuelo a creature so extraordinary, so divine?"

"You shall hear her," said Porpora, with an air of resignation, while he murmured, "it is her destiny."

The count succeeded in raising the spirits of the master from their state of depression, and led him to expect a serious reform in the choice of operas. He promised to exclude inferior productions so soon as he should succeed in getting rid of Corilla, to whose caprices he attributed their admission and success. He even dexterously gave him to understand that he would be very reserved as to Hasse; and declared that if Porpora would write an opera for Consuelo, the pupil would confer a double glory on her master in expressing his thoughts in a style which suited them, as well as realize a lyric triumph for San Samuel and for the count.

Porpora, fairly vanquished, began to thaw, and now secretly longed for the coming out of his pupil, as much as he had hitherto dreaded it from the fear that she should be the means of adding fresh lustre to the productions of his rivals. But as the count expressed some anxiety touching Consuelo's appearance, he refused to permit him to hear her in private, and without preparation.

"I do not wish you to suppose," said he, in reply to the count's questions and entreaties, "that she is a beauty. A poorly-dressed and timid girl, in presence of a nobleman and a judge—a child of the people, who has never been the object of the slightest attention—cannot dispense with some preparatory toilet. And, besides, Consuelo is one whose expression genius ennobles in an extraordinary degree. She must be seen and heard at the same time. Leave it all to me; if you are not satisfied you may leave her alone, and I shall find out means of making her a good nun, who will be the glory of the school, and the instructress of future pupils." Such, in fact, was the destiny which Porpora had planned for Consuelo.

When he saw his pupil again, he told her that she was to be heard and an opinion given of her by the count; but as she was uneasy on the score of her looks, he gave her to understand that she would not be seen—in short, that she would sing behind the organ-screen, the count being merely present at the service in the church. He advised her, however, to dress with some attention to appearance, as she would have to be presented, and though the noble master was poor, he gave her money for the purpose. Consuelo, frightened and agitated, busied for the first time in her life with attention to her person, hastened to see after her toilet and her voice. She tried the last, and found it so fresh, so brilliant, and so full, that Anzoletto, to whom she sang, more than once repeated with ecstasy, "Alas! why should they require more than that she knows how to sing?"

CHAPTER X.

ON the eve of the important day, Anzoletto found Consuelo's door closed and locked; and after having waited for a quarter of an hour

on the stairs, he finally obtained permission to see his friend in her festal attire, the effect of which she wished to try before him. She had on a handsome flowered muslin dress, a lace handkerchief, and powder. She was so much altered, that Anzoletto was for some moments uncertain whether she had gained or lost by the change. The hesitation which Consuelo read in his eyes was as the stroke of a dagger to her heart.

"Ah!" said she, "I see very well that I do not please you. How can I hope to please a stranger, when he who loves me sees nothing agreeable in my appearance?"

"Wait a little," replied Anzoletto. "I like your elegant figure in those long stays, and the distinguished air which this lace gives you. The large folds of your petticoat suit you to admiration, but I regret your long black hair. However, it is the fashion, and to-morrow you must be a lady."

"And why must I be a lady? For my part I hate this powder, which fades one, and makes even the most beautiful grow old before her time. I have an artificial air under all these furbelows; in short, I am not satisfied with myself, and I see you are not so either. Oh! by-the-bye, I was at rehearsal this morning, and saw Clorinda, who also was trying on a new dress. She was so gay, so fearless, so handsome, (oh! she must be happy!—you need not look twice at her to be sure of her beauty), that I feel afraid of appearing beside her before the count."

"You may be easy; the count has seen her, and has heard her too."

"And did she sing badly?"

"As she always does."

"Ah! my friend, those rivalries spoil the disposition. A little while ago, if Clorinda, who is a good girl, notwithstanding her vanity, had been spoken of unfavorably by a judge, I should have been sorry for her from the bottom of my heart; I should have shared her grief and humiliation; and now I find myself rejoicing at it! To strive, to envy, to seek to injure each other, and all that for a man whom we love not, nay! but whom we know not! I feel very low-spirited, my dear love, and it seems to me as if I were as much frightened by the idea of succeeding as by that of failing. It seems as if our happiness was coming to a close, and that to-morrow, after the trial, whatever may be the result, I shall return to this poor apartment a different person from what I have hitherto lived in it."

Two large tears rolled down over Consuelo's cheeks.

"Well, are you going to cry now?" said Anzoletto. "What can you be thinking of? You will dim your eyes, and swell your eyelids. Your eyes, Consuelo! do not spoil your eyes, which are the most beautiful feature in your face."

"Or rather the least ugly," said she, wiping away her tears. "Come, when we give ourselves up to the world we have not even the right to weep."

Her friend tried to comfort her, but she was exceedingly dejected all the rest of the day; and in the evening, when she was again alone, she brushed out the powder, uncurled her ebon hair, and sleeked it, tried on a little black silk dress, well preserved, and still nearly new, her usual Sunday garb, and regained a portion of her confidence on once more recognising herself in her mirror. Then she prayed fervently, and thought of her mother, until, melted to tears, she cried

herself to sleep. When Anzoleto came to see her the following day to take her to church, she was sitting at her spinnet, practising her first air, and her hair dressed as on every Sunday.—“What!” he exclaimed, “not dressed yet? unpowdered still? It is almost the hour; what can you be about, Consuelo?”

“My dear, she replied, steadily, “I wear my hair as it is. I am ready as I am. I am tranquil, and shall go thus. This fine black dress does not suit me. My black hair pleases you better than powder. These corsets do but check my breath. Do not endeavor to change my resolution; I have made up my mind. I have prayed to God to direct me, and my mother to watch over my conduct. God has directed me to be quiet and simple. My mother has visited me in my dreams, and she said what she always used to say: ‘Try to sing well, Providence will do the rest.’ I saw her take my fine dress, my laces, and my ribbons, and put them away in the cupboard; and then she laid my black frock and white muslin mantilla on the chair by the bedside; when I awoke, I locked up my full dress as I saw her do in the dream, and put on my black frock and mantilla, as you see me. I have more courage, now that I have given up the idea of pleasing by graces which I do not comprehend. Listen to my voice; after all, everything lies in that,”—and she sounded a note.

“Good Lord! we are ruined!” cried Anzoleto. “Your voice is *voilà*,* and your eyes are bloodshot. You have been crying all night, Consuelo. This is a pretty business! I say we are ruined! It is absurd to wear mourning on a holiday; besides, it is unlucky, and it does not become you. Come, be quick—put on your fine full dress, while I go and get you some rouge. You are pale as a ghost!”

The poor girl’s mind was again agitated, and her tears flowed afresh. Anzoleto was vexed more and more, and while they were still debating, the clock struck the fatal hour. Consuelo, pale and trembling, looked at herself for the last time in the little broken mirror. Then, turning round, sprang impetuously into Anzoleto’s arms. “Oh, my beloved,” she cried, “do not swear at me. Clasp me more closely in your arms, to give some color to my pale cheeks. Be your kiss to my cheeks as was the sacred fire which kindled Isaiah’s lips, and may God pardon us for doubting His assistance!”

Then she cast her mantilla eagerly over her head, snatched up her music books, and hurrying away her dispirited lover, made haste to the church of the Mendicanti, whither the crowd were already flocking, to listen to Porpora’s admirable music. Anzoleto, more dead than alive, went to seek the count, who had given him the meeting in the organ-loft, while Consuelo went up to the organ-loft, in which the choirs were already in air, with the professor at his desk. Consuelo was not aware that the count’s tribune was so contrived that he could look into the organ-loft more easily than into the church—that he had already fixed his eyes on her, and was watching her every gesture.

Her features, however, he could not yet distinguish, for on entering

* *VOILÀ*. We have thought it advisable to leave this word untranslated, although nothing in general is more abominable than to see books professing to be written in the English language, interlarded with foreign words or phrases. This word *voilà* is, however, a musical technicality, and can be expressed by no English word. It does not mean *HUSKY* exactly, nor *HOARSE*, nor *THICK*, but something intermediate. The literal meaning of the word being *VEILED* or *SHROUDED*, which, as applied to a voice in English, would be a simply nonsense.

she knelt down, buried her face in her hands, and prayed fervently and devoutly. “Oh, my God,” she cried, with the voice of the heart “thou knowest that I seek not advancement for the humiliation of my rivals. Thou knowest that I have no thought to surrender myself to the world and worldly acts, abandoning thy love, and straying into the paths of vice. Thou knowest that pride dwells not in me, and that I implore thee to support me, and to swell my voice, and to expand my thoughts as I sing thy praises, only that I may dwell with him whom my mother permitted me to love.”

When the first sounds of the orchestra called Consuelo to her place, she rose slowly, her mantilla fell from her shoulders, and her face was at length visible to the impatient and restless spectators in the neighboring tribune. But what marvellous change is here in this young girl, just now so pale, so cast down, so overwhelmed by fatigue and fear! The ether of heaven seemed to bedew her lofty forehead, while a gentle languor was diffused over the noble and graceful outlines of her figure. Her tranquil countenance expressed none of those petty passions, which seek, and as it were, exact applause. There was something about her solemn, mysterious, and elevated—at once lovely and affecting.

“Courage, my daughter,” said the professor, in a low voice. “You are about to sing the music of a great master, and he is here to listen to you.”

“Who?—Marcello?” said Consuelo, seeing the professor lay the Hymns of Marcello open on the desk.

“Yes—Marcello,” replied he. “Sing as usual—nothing more and nothing less—and all will be well.”

Marcello, then in the last year of his life, had in fact come once again to revisit Venice, his birth-place, where he had gained renown as composer, as writer, and as magistrate. He had been full of courtesy towards Porpora, who had requested him to be present in his school, intending to surprise him with the performance of Consuelo, who knew his magnificent “*I cieli immensi narrano*” by heart. Nothing could be better adapted to the religious glow that now animated the heart of this noble girl. So soon as the first words of this lofty and brilliant production shone before her eyes, she felt as if wafted into another sphere. Forgetting Count Zustiniani—forgetting the spiteful glances of her rivals—forgetting even Anzoleto—she thought only of God and of Marcello, who seemed to interpret those wondrous regions whose glory she was about to celebrate. What subject so beautiful!—what conception so elevated!—

*I cieli immensi narrano
Del grandi Iddio la gloria
Il firmamento lucido
All universo annunzia
Quanto sieno mirabili
Della sua destra le opere.*

A divine glow overspread her features, and the sacred fire of genius darted from her large black eyes, as the vaulted roof rang with that unequalled voice, and with those lofty accents which could only proceed from an elevated intellect, joined to a good heart. After he had listened for a few instants, a torrent of delicious tears streamed from Marcello’s eyes. The count, unable to restrain his emotion, exclaimed—“By the Holy Rood, this woman is beautiful! She is Santa Cecilia, Santa Teresa, Santa Consuelo! She is poetry, she is music, she

in faith personified." As for Anzoletto, who had risen, and whose trembling knees barely sufficed to sustain him with the aid of his hands, which clung convulsively to the grating of the tribune, he fell back upon his seat, ready to swoon, intoxicated with pride and joy.

It required all the respect due to the locality, to prevent the numerous dilettanti in the crowd from bursting into applause, as if they had been in the theatre. The count would not wait till the close of the service to express his enthusiasm to Porpora and Consuelo. She was obliged to repair to the tribune of the count to receive the thanks and gratitude of Marcello. She found him so much agitated as to be hardly able to speak.

"My daughter," said he, with a broken voice, "receive the blessing of a dying man. You have caused me to forget for an instant the mortal suffering of many years. A miracle seems exerted in my behalf, and the unrelenting, frightful malady appears to have fled forever at the sound of your voice. If the angels above sing like you, I shall long to quit the world in order to enjoy that happiness which you have made known to me. Blessings then be on you, oh my child, and may your earthly happiness correspond with your deserts! I have heard Faustina, Romanina, Cuzzoni, and the rest; but they are not to be named along with you. It is reserved for you to let the world hear what it has never yet heard, and to make it feel what no man has ever yet felt."

Consuelo, overwhelmed by this magnificent eulogium, bowed her head, and almost bending to the ground, kissed, without being able to utter a word, the livid fingers of the dying man, then rising, she cast a look upon Anzoletto which seemed to say—"Ungrateful one, you knew not what I was!"

CHAPTER XL

DURING the remainder of the service, Consuelo displayed energy and resources which completely removed any hesitation Count Zustiniani might have felt respecting her. She led, she animated, she sustained the choir, displaying at each instant prodigious powers, and the varied qualities of her voice rather than the strength of her lungs. For those who know how to sing do not become tired, and Consuelo sang with as little effort and labor as others might have in merely breathing. She was heard above all the rest, not because she screamed like those performers, without soul and without breath, but because of the unimaginable sweetness and purity of her tones. Besides, she felt that she was understood in every minute particular. She alone, amidst the vulgar crowd, the shrill voices and imperfect trills of those around her, was a musician and a master. She filled therefore instinctively and without ostentation her powerful part, and as long as the service lasted she took the prominent place which she felt was necessary. After all was over, the choristers imputed it to her as a grievance and a crime; and those very persons who, failing and sinking, had as it were implored her assistance with their looks, claimed for themselves all the eulogiums which were given to the

school of Porpora at large. At these eulogiums the master smiled and said nothing; but he looked at Consuelo, and Anzoletto understood very well what his look meant.

After the business of the day was over, the choristers partook of a select collation which the count had caused to be served up in one of the parlors of the convent. Two immense tables in the form of a half-moon were separated by the grating, in the centre of which, over an immense *gaté*, there was an opening to pass the dishes, which the count himself gracefully handed round to the principal nuns and pupils. The latter, dressed as Beguines, came by dozens alternately to occupy the vacant places in the interior of the cloisters. The superior, seated next the grating, was thus at the right hand of the count as regarded the outer hall; the seat on his left was vacant. Marcello, Porpora, the curate of the parish, and the officiating priests, some dilettanti patricians, and the lay administrators of the school, together with the handsome Anzoletto with his black coat and sword, had a place at the secular table. The young singers, though usually animated enough on such occasions, what with the pleasure of feasting, of conversing with gentlemen, the desire of pleasing, or at least of being observed—were on that day thoughtful and constrained. The project of the count had somehow expired—for what secret can be kept in a convent without oozing out?—and each of these young girls secretly flattered herself that she should be presented by Porpora in order to succeed Corilla. The professor was even malicious enough to encourage their illusions, whether to induce them to perform better before Marcello, or to revenge himself for the previous annoyance during their course of instruction. Certain it is that Clorinda, who was one of the out-pupils of the conservatory, was there in full attire, waiting to take her place beside the count; but when she saw the despised Consuelo, with her black dress and tranquil mein, the ugly creature whom she affected to despise, henceforth esteemed a musician and the only beauty of the school, she became absolutely frightful with anger—uglier that Consuelo had ever been—ugly as Venus herself would become were she actuated by a base and degrading motive. Anzoletto, exulting in his victory, looked attentively at her, seated himself beside her, and loaded her with absurd compliments which she had not sense to understand, but which nevertheless consoled her. She imagined she would revenge herself on her rival by attracting her betrothed, and spared no pains to intoxicate him with her charms. She was no match however for her companion, and Anzoletto was acute enough to load her with ridicule.

In the mean time Count Zustiniani, upon conversing with Consuelo, was amazed to find her endowed with as much tact, good sense, and conversational powers, as he had found in her talent and ability at church. Absolutely devoid of coquetry, there was a cheerful frankness and confiding good nature in her manner which inspired a sympathy equally rapid and irresistible. When the repast was at an end, he invited her to take the air in his gondola with his friends. Marcello was excused on account of his failing health; but Porpora, Barberigo, and other patricians were present, and Anzoletto was also of the party. Consuelo, who felt not quite at home among so many men, entreated the count to invite Clorinda; and Zustiniani, who did not suspect the badinage of Anzoletto with this poor girl, was not sorry to see him attracted by her. The noble count, thanks to the sprightliness of his character, his fine figure, his wealth, his thea-

tre, and also the easy manners of the country and of the time, had a strong spice of conceit in his character. Fired by the wine of Greece and by his musical enthusiasm, and impatient to revenge himself on the perfidious Corilla, he thought there was nothing more natural than to pay his court to Consuelo. Seating himself therefore beside her in the gondola, and so arranging that the young people should occupy the other extremity, he began to direct glances of a very significant character on his new flame. The simple and upright Consuelo took no notice. Her candor and good principle revolted at the idea that the protector of her friend could harbor ill designs; indeed, her habitual modesty, in no way affected by the splendid triumph of the day, would have made it impossible for her to believe it. She persisted therefore in respecting the illustrious signor, who adopted her along with Anzoletto, and continued to amuse herself with the party of pleasure, in which she could see no harm.

So much calmness and good faith surprised the count, who remained uncertain whether it was the joyous submission of an unresisting heart or the unsuspectingness of perfect innocence. At eighteen years of age, however, now, as well as a hundred years ago, especially with a friend such as Anzoletto, a girl could not be perfectly ignorant. Every probability was in favor of the count; nevertheless, each time that he seized the hand of his protégée, or attempted to steal his arm round her waist, he experienced an indefinable fear, and a feeling of uncertainty—almost of respect, which restrained him, he could not tell how.

Barberigo thought Consuelo sufficiently attractive, and he would in his turn gladly have maintained his pretensions, had he not been restrained by motives of delicacy towards the count. "Honor to all," said he to himself, as he saw the eyes of Zustiniani swimming in an atmosphere of voluptuous delight; "my turn will come next." Meanwhile the young Barberigo, not much accustomed to look at the stars when on excursions with ladies, inquired by what right Anzoletto should appropriate the fair Clorinda; and approaching, he endeavored to make him understand that his place was rather to take the oar than to flirt with ladies. Anzoletto, notwithstanding his acuteness, was not well-bred enough to understand at first what he meant; besides, his pride was fully on a par with the insolence of the patricians. He detested them cordially, and his apparent deference towards them merely served to disguise his inward contempt. Barberigo, seeing that he took a pleasure in opposing them, bethought himself of a cruel revenge. "By Jove!" said he to Clorinda, "your friend Consuelo is getting on at a furious rate; I wonder where she will stop. Not contented with setting the town crazy with her voice, she is turning the head of the poor count. He will fall madly in love, and Corilla's affair will be soon settled."

"Oh, there is nothing to fear," exclaimed Clorinda, mockingly; "Consuelo's affections are the property of Anzoletto here, to whom in fact she is engaged. They have been burning for each other, I don't know how many years."

"I do not know how many years may be swept away in the twinkling of an eye," said Barberigo, "especially when the eyes of Zustiniani take it upon them to cast the mortal dart. Do not you think so, beautiful Clorinda?"

Anzoletto could bear it no longer. A thousand serpents already found admission into his bosom. Hitherto such a suspicion had

never entered his mind. He was transported with joy at witnessing his friend's triumph, and it was as much to give expression to his transports as to amuse his vanity, that he occupied himself in rallying the unfortunate victim of the day. After some cross purposes with Barberigo, he feigned a sudden interest in a musical discussion which Porpora was keeping up with some of the company in the centre of the bark, and thus leaving a situation which he had now no longer any wish to retain, he glided along unobserved almost to the prow. He saw at the first glance that Zustiniani did not relish his attempt to interrupt this tête-à-tête with his betrothed, for he replied coolly, and even with displeasure. At last, after several idle questions badly received, he was advised to go and listen to the instructions which the great Porpora was giving on counterpoint.

"The great Porpora is not my master," said Anzoletto, concealing the rage which devoured him. "He is Consuelo's master; and if it would only please your Highness," said he, in a low tone, bending towards the count in an insinuating manner, "that my poor Consuelo should receive no other lessons than those of her old teacher."

"Dear and well-beloved Zoto," replied the count caressingly, but at the same time with profound malice, "I have a word for your ear;" and leaning towards him he added: "Your betrothed has doubtless received lessons from you that must render her invulnerable; but if I had any pretension to offer her others, I should at least have the right of doing so during one evening."

Anzoletto felt a chill run through his frame from head to foot.

"Will your gracious Highness deign to explain yourself?" said he, in a choking voice.

"It is soon done, my good friend," replied the count in a clear tone—*"gondola for gondola."*

Anzoletto was terrified when he found that the count had discovered his tête-à-tête with Corilla. The foolish and audacious girl had boasted to Zustiniani in a violent quarrel that they had been together. The guilty youth vainly pretended astonishment. "You had better go and listen to Porpora about the principle of the Neapolitan schools," said the count; "you will come back and tell me about it, for it is a subject that interests me much."

"I perceive, your Excellency," replied Anzoletto, frantic with rage and ready to dash himself into the sea.

"What!" said the innocent Consuelo, astonished at his hesitation, "will you not go? Permit me, Signor Count; you shall see that I am willing to serve you." And before the count could interpose, she bounded lightly over the seat which separated her from her old master, and sat down close beside him.

The count, perceiving that matters were not far enough advanced, found it necessary to dissemble. "Anzoletto," said he, smiling, and pulling the ear of his protégé a little too hard, "my revenge is at an end. It has not proceeded nearly so far as your deserts; neither do I make the slightest comparison between the pleasure of conversing in the presence of a dozen persons with your fair friend and the tête-à-tête which you have enjoyed in a well-closed gondola with mine."

"Signor Count!" exclaimed Anzoletto, violently agitated, "I protest on my honor—"

"Where is your honor?" resumed the count; "is it in your left ear?" And he menaced the unfortunate organ with an infliction similar to that which he had just visited the right.

"Do you suppose your protégé has so little sense," said Anzoletto recovering his presence of mind, "as to be guilty of such folly?"

"Guilty or not," rejoined the count, drily, "it is all the same to me." And he seated himself beside Consuelo.

CHAPTER XII.

THE musical dissertation was continued until they reached the palace of Zustiniani, where they arrived towards midnight, to partake of coffee and sherbet. From the technicalities of art they had passed on to style, musical ideas, ancient and modern forms; from that to artists and their different modes of feeling and expressing themselves. Porpora spoke with admiration of his master Scarlatti, the first who had imparted a pathetic character to religious compositions; but there he stopped, and would not admit that sacred music should trespass upon profane, in tolerating ornaments, trill, and roudades.

"Do you, then, Signor," said Anzoletto, "find fault with these and other difficult additions, which have nevertheless constituted the glory and success of your illustrious pupil Farinelli?"

"I only disapprove of them in the church," replied the maestro; "I would have them in their proper place, which is the theatre. I wish them of a pure, sober, genuine taste, and appropriate in their modulations, not only to the subject of which they treat, but to the person and situation that are represented, and the passion which is expressed. The nymphs and shepherds may warble like any birds; their cadences may be like the flowing fountain; but Medea or Dido can only sob and roar like a wounded lioness. The coquette, indeed, may load her silly cavatina with capricious and elaborate ornament. Corilla excels in this description of music; but once she attempts to express the deeper emotions, the passions of the human heart, she becomes inferior even to herself. In vain she struggles, in vain she swells her voice and bosom—a note misplaced, an absurd roudade, parodies in an instant the sublimity which she had hoped to reach. You have all heard Faustina Bordini, now Madame Hasse: in situations appropriate to her brilliant qualities, she had no equal; but when Cuzzoni came, with her pure, deep feeling, to sing of pain, of prayer, or tenderness, the tears which she drew forth banished in an instant from your heart the recollection of Faustina. The solution of this is to be found in the fact that there is a showy and superficial cleverness, very different from lofty and creative genius. There is also that which amuses, which moves us, which astonishes, and which completely carries us away. I know very well that sudden and startling effects are now in fashion; but if I taught them to my pupils as useful exercises, I almost repent of it when I see the majority so abuse them—so sacrifice what is necessary to what is superfluous—the lasting emotion of the audience to cries of surprise and the starts of a feverish and transitory pleasure.

No one attempted to combat conclusions so eternally true with regard to all the arts, and which will be always applied to their varied manifestations by lofty minds. Nevertheless, the count, who was curious to know how Consuelo would sing ordinary music, pretended to

combat a little the severe notions of Porpora; but seeing that the modest girl, instead of refuting his heresies, ever turned her eyes to her old master as if to solicit his victorious replies, he determined to attack herself, and asked her "if she sang upon the stage with as much ability and purity as at church?"

"I do not think," she replied, with unfeigned humility, "that I should there experience the same inspirations, or acquit myself nearly so well."

"This modest and sensible reply satisfies me," said the count; "and I feel assured that if you will condescend to study those brilliant difficulties of which we every day become more greedy, you will sufficiently inspire an ardent, curious, and somewhat spoiled public."

"Study!" replied Porpora, with a meaning smile.

"Study!" cried Anzoletto, with superb disdain.

"Yes, without doubt," replied Consuelo, with her accustomed sweetness. "Though I have sometimes labored in this direction, I do not think I should be able to rival the illustrious performers who have appeared in our time."

"You do not speak sincerely," exclaimed Anzoletto, with animation. "Eccellenza, she does not speak the truth. Ask her to try the most elaborate and difficult airs in the repertory of the theatre, and you will see what she can do."

"If I did not think she were tired," said the count, whose eyes sparkled with impatience and curiosity. Consuelo turned hers artlessly to Porpora, as if to await his command.

"Why, as to that," said he, "such a trifle could not tire her; and as we are here a select few, we can listen to her talent in every description of music. Come, Signor Count, choose an air, and accompany it yourself on the harpsichord."

"The emotion which the sound of her voice would occasion me," replied Zustiniani, "would cause me to play falsely. Why not accompany her yourself, maestro?"

"I should wish to see her sing," continued Porpora: "for between us be it said, I have never seen her sing. I wish to know how she means herself, and what she does with her mouth and with her eyes. Come, my child, arise; it is for me as well as for you that this trial is to be made."

"Let me accompany her, then," said Anzoletto, seating himself at the instrument.

"You will frighten me, O my master!" said Consuelo to Porpora.

"Fools alone are timid," replied the master. "Whoever is inspired with the love of art need fear nothing. If you tremble it is because you are vain; if you lose your resources, it is because they are false; and if so, I shall be one of the first to say: 'Consuelo is good for nought.'"

And without troubling himself as to what effect these tender encouragements might produce, the professor donned his spectacles, placed himself before his pupil, and began to beat the time on the harpsichord to give the true movement of the ritornella. They chose a brilliant, strange, and difficult air from an opera buffa of Galuppi,—*The Diavolessa*,—in order to test her in a species of art the most opposite to that in which she had succeeded in the morning. The young girl enjoyed a facility so prodigious as to be able, almost without study, and as if in sport, to overcome, with her pliable and powerful voice, all the difficulties of execution then known. Porpora had

recommended and made her repeat such exercises from time to time, in order to see that she did not neglect them; but he was quite unaware of the ability of his wonderful pupil in this respect. As if to revenge himself for the bluntness which he had displayed, Consuelo was roguish enough to add to *The Diavolessa* a multitude of turns and ornaments until then esteemed impracticable, but which she improvised with as much unconcern and calmness as if she had studied them with care.

These embellishments were so skilful in their modulations, of a character so energetic, wild, and startling, and mingled in the midst of their most impetuous gaiety with accents so mournful, that a shudder of terror replaced the enthusiasm of the audience; and Porpora, rising suddenly, cried out with a loud voice: "You are the devil in person!"

Consuelo brought her air to a close with a *crescendo di forza*, which produced bursts of applause, and taking her seat again began laughing merrily.

"Naughty girl," cried Porpora. "This trick you have played me, deserves the gallows. You have made a fool of me, concealing from me half your studies and powers. It is many a day since you have had ought to learn of me; and you have taken my lessons treacherously; to steal my secrets of composition and of teaching, I fancy, and so to outdo me in everything, and make me pass for an old-fashioned pedagogue."

"Master mine," Consuelo made reply, "what have I done but imitate your trick upon the Emperor Charles? You have related that to me already, many times.—How his Imperial Majesty detested trills, and forbade your introducing one into your oratorio; and how, after obeying his orders rigidly unto the very end of the piece, you gave him a *divertissement* at the last fugue, in perfectly good taste, beginning with four ascending trills, afterwards repeated infinitely in the *stretto* by all the parts. You have discoursed all this evening on the abuse of ornament, and you end by ordering me to execute them. I executed too many, in order to prove myself capable of extravagance—a fault to which I willingly plead guilty."

"I tell you that you are Beelzebub incarnate," answered Porpora. "Now then play some human air, and sing it according to your own notions, for I perceive that I, at least, can teach you no longer."

"You will always be my revered, always my beloved master," cried she, falling on his neck and clasping him in her arms. "It is to you only that I owe my livelihood, my instructions for the last ten years. Oh, master, I have heard say that you have formed but ungrateful pupils; but may God deprive me at once of the power of living and of singing, if my heart is tainted with the full venom of ingratitude!"

Porpora grew pale, spoke a few indistinct words, and kissed the brow of his pupil paternally; but with the kiss he left a tear, which Consuelo, who would not wipe it, felt drying on her forehead.—the icy bitter tear of unhappy age, and unappreciated genius. A sort of superstitious horror overwhelmed her with deep emotion, and her gaiety was overshadowed, and her liveliness extinguished for the night. An hour afterwards, when all the set terms of admiration had been lavished on her—not of that only, but of rapture and surprise—without drawing her from her gloom, they asked for a specimen of her dramatic skill. She sang a grand aria of Jomelli's opera, "*Didone Abandonata*." Never had she felt before the wish to give her saddest

vent. In the pathetic, the simple, the grand—she was sublime; and her face showed fairer yet, and more expressive than it had done while she sang in church. Her complexion was flushed with a feverish glow; her eyes lightened with a strange and lurid lustre. She was a saint no longer—but what suited better far, she was a woman tortured by devouring love. The count, his friend Barberigo, Anzoletto, all the auditors, even, I believe, to old Porpora himself, were almost beside themselves. Clorinda was choking with envy. Then Consuelo, on the count's telling her that her engagement should be drawn and signed to-morrow, asked him to promise her yet another favor, and to plight his word like a knight of old, to grant a request which he had not heard. He did so, and the party broke up, exhausted with that sweet emotion which is produced by great effect, and wielded at will by great intellects.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHILE Consuelo was achieving all these triumphs, Anzoletto had lived so completely in her as to forget himself; nevertheless, when the count in dismissing him mentioned the engagement of his betrothed, without saying a word of his own, he called to mind the coolness with which he had been treated during the evening, and the dread of being ruined without remedy poisoned all his joy. The idea darted across his mind to leave Consuelo on the steps, leaning on Porpora's arm, and to return to cast himself at the feet of his benefactor; but as at this moment he hated him, we must say in his praise that he withstood the temptation to humiliate himself. When he had taken leave of Porpora, and repaired to accompany Consuelo along the canal, the gondoliers of the count informed him that by the commands of their master the gondola waited to conduct the signora home. A cold perspiration burst upon his forehead. "The signora," said he, rudely, "is accustomed to use her own limbs; she is much obliged to the count for his attentions."

"By what right do you refuse for her?" said the count, who was close behind him. Anzoletto turned and saw him, not with uncovered head, as a man who dismissed his guests, but with his cloak thrown over his shoulders, his hat in one hand, and his sword in the other, as one who seeks adventures. Anzoletto was so enraged, that a thought of stabbing him with the long narrow knife which a Venetian always carried about concealed on his person, flashed across his mind. "I hope, Signora," said the count, in a firm voice, "that you will not offer me the affront of refusing my gondola to take you home, and causing me the vexation of not permitting me to assist you to enter it."

Consuelo, always confiding, and suspecting nothing of what passed around her, accepted the offer, thanked him, and placing her pretty rounded elbow in the hand of the count, she sprang without ceremony into the gondola. Then a dumb but energetic dialogue took place between the Count and Anzoletto. The count, with one foot on the bank and one on the bark, measured Anzoletto with his eye, who, standing on the last step of the stairs leading from the water's edge

to the p^aace, measured him with a fierce air in return, his hand in his breast, and grasping the handle of his knife. A single step, and the count was lost. What was most characteristic of the Venetian disposition in this rapid and silent scene, was, that the two rivals watched each other without either hastening the catastrophe. The count was determined to torture his rival by apparent irresolution, and he did so at leisure, although he saw and comprehended the gesture of Anzoletto. On his side, Anzoletto had strength to wait, without betraying himself, until it would please the count to finish his malicious pleasantry or to surrender life. This pantomime lasted two minutes, which seemed to Anzoletto an age, and which the count supported with stoical disdain. The count then made a profound bow to Consuelo, and turning towards his protégé, "I permit you also," said he, "to enter my gondola; in future you will know how a gallant man conducts himself;" and he stepped back to allow Anzoletto to pass into the boat. Then he gave orders to the gondolier to row to the Corte Minelli, while he remained standing on the bank, motionless as a statue. It almost seemed as if he awaited some new attempt at murder on the part of his humiliated rival.

"How does the count know your abode?" was the first word which Anzoletto addressed to his betrothed, when they were out of sight of the palace of Zustiniani.

"Because I told him," replied Consuelo.

"And why did you tell him?"

"Because he asked me."

"You do not guess then why he wished to know?"

"Probably to convey me home."

"Do you think so? Do you think he will not come to see you?"

"Come to see me? what madness! And in such a wretched abode! That would be an excess of politeness which I should never wish."

"You do well not to wish it, Consuelo; for excess of shame might ensue from this excess of honor."

"Shame! and why shame to me? In good faith I do not understand you to-night, dear Anzoletto; and I think it rather odd that you should speak of things I do not comprehend, instead of expressing your joy at our incredible and unexpected success."

"Unexpected indeed," returned Anzoletto, bitterly.

"It seemed to me that at vespers, and while they applauded me this evening, you were even more enchanted than I was. You looked at me with such passionate eyes that my happiness was doubled in seeing it reflected from you. But now you are gloomy and out of sorts, just as when we wanted bread, and our prospects were uncertain."

"And now you wish that I should rejoice in the future? Possibly it is no longer uncertain, but assuredly it presents nothing cheering for me."

"What more would we have? It is hardly a week since you appeared before the count and were received with enthusiasm."

"My success was infinitely eclipsed by yours—you know it well."

"I hope not; besides, if it were so, there can be no jealousy between us."

These ingenuous words, uttered with the utmost truth and tenderness, calmed the heart of Anzoletto. "Ah, you are right," said he clasping his betrothed in his arms; "we cannot be jealous of each other, we cannot deceive each other:" but as he uttered these words he recalled with remorse his adventure with Corilla, and it occurred to

him that the count, in order to punish him, might reveal his conduct to Consuelo whenever he had reason to suppose that she in the least encouraged him. He fell into a gloomy reverie, and Consuelo also became pensive.

"Why," said she, after a moment's silence, "did you say that we could not deceive each other? It is a great truth surely, but why did you just then think of it?"

"Hush! let us not say another word in this gondola," said Anzoletto; "they will hear what we say, and tell it to the count. This velvet covering is very thin, and these palace gondolas have recesses four times as deep and as large as those for hire. Permit me to accompany you home," said he, when they had been put ashore at the entrance of the Corte Minelli.

"You know that it is contrary to our usage, and engagement," replied she.

"Oh do not refuse me," said Anzoletto, "else you will plunge me into fury and despair."

Frightened by his tone and his words, Consuelo dared no longer refuse; and when she had lighted her lamp and drawn the curtains, seeing him gloomy and lost in thought she threw her arms around him. "How unhappy and disquieted you seem this evening!" said she; "what is passing in your mind?"

"Do you not know, Consuelo? do you not guess?"

"No, on my soul!"

"Swear that you do not guess it. Swear it by the soul of your mother—by your hopes of heaven!"

"Oh, I swear it!"

"And by our love?"

"By our love."

"I believe you, Consuelo, for it would be the first time you ever uttered an untruth!"

"And now will you explain yourself?"

"I shall explain nothing. Perhaps I may have to explain myself soon; and when that moment comes, and when you have too well comprehended me, woe to us both, the day on which you know what I now suffer!"

"O Heaven! What new misfortune threatens us? what curse assails us, as we re-enter this poor chamber, where hitherto we had no secrets from each other? Something too surely told me when I left it this morning that I should return with death in my soul. What have I done that I should not enjoy a day that promised so well? Have I not prayed God sincerely and ardently? Have I not thrust aside each proud thought? Have I not suffered from Clorinda's humiliation? Have I not obtained from the count a promise that he should engage her as *seconda donna* with us? What have I done, must I again ask, to incur the sufferings of which you speak—which I already feel since you feel them?"

"And did you indeed procure an engagement for Clorinda?"

"I am resolved upon it, and the count is a man of his word. This poor girl has always dreamed of the theatre, and has no other means of subsistence."

"And do you think that the count will part with Rosalba, who knows something, for Clorinda, who knows nothing?"

"Rosalba will follow her sister Corilla's fortune; and as to Clorinda we shall give her lessons, and teach her to turn her voice, which is not

amiss, to the best account. The public, besides, will be indulgent to a pretty girl. Were she only to obtain a third place, it would be always something—a beginning—a source of subsistence."

"You are a saint, Consuelo; you do not see that this dolt, in accepting your intervention, although she should be happy in obtaining a third or even a fourth place, will never pardon you for being first."

"What signifies her ingratitude? I know already what ingratitude and the ungrateful are."

"You!" said Anzoleto, bursting into a laugh, as he embraced her with all his old brotherly warmth.

"Oh," replied she, enchanted at having diverted him from his cares, "I should always have before my eyes the image of my noble master Porpora. Many bitter words he uttered which he thought me incapable of comprehending; but they sank deep into my heart, and shall never leave it. He is a man who has suffered greatly, and is devoured by sorrow. From his grief and his deep indignation, as well as what has escaped from him before me, I have learned that artists, my dear Anzoleto, are more wicked and dangerous than I could suppose—that the public is fickle, forgetful, cruel, and unjust—that a great career is but a heavy cross, and that glory is a crown of thorns. Yes, I know all that, and I have thought and reflected upon it so often, that I think I should neither be astonished nor cast down were I to experience it myself. Therefore it is that you have not been able to intoxicate me by the triumph of to-day—therefore it is your dark thoughts have not discouraged me. I do not yet comprehend them very well; but I know that with you, and provided you love me, I shall strive not to hate and despise mankind like my poor unhappy master, that noble yet simple old man."

In listening to his betrothed, Anzoleto recovered his serenity and his courage. She exercised great influence over him, and each day he discovered in her a firmness and rectitude which supplied everything that was wanting in himself. The terrors with which jealousy had inspired him, were forgotten at the end of a quarter of an hour's conversation; and when she questioned him again he was so much ashamed of having suspected a being so pure and so calm, that he ascribed his agitation to other causes. "I am only afraid," said he, "that the count will find you so superior, that he shall judge me unworthy to appear with you before the public. He seemed this evening to have forgotten my very existence. He did not even perceive that in accompanying you I played well. In fine, when he told you of your engagement, he did not say a word of mine. How is it that you did not remark that?"

"It never entered my head that I should be engaged without you. Does he not know that nothing would persuade me to it?—that we are betrothed?—that we love each other? Have you not told him all this?"

"I have told him so, but perhaps he thinks that I wish to boast, Consuelo."

"In that case I shall boast myself of my love, Anzoleto: I shall tell him so that he cannot doubt it. But you are deceived, my friend; the count has not thought it necessary to speak of your engagement because it was a settled thing since the day that you sung so well, at his house."

"But not yet ratified, and your engagement he has told you will be signed to-morrow."

"Do you think I shall sign the first? Oh, no! you have done well to put me on my guard. My name shall be written below yours."

"You swear it?"

"Oh, fie! Do you ask oaths for what you know so well? Truly you do not love me this evening, or you would not make me suffer by seeming to imagine that I did not love you."

At this thought Consuelo's eyes filled with tears, and she sat down with a pouting air, which rendered her charming. I am a fool—an ass! thought Anzoleto. "How could I for one instant suppose that the count could triumph over a soul so pure—an affection so full and entire? He is not so inexperienced as not to perceive at a glance that Consuelo is not for him, and he would not have been so generous as to offer me a place in his gondola, had he not known that he would have played the part of a fool there. No, no; my lot is well assured—my position unassailable. Let Consuelo please him or not, let him love, pay court to her—all that can only advance my fortunes, for she will soon learn to obtain what she wishes without incurring any danger. Consuelo will soon be better informed on this head than myself. She is prudent, she is energetic. The pretensions of the dear count will only turn to my profit and glory."

And thus adjuring all his doubts, he cast himself at the feet of his betrothed, and gave vent to that passionate enthusiasm which he now experienced for the first time, and which his jealousy had served for some hours to restrain.

"O my beauty—my saint—my queen!" he cried "excuse me for having thought of myself before you, as I should have done, on finding myself again with you in this chamber. I left it this morning in anger with you. Yes, yes; I should have re-entered it upon my knees. How could you love and smile upon a brute like me? Strike me with your fan, Consuelo; place your pretty foot upon my neck. You are greater than I am by a hundred fold, and I am your slave forever from this day."

"I do not deserve these fine speeches," said she, abandoning herself to his transports; "and I excuse your doubts, because I comprehend them. It was the fear of being separated from me—of seeing our lot divided—which caused you all this unhappiness. You have failed in your faith in God, which is much worse than having accused me. But I shall pray for you, and say—'Lord, forgive as I forgive him.'"

While thus innocently and simply expressing her love, and mingling with it that Spanish feeling of devotion so full of human affection and ingenuous candor, Consuelo was beautiful. Anzoleto gazed on her with rapture.

"Oh, thou mistress of my soul!" he exclaimed, in a suffocated voice, "be mine for ever more!"

"When you will—to-morrow," said Consuelo, with a heavenly smile.

"To-morrow? and why to-morrow?"

"You are right; it is now past midnight—we may be married to-day. When the sun rises let us seek the priest. We have no friends, and the ceremony need not be long. I have the muslin dress which I have never yet worn. When I made it, dear Anzoleto, I said to myself—'Perhaps I may not have money to purchase my wedding dress, and if my friend should soon decide on marrying me, I would be obliged to wear one that I have had on already.' That, they say

is unlucky. So, when my mother appeared to me in a dream, to take it from me and lay it aside, she knew what she did, poor soul! Therefore, by to-morrow's sun we shall swear at San Samuel's fidelity for ever. Did you wish to satisfy yourself first, wicked one, that I was not ugly?"

"O Consuelo!" exclaimed Anzoleto, with anguish, "you are a child. We could not marry thus, from one day to another, without its being known. The Count and Porpora, whose protection is so necessary to us, would be justly irritated if we took this step without consulting or even informing them. Your old master does not like me too well, and the count, as I know, does not care much for married singers. We cannot go to San Samuel, where everybody knows us, and where the first old woman we met would make the palace acquainted with it in half an hour. We must keep our union secret."

"No, Anzoleto," said Consuelo, "I cannot consent to so rash—so ill-advised a step. I did not think of the objections you have urged to a public marriage; but if they are well founded, they apply with equal force to a private and clandestine one. It was not I who first spoke of it, Anzoleto, although I thought more than once that we were old enough to be married; yet it seemed right to leave the decision to your prudence, and, if I must say it, to your wishes; for I saw very well that you were in no hurry to make me your wife, nor had I any desire to remind you. You have often told me that before settling ourselves, we must think of our future family, and secure the needful resources. My mother said the same, and it is only right. Thus, all things considered, it would be too soon. First, our engagement must be signed—is not that so?—then we must be certain of the good will of the public. We can speak of all this after we make our debut. But why do you grow pale, Anzoleto? Why do you wring your hands? O Heavens! are we not happy? Does it need an oath to insure our mutual love and reliance?"

"O Consuelo! how calm you are!—how pure!—how cold!" exclaimed Anzoleto, with a sort of despair.

"Cold!" exclaimed the young Spaniard, stupefied, and crimsoned with indignation. "God, who reads my heart, knows whether I love you!"

"Very well," retorted Anzoleto, angrily; "throw yourself into his bosom, for mine is no safe refuge; and I shall fly lest I become impious."

Thus saying he rushed towards the door, believing that Consuelo, who had hitherto never been able to separate from him in any quarrel however trifling, would hasten to prevent him; and in fact she made an impetuous movement as if to spring after him, then stopped, saw him go out, ran likewise to the door, and put her hand on the latch in order to call him back. But summoning up all her resolution by a superhuman effort, she fastened the bolt behind him, and then, overcome by the violent struggle she had undergone, she swooned away upon the floor, where she remained motionless till daybreak.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I must confess that I am completely enchanted with her," said Count Zustiniani to his friend Barberigo, as they conversed together on the balcony of his palace about two o'clock the same night.

"That is as much as to say that I must not be so," replied the young and brilliant Barberigo, "and I yield the point, for your rights take precedence of mine. Nevertheless, if Corilla should mesh you afresh in her nets, you will have the goodness to let me know, that I may try and win her ear."

"Do not think of it, if you love me. Corilla has never been other than a plaything. I see by your countenance that you are but mocking me."

"No, but I think that the amusement is somewhat serious which causes us to commit such follies and incur such expense."

"I admit that I pursue my pleasures with so much ardor that I spare no expense to prolong them; but in this case it is more than fancy—it is passion which I feel. I never saw a creature so strangely beautiful as this Consuelo; she is like a lamp that pales from time to time, but which at the moment when it is apparently about to expire, sheds so bright a light that the very stars are eclipsed."

"Ah!" said Barberigo, sighing, "that little black dress and white collar, that slender and half devout toilet, that pale, calm face, at first so little striking, that frank address and astonishing absence of coquetry—all become transformed, and, as it were, grow divine when inspired by her own lofty genius of song. Happy Zustiniani, who hold in your hands the destinies of this dawning star!"

"Would I were secure of the happiness which you envy! But I am discouraged when I find none of those passions with which I am acquainted, and which are so easy to bring into play. Imagine, friend, that this girl remains an enigma to me even after a whole day's study of her. It would almost seem from her tranquillity and my awkwardness, that I am already so far gone that I cannot see clearly."

"Truly you are captivated, since you already grow blind. I, whom hope does not confuse, can tell you in three words what you do not understand. Consuelo is the flower of innocence; she loves the little Anzoleto, and will love him yet for some time; but if you affront this attachment of childhood, you will only give it fresh strength. Appear to consider it of no importance, and the comparison which she will not fail to make between you and him will not fail to cool her preference."

"But the rascal is as handsome as an Apollo, he has a magnificent voice, and must succeed. Corilla is already crazy about him; he is not one to be despised by a girl who has eyes."

"But he is poor, and you are rich—he is unknown, and you are powerful. The needful thing is to find out whether they are merely betrothed, or whether a more intimate connexion binds them. In the latter case Consuelo's eyes will soon be opened; in the former there will be a struggle and uncertainty which will but prolong her anguish."

"I must then desire what I horribly fear, and which maddens me with rage when I think of it. What do you suppose?"

"I think they are merely betrothed."