

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 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."



"But it is impossible. He is a bold and ardent youth, and then the manners of those people!"

"Consuelo is in all respects a prodigy. You have had experience to little purpose, dear Zustiniani, if you do not see in all the movements, all the looks, all the words of this girl, that she is pure as the ocean gem."

"You transport me with joy."

"Take care—it is folly, prejudice. If you love Consuelo, she must be married to-morrow, so that in eight days her master may make her feel the weight of her chain, the torments of jealousy, the *ennui* of a troublesome, unjust, and faithless guardian; for the handsome Anzoleto will be all that. I could not observe him yesterday between Consuelo and Clorinda without being able to prophesy her wrongs and misfortunes. Follow my advice, and you will thank me. The bond of marriage is easy to unloose between people of that condition, and you know that with women love is an ardent fancy which only increases with obstacles."

"You drive me to despair," replied the count; "nevertheless, I feel that you are right."

Unhappily for the designs of Count Zustiniani, this dialogue had a listener upon whom they did not reckon, and who did not lose one syllable of it. After quitting Consuelo, Anzoleto, stung with jealousy had come to prowl about the palace of his protector, in order to assure himself that the count did not intend one of those forcible abductions then so much in vogue, and for which the patricians had almost entire impunity. He could hear no more, for the moon, which just then arose over the roofs of the palace, began to cast his shadow on the pavement, and the two young lords, perceiving that a man was under the balcony, withdrew and closed the window.

Anzoleto disappeared in order to ponder at his leisure on what he had just heard; it was quite enough to direct him what course to take in order to profit by the virtuous counsels of Barberigo to his friend. He slept scarcely two hours, and immediately when he awoke ran to the Corte Minelli. The door was still locked, but through the chinks he could see Consuelo, dressed, stretched on the bed and sleeping, pale and motionless as death. The coolness of the morning had roused her from her swoon, and she threw herself on the bed without having strength to undress. He stood for some moments looking at her with remorseful disquietude, but at last becoming uneasy at this heavy sleep, so contrary to the active habits of his betrothed, he gently enlarged an opening through which he could pass his knife and slide back the bolt. This occasioned some noise: but Consuelo, overcome with fatigue, was not awakened. He then entered, knelt down beside her couch, and remained thus until she awoke. On finding him there, Consuelo uttered a cry of joy, but instantly taking away her arms, which she had thrown round his neck, she drew back with an expression of alarm.

"You dread me now, and instead of embracing, fly me," said he with grief. "Oh, I am cruelly punished for my fault; pardon me, Consuelo, and see if you have ever cause to mistrust your friend again. I have watched you sleeping for a whole hour; pardon me, sister—it is the first and last time you shall have to blame or repulse your brother; I shall never more offend you by my jealousies or passions. Leave me, banish me if I fail in my oath. Are you satisfied, dear and good Consuelo?"

Consuelo only replied by pressing the fair head of the Venetian to her heart, and bathing it with tears. This outburst comforted her; and soon after falling back on her pillow, "I confess," said she, "that I am overcome; I hardly slept all night, we parted so unhappily."

"Sleep, Consuelo; sleep, dear angel," replied Anzoleto. "Do you remember the night that you allowed me to sleep on your couch, while you worked and prayed at your little table? It is now my turn to watch and protect you.—Sleep, my child: I shall turn over your music and read it to myself whilst you repose an hour or two; no one will disturb us before the evening. Sleep, then, and prove by this confidence that you pardon and trust me."

Consuelo replied by a heavenly smile. He kissed her forehead and placed himself at the table, while she enjoyed a refreshing sleep, mingled with sweet dreams.

Anzoleto had lived calmly and innocently too long with this young girl to render it difficult after one day's agitation, to regain his usual demeanor. This brotherly feeling was, as it were, the ordinary condition of his soul; besides, what he had heard the preceding night under the balcony of Zustiniani, was well calculated to strengthen his faltering purpose. "Thanks, my brave gentlemen," said he to himself; "you have given me a lesson which the *rascal* will turn to account just as much as one of your own class. I shall abstain from jealousy, infidelity, or any weakness which may give you an advantage over me. Illustrious and profound Barberigo! your prophecies bring counsel; it is good to be of your school."

Thus reflecting, Anzoleto, overcome by a sleepless night, dozed in his turn, his head supported on his hand, and his elbows on the table; but his sleep was not sound, and the daylight had begun to decline as he rose to see if Consuelo still slumbered. The rays of the setting sun streaming through the window, cast a glorious purple tinge on the old bed and its beautiful occupant. Her white mantilla she had made into a curtain, which was secured to a filagree crucifix nailed to the wall above her head. Her veil fell gracefully over her well-proportioned and admirable figure; and, bathed in this rose-colored light as a flower which closes its leaves together at the approach of evening, her long tresses falling upon her white shoulders, her hands crossed on her bosom as a saint on her marble tomb, she looked so chaste and heavenly that Anzoleto mentally exclaimed, "Ah, Count Zustiniani, that you could see her this moment, and behold the prudent and jealous guardian of a treasure you vainly covet, beside her!"

At this moment, a faint noise was heard outside, and Anzoleto, whose faculties were kept on the stretch, thought he recognised the splashing of water at the foot of Consuelo's ruined dwelling, although gondolas rarely approached the Corte Minelli. He mounted on a chair, and was by this means able to see through a sort of loop-hole near the ceiling, which looked towards the canal. He distinctly saw Count Zustiniani leave his bark, and question the half-naked children who played on the beach. He was uncertain whether he should awaken his betrothed or close the door; but, during the ten minutes which the count occupied in finding out the garret of Consuelo, he had time to regain the utmost self-possession and to leave the door ajar, so that any one might enter without noise or hindrance, then reseating himself, he took a pen and pretended to write music. He appeared perfectly calm and tranquil, although his heart beat violently



The count slipped in, rejoicing in the idea of surprising his protégée whose obvious destitution he conceived would favor his corrupt intentions. He brought Consuelo's engagement ready signed along with him, and he thought with such a passport his reception could not be very discouraging; but at the first sight of the strange sanctuary in which this sweet girl slept her angelic sleep under the watchful eye of her contented lover, Count Zustiniani lost his presence of mind, entangled his cloak which he had thrown with a conquering air over his shoulders, and stopped between the bed and the table, utterly uncertain whom he should address. Anzoleto was revenged for the scene at the entrance of the gondola.

"My lord," he exclaimed, rising, as if surprised by an unexpected visit, "shall I awake my betrothed?"

"No," replied the count, already at his ease, and affecting to turn his back that he might contemplate Consuelo; "I am so happy to see her thus, I forbid you to awaken her."

"Yes, you may look at her," thought Anzoleto; "it is all I wished for."

Consuelo did not awaken, and the count, speaking in a low tone and assuming a gracious and tranquil aspect, expressed his admiration without restraint. "You were right, Zoto," said he with an easy air; "Consuelo is the first singer in Italy, and I was wrong to doubt that she was the most beautiful woman in the world."

"Your highness thought her frightful, however," said Anzoleto, maliciously.

"You have doubtless complained to her of all my folly; but I reserve to myself the pleasure of obtaining pardon by so honorable and complete an apology, that you shall not again be able to injure me in recalling my errors."

"Injure you, Signor Count!—how could I do so even had I the wish?"

Consuelo moved. "Let us not awaken her too suddenly," said the count, and clear this table, that I may place on it and read, her engagement. Hold!" said he when Anzoleto had obeyed him; "cast your eyes over this paper, while we wait for hers to open."

"An engagement before trial!—it is magnificent, my noble patron. And she is to appear at once, before Corilla's engagement has expired?"

"That is nothing; there is some trifling debt of a thousand sequins or so due her, which we shall pay off."

"But what if Corilla should rebel!"

"We will confine her under the leads."

"Fore Heaven! nothing stops your highness."

"Yes, Zoto" replied the count coldly; "thus it is: what we desire we do, towards one and all."

"And the conditions are the same as for Corilla—the same conditions for a debutante without name or reputation, as for an illustrious performer adored by the public."

"The new singer shall have even more; and if the conditions granted her predecessor do not satisfy her, she has only to say a word and they shall be doubled. Everything depends upon herself," continued he, raising his voice a little, as he perceived that Consuelo was awake: "her fate is in her own hands."

Consuelo had heard all this partially, through her sleep. When she had rubbed her eyes, and assured herself that she was not dreaming,

she slid down into the space between the bed and the wall, without considering the strangeness of her position, and after arranging her hair, came forward with ingenuous confidence to join in the conversation.

"Signor Count," said she, "you are only too good; but I am not so presumptuous as to avail myself of your offer. I will not sign this engagement until I have made a trial of my powers before the public. It would not be delicate on my part. I might not please—I might incur a *flasco* and be hissed. Even should I be hoarse or unprepared, or even ugly that day, your word would still be pledged—you would be too proud to take it back, and I to avail myself of it."

"Ugly on that day, Consuelo—you ugly!" said the count, looking at her with burning glances; "come now," he added, taking her by the hand and leading her to the mirror, "look at yourself there. If you are adorable in this costume, what would you be, covered with diamonds and radiant with triumph?"

The count's impertinence made Anzoleto gnash his teeth; but the calm indifference with which Consuelo received his compliments restrained his impatience. "Sir," said she, pushing back the fragment of a looking-glass which he held in his hand, "do not break my mirror; it is the only one I ever had, and it has never deceived me.—Ugly or pretty, I refuse your liberality; and I may tell you frankly that I shall not appear unless my betrothed be similarly engaged. I will have no other theatre nor any other public except his; we cannot be separate, being engaged to each other."

This abrupt declaration took the count a little unawares, but he soon regained his equanimity.

"You are right, Consuelo," replied he; "I never intended to separate you: Zoto shall appear with yourself. At the same time I cannot conceal from you that his talents, although remarkable, are much inferior to yours."

"I do not believe it, my lord," said Consuelo, blushing as if she had received a personal insult.

"I hear that he is your pupil, much more than that of the maestro I gave him. Do not deny it, beautiful Consuelo. On learning your intimacy, Porpora exclaimed, 'I am no longer astonished at certain qualities he possesses, which I was unable to reconcile with his defects.'"

"Thanks to the Signor Professor," said Anzoleto, with a forced smile.

"He will change his mind," said Consuelo, gaily—"besides, the public will contradict this dear good master."

"The dear good master is the best judge of music in the world," replied the count. "Anzoleto will do well to profit by your lessons; but we cannot arrange the terms of his agreement before we have ascertained the sentiments of the public. Let him make his appearance, and we shall settle with him according to justice and our own favorable feeling towards him, on which he has every reason to rely."

"Then let us both make our appearance," replied Consuelo: "but no signature—no agreement before trial; on that I am determined."

"You are not satisfied with my terms, Consuelo; very well, then you shall dictate them yourself; here is the pen—add—take away—my signature is below."

Consuelo seized the pen; Anzoleto turned pale, and the count, who observed him, chewed with pleasure the end of the ruffie which he



twisted in his fingers. Consuelo erased the contract, and wrote upon the portion remaining above the signature of the count—

"Anzoleto and Consuelo severally agree to such conditions as it shall please Count Zustiniani to impose, after their first appearance which shall take place during the ensuing month at the theatre of San Samuel."

She signed rapidly, and passed the pen to her lover.

"Sign without looking," said she. "You can do no less to prove your gratitude, and your confidence in your benefactor."

Anzoleto had glanced over it in a twinkling; he signed—it was but the work of a moment.—The count read over his shoulder.

"Consuelo," said he, "you are a strange girl—in truth an admirable creature. You will both dine with me," he continued, tearing the contract and offering his hand to Consuelo, who accepted it, but at the same time requested him to wait with Anzoleto in his gondola while she should arrange her toilet.

"Decidedly," said she to herself when alone, "I shall be able to buy a new marriage robe." She then arranged her muslin dress, settled her hair, and flew down the stairs singing with a voice full of freshness and vigor. The count, with excess of courtesy, had waited for her with Anzoleto at the foot of the stair. She believed him further off, and almost fell into his arms, but suddenly disengaging herself, she took his hand and carried it to her lips, after the fashion of the country, with the respect of an inferior who does not wish to infringe upon the distinctions of rank; then turning she clasped her betrothed, and bounded with joyous steps towards the gondola, without awaiting the ceremonious escort of her somewhat mortified protector.

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#### CHAPTER XV.

THE count seeing that Consuelo was insensible to the stimulus of gain, tried to flatter her vanity by offering her jewels and ornaments; but these she refused. Zustiniani at first imagined that she was aware of his secret intentions; but he soon saw that it was but a species of rustic pride, and that she would receive no recompense until she had earned it by working for the prosperity of his theatre. He obliged her however to accept a white satin dress, observing that she could not appear with propriety in her muslin robe in his saloon, and adding that he would consider it a favor if she would abandon the attire of the people. She submitted her fine figure to the fashionable milliners, who made the very most of it, and did not spare the material. Thus transformed in two days into a woman of the world, and induced to accept a necklace of fine pearls which the count presented to her as payment for the evening when she sang before him and his friends, she was beautiful, if not according to her own peculiar style of beauty, at least as she should be admired by the vulgar. This result however was not perfectly attained. At the first glance Consuelo neither struck nor dazzled anybody; she was always pale, and her modest, studious habits took from her look that brilliant glance which we witness in the eyes of women whose only object is to shine. The basis of her character, as well as the distinguishing

peculiarity of her countenance, was a reflective seriousness.—One might see her eat, and talk, and weary herself with the trivial concerns of daily life, without even supposing that she was pretty; but once the smile of enjoyment, so easily allied to serenity of soul, came to light up her features, how charming she became! And when she was further animated—when she interested herself seriously in the business of the piece—when she displayed tenderness, exaltation of mind, the manifestation of her inward life and hidden power—she shone resplendent with all the fire of genius and love, she was another being, the audience were hurried away—passion-stricken as it were—annihilated at pleasure—without her being able to explain the mystery of her power.

What the count experienced for her therefore astonished and annoyed him strangely. There were in this man of the world artistic chords which had never yet been struck, and which she caused to thrill with unknown emotions; but this revelation could not penetrate the patrician's soul sufficiently to enable him to discern the impotence and poverty of the means by which he attempted to lead away a woman so different from those he had hitherto endeavored to corrupt.

He took patience and determined to try the effects of emulation. He conducted her to his box in the theatre that she might witness Corilla's success, and that ambition might be awakened in her; but the result was quite different from that which he expected from it. Consuelo left the theatre, cold, silent, fatigued, and in no way excited by the noise and applause. Corilla was deficient in solid talent, noble sentiment, and well-founded power: and Consuelo felt quite competent to form an opinion of this forced, factitious talent, already vitiated at its source by selfishness and excess. She applauded unconsciously, uttered words of formal approval, and disdained to put on a mask of enthusiasm for one whom she could neither fear nor admire. The count for a moment thought her under the influence of secret jealousy of the talents, or at least of the person, of the prima donna. "This is nothing," said he, "to the triumphs you will achieve when you appear before the public as you have already appeared before me. I hope that you are not frightened by what you see."

"No, Signor Count," replied Consuelo, smiling; "the public frightens me not, for I never think of it. I only think of what might be realized in the part which Corilla fills in so brilliant a manner, but in which there are many defects which she does not perceive."

"What! you do not think of the public?"

"No; I think of the piece, of the intentions of the composer, of the spirit of the part, and of the good qualities and defects of the orchestra, from the former of which we are to derive advantage, while we are to conceal the latter by a louder intonation at certain parts. I listen to the choruses, which are not always satisfactory, and require a more strict direction; I examine the passages on which all one's strength is required, and also those of course where it may advantageously be reserved. You will perceive, Signor Count, that I have many things to think of besides the public, who know nothing about all that I have mentioned, and can teach me nothing."

This grave judgment and serious inquiry so surprised Zustiniani that he could not utter a single question, and asked himself, with some trepidation, what hold a gallant like himself could have on genius of this stamp.

The appearance of the two debutants was preceded by all the usual



inflated announcements; and this was the source of continual discussion and difference of opinion between the count and Porpora, Consuelo and her lover. The old master and his pupil blamed the quack announcements and all these thousand unworthy tricks which have driven us so far into folly and bad faith. In Venice during those days the journals had not much to say as to public affairs; they did not concern themselves with the composition of the audience; they were unaware of the deep resources of public advertisements, the gossip of biographical announcements, and the powerful machinery of hired applause. There was plenty of bribing and not a few cabals, but all this was concocted in coteries, and brought about through the instrumentality of the public, warmly attached to one side or sincerely hostile to the other. Art was not always the moving spring; passions great and small, foreign alike to art and talent, then as now, came to do battle in the temple; but they were not so skillful in concealing these sources of discord, and in laying them to the account of pure love for art. At bottom, indeed, it was the same vulgar, worldly spirit, with a surface less complicated by civilization.

Zustiniani managed these affairs more as a nobleman than the conductor of a theatre. His ostentation was a more powerful impulse than the avarice of ordinary speculators. He prepared the public in his saloons, and warmed up his representations beforehand. It is true his conduct was never cowardly or mean, but it bore the puerile stamp of self-love, a busy gallantry, and the pointed gossip of good society. He therefore proceeded to demolish, piece by piece, with considerable art, the edifice so lately raised by his own hands to the glory of Corilla. Everybody saw that he wanted to set up in its place the miracle of talent; and as the exclusive possession of this wonderful phenomenon was ascribed to him, poor Consuelo never suspected the nature of his intentions towards her, although all Venice knew that the count, disgusted with the conduct of Corilla, was about to introduce in her place another singer; while many added, "Grand mystification for the public, and great prejudice to the theatre; for his favorite is a little street singer, who has nothing to recommend her except her fine voice and tolerable figure."

Hence arose fresh cabals for Corilla, who went about playing the part of an injured rival, and who implored her extensive circle of adores and their friends to do justice to the insolent pretensions of the *zingarella*. Hence also new cabals in favor of Consuelo, by a numerous party, who, although differing widely on other subjects, united in a wish to mortify Corilla and elevate her rival in her place.

As to the veritable dilettanti of music, they were equally divided between the opinion of the serious masters—such as Porpora, Marcello, and Jomelli, who predicted with the appearance of an excellent musician, the return of the good old usages and casts of performance—and the anger of second-rate composers, whose compositions Corilla had always preferred, and who now saw themselves threatened with neglect in her person. The orchestra, dreading to set to work on scores which had been long laid aside, and which consequently would require study, all those retainers of the theatre, who in every thorough reform always foresaw an entire change of the performers, even the very scene-shifters, the tirewoman, and the hair-dressers—all were in movement for or against the débutante at San Samuel. In point of fact the debut was much more in everybody's thoughts than the new administration or the acts of the Doge, Pietro, Grimaldi, who had just then peaceably succeeded his predecessor, Luigi Pisani.

Consuelo was exceedingly distressed at these delays and the petty quarrels connected with her new career; she would have wished to come out at once, without any other preparation than what concerned herself and the study of the new piece. She understood nothing of those endless intrigues which seemed to her more dangerous than useful, and which she felt she could very well dispense with. But the count, who saw more clearly into the secrets of his profession, and who wished to be envied his imaginary happiness, spared nothing to secure partisans, and made her come every day to his palace to be presented to all the aristocracy of Venice. Consuelo's modesty and reluctance ill supported his designs, but he induced her to sing, and the victory was at once decisive—brilliant—incontestible.

Anzoleto was far from sharing the repugnance of his betrothed for these secondary means. His success was by no means so certain as hers. In the first place, the count was not so ardent in his favor, and the tenor whom he was to succeed was a man of talent, who would not be easily forgotten. It is true he also sang nightly at the count's palace, and Consuelo in their duets brought him out admirably; so that, urged and sustained by the magic of a genius superior to his own, he often attained great heights. He was on these occasions both encouraged and applauded; but when the first surprise excited by his fine voice was over, more especially when Consuelo had revealed herself, his deficiency was apparent, and frightened even himself. This was the time to work with renewed vigor; but in vain Consuelo exhorted him, and appointed him to meet her each morning at the Corte Minelli—where she persisted in remaining, spite of the remonstrances of the count, who wished to establish her more suitably. Anzoleto had so much to do—so many visits, engagements, and intrigues on hand—such distracting anxieties to occupy his mind—that neither time nor courage was left for study.

In the midst of these perplexities, seeing that the greatest opposition would be given by Corilla, and also that the count no longer gave himself any trouble about her, Anzoleto resolved to visit her himself in order to deprecate her hostility. As may easily be conceived, she had pretended to take the matter very lightly, and treated the neglect and contempt of Zustiniani with philosophical unconcern. She mentioned and boasted everywhere that she had received brilliant offers from the Italian opera at Paris, and calculating on the reverse which she thought awaited her arrival, laughed outright at the illusions of the count, and his party. Anzoleto thought that with prudence and by employing a little deceit, he might disarm this formidable enemy; and having perfumed and adorned himself, he waited on her at one in the afternoon—an hour when the siesta renders visits unusual and the palaces silent.

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## CHAPTER XVI

ANZOLETO found Corilla alone in a charming boudoir, reclining on a couch in a becoming undress; but the alterations in her features by daylight led him to suspect that her security with regard to Consuelo was not so great as her faithful partisans asserted. Nevertheless, she



received him with an easy air, and tapping him playfully on the cheek, while she made a sign to her servant to withdraw, exclaimed—"Ah, wicked one, is it you?—are you come with your tales, or would you make me believe you are no dealer in flourishes, nor the most intriguing of all the postulants for fame? You were somewhat conceited, my handsome friend, if you supposed that I should be disheartened by your sudden flight after so many tender declarations; and still more conceited was it to suppose that you were wanted, for in four-and-twenty hours I had forgotten that such a person existed."

"Four-and-twenty hours!—that is a long time," replied Anzoletto, kissing the plump and rounded arm of Corilla. "Ah, if I believed that, I should be proud indeed; but I know that if I was so far deceived as to believe you when you said—"

"What I said, I advise you to forget also. Had you called, you would have found my door shut against you. What assurance to come to-day!"

"Is it not good taste to leave those who are in favor, and to lay one's heart and devotion at the feet of her who—"

"Well, finish—to her who is in disgrace. It is most generous and humane on your part, most illustrious friend!" And Corilla fell back upon the satin pillow with a burst of shrill and forced laughter.

Although the disgraced prima donna was no longer in her early freshness—although the mid-day sun was not much in her favor, and although vexation had somewhat taken from the effect of her full-formed features—Anzoletto, who had never been on terms of intimacy with a woman so brilliant and so renowned, felt himself moved in regions of the soul to which Consuelo had never descended, and whence he had voluntarily banished her pure image. He therefore palliated the rallery of Corilla by a profession of love which he had only intended to feign, but which he now actually began to experience. I say love, for want of a better word, for it were to profane the name to apply it to the attraction awakened by such women as Corilla. When she saw the young tenor really moved, she grew milder, and addressed him after a more amiable fashion.

"I confess," said she, "you selected me for a whole evening, but I did not altogether esteem you. I know you are ambitious, and consequently false, and ready for every treason. I dare not trust to you. You pretended to be jealous on a certain night in my gondola, and took upon you the airs of a despot. That might have disenchanted me with the inspired gallantries of our patricians, but you deceived me, ungrateful one! you were engaged to another, and are going to marry—whom?—oh, I know very well—my rival, my enemy, the debutante, the new protégée of Zustiniani. Shame upon us two—upon us three—upon us all!" added she, growing animated in spite of herself, and withdrawing her hand from Anzoletto.

"Cruel creature!" he exclaimed, trying to regain her fair fingers, you ought to understand what passed in my heart when I first saw you, and not busy yourself with what occupied me before that terrible moment. As to what happened since, can you not guess it, and is there any necessity to recur to the subject?"

"I am not to be put off with half words and reservations; do you love the *zingarella*, and are you about to marry her?"

"And if I loved her, how does it happen I did not marry her before?"

"Perhaps the count would have opposed it. Every one knows what

he wants now. They even say that he has ground for impatience, and the little one still more so."

The color mounted to Anzoletto's face when he heard language of this sort applied to the being whom he venerated above all others.

"Ah, you are angry at my supposition," said Corilla; "it is well—that is what I wished to find out. You love her. When will the marriage take place?"

"For the love of Heaven, madam, let us speak of nobody except ourselves."

"Agreed," replied Corilla. "So, my former lover and your future spouse—"

Anzoletto was enraged; he rose to go away; but what was he to do? Should he enrage still more the woman whom he had come to pacify? He remained undecided, dreadfully humiliated, and unhappy at the part he had imposed upon himself.

Corilla eagerly desired to win his affections, not because she loved him, but because she wished to be revenged on Consuelo, whom she had abused without being certain that her insinuations were well founded.

"You see," said she, arresting him on the threshold with a penetrating look, "that I have reason to doubt you; for at this moment you are deceiving some one—either her or myself."

"Neither one nor the other," replied he, endeavoring to justify himself in his own eyes. "I am not her lover, and I never was so. I am not in love with her, for I am not jealous of the count."

"Oh! indeed? You are jealous, even to the point of denying it, and you come here to cure yourself or to distract your attention from a subject so unpleasant. Many thanks!"

"I am not jealous, I repeat; and to prove that it is not mortification which makes me speak, I tell you that the count is no more her lover than I am; that she is virtuous, child as she is, and that the only one guilty towards you is Count Zustiniani."

"So, so; then I may hiss the *zingarella* without afflicting you. You shall be in my box on the night of her debut, and you shall hiss her. Your obedience shall be the price of my favor—take me at my word, or I draw back."

"Alas! madam, you wish to prevent me appearing myself, for you know I am to do so at the same time as Consuelo. If you hiss her, I shall fall a victim to your wrath, because I shall sing with her. And what have I done, wretch that I am, to displease you? Alas! I had a delicious but fatal dream. I thought for a whole evening that you took an interest in me, and that I should grow great under your protection. Now I am the object of your hatred and anger—I, who have so loved and respected you as to fly you! Very well, madam; satiate your enmity. Overthrow me—ruin me—close my career. So that you can here tell me, in secret, that I am not hateful to you, shall I accept the public marks of your anger?"

"Serpent!" exclaimed Corilla, "where have you imbibed the poison which your tongue and your eyes distil?—Much would I give to know, to comprehend you, for you are the most amiable of lovers and the most dangerous of enemies."

"I your enemy! how could I be so, even were I not subdued by your charms? Have you enemies then, divine Corilla? Can you have them in Venice, where you are known, and where you rule over no divided empire? A lover quarrel throws the count into despair: he



would remove you, since thereby he would cease to suffer. He meets a little creature in his path who appears to display resources, and who only asks to be heard. Is this a crime on the part of a poor child who only hears your name with terror, and who never utters it herself without respect? And you ascribe to this little one insolent pretensions which she does not entertain. The efforts of the count to recommend her to his friends, the kindness of these friends, who exaggerate her deserts, the bitterness of yours, who spread calumnies which serve but to annoy and vex you, whilst they should but calm your soul in picturing to you your glory unassailable, and your rival all trembling—these are the prejudices which I discover in you, and at which I am so confounded that I hardly know how to assail them.”

“You know but too well, with that flattering tongue of yours,” said Corilla, looking at him with tenderness mixed with distrust; “I hear the honied words which reason bids me disclaim. I wager that this Consuelo is divinely beautiful, whatever may have been said to the contrary, and that she has merits, though opposed to mine, since the severe Porpora has proclaimed them.”

“You know Porpora; you know all his crotchety ideas. An enemy of all originality in others, and of every innovation in the art of song, he declares a little pupil, who listens to his dotage, submissive to his pedantry, and who runs over the scale decently, to be preferable to all the wonders which the public adores. How long have you tormented yourself about this crazy old fool?”

“Has she no talent, then?”

“She has a good voice, and sings church music fairly, but she can know nothing about the stage; and as to the power of displaying what talent she has, she is so overcome with alarm, that there is much reason to fear that she will lose what little Heaven has given her.”

“Afraid!—what, she? I have heard say, on the other hand, that she is endowed with a fair stock of impudence?”

“Ah, the poor girl! Alas! some one must have a great spite at her. You shall hear her, divine Corilla, and you will be touched with sympathising pity, and will applaud her rather than have her hissed, as you said for her just now.”

“Either you are cheating me, or my friends have cheated strangely concerning her.”

“They have cheated themselves. In their absurd and useless ardor for you they have got frightened at seeing a rival raised up to you. Frightened at a mere child!—and frightened for you! Ah, how little can they know you! Oh, were I your permitted friend, I should know better what you are, than to think that I was doing you aught but injury in holding up any rivalry as a fear to you, were it that of a Faustina or a Molteni.”

“Don’t imagine that I have been frightened. I am neither envious nor ill-natured, and I should feel no regret at the success of any one who had never injured my own. But when I have cause to believe that people are injuring and braving me, then indeed—”

“Will you let me bring little Consuelo to your feet? Had she dared it, she would have come to ask your aid and advice. But she is a mere shy child. And you, too, have been calumniated to her. She has been told that you are cruel, revengeful and bent on causing her fall.”

“She has been told so? Ah, then I understand what brought you hither.”

“You understand nothing of the sort, madam. For I did not believe at all, and never shall believe it. You have not an idea what brought me.”

And as he spoke, Anzoleto turned his sparkling eyes upon Corilla, and bent his knee before her with the deepest show of reverence and love.

Corilla was destitute neither of acuteness nor of ill-nature; but as happens to women excessively taken with themselves, vanity sealed her eyes and precipitated her into the clumsy trap.

She thought she had nothing to apprehend as regarded Anzoleto’s sentiments for the debutante. When he justified himself, and swore by all the gods that he had never loved this young girl, save as a brother should love, he told the truth, and there was so much confidence in his manner that Corilla’s jealousy was overcome. At length the great day approached, and the cabal was annihilated. Corilla, on her part, the meanwhile went on in a different direction, fully persuaded that the timid and inexperienced Consuelo would not succeed, and that Anzoleto would owe her an infinite obligation for having contributed nothing to her downfall. Besides, he had the address to embroil her with her firmest champions, pretending to be jealous, and obliging her to dismiss them rather rudely.

Whilst he thus labored in secret to blast the hopes of a woman whom he pretended to love, the cunning Venetian played another game with the count and Consuelo. He boasted to them of having disarmed this most formidable enemy by dexterous management, interested visits, and bold falsehoods. The count, frivolous and somewhat of a gossip, was extremely amused by the stories of his protégé. His self-love was flattered at the regret which Corilla was said to experience on account of their quarrel, and he urged on this young man, with the levity which one witnesses in affairs of love and gallantry, to the commission of cowardly perfidy. Consuelo was astonished and distressed. “You would do better,” said she, “to exercise your voice and study your part. You think you have done much in propitiating the enemy, but a single false note, a movement badly expressed, would do more against you with the impartial public than the silence of the envious. It is of this public that you should think, and I see with pain that you are thinking nothing about it.”

“Be calm, little Consuelo,” said he; “your error is to believe a public at once impartial and enlightened. Those best acquainted with the matter are hardly ever in earnest, and those who are in earnest know so little about it, that it only requires boldness to dazzle and lead them away.”

## CHAPTER XVII.

In the midst of the anxieties awakened by the desire of success, and by the ardor of Corilla, the jealousy of Anzoleto with regard to the count slumbered. Happily, Consuelo did not need a more watchful or more moral protector. Secure in innocence she avoided the advances of Zustiniani, and kept him at a distance precisely by caring nothing about it. At the end of a fortnight this Venetian libertine acknowledged that she had none of those worldly passions which



led to corruption, though he spared no pains to make them sprig up. But even in this respect he had advanced no further than the first day, and he feared to ruin his hopes by pressing them too openly. Had Anzoleto annoyed him by keeping watch, anger might have caused him to precipitate matters; but Anzoleto left him at perfect liberty. Consuelo distrusted nothing, and he only tried to make himself agreeable, hoping in time to become necessary to her. There was no sort of delicate attentions, or refined gallantries, that he omitted. Consuelo placed them all to the account of the liberal and elegant manners of his class, united with a love for art and a natural goodness of disposition. She displayed towards him an unfeigned regard, a sacred gratitude, while he, happy and yet dissatisfied with this pure-hearted unreserve, began to grow uneasy at the sentiment which he inspired until such period as he might wish to break the ice.

While he gave himself up with fear, and yet not without satisfaction, to this new feeling—consoling himself a little for his want of success by the opinion which all Venice entertained of his triumph—Corilla experienced the same transformation in herself. She loved with ardor, if not with devotion; and her irritable and imperious soul bent beneath the yoke of her young Adonis. It was truly the queen of beauty in love with the beautiful hunter, and for the first time humble and timid before the mortal of her choice. She affected with a sort of delight, virtues which she did not possess. So true it is that the extinction of self-idolatry in favor of another, tends to raise and ennoble, were it but for an instant, hearts the least susceptible of pure emotions.

The emotion which she experienced reacted on her talents, and it was remarked at the theatre that she performed pathetic parts more naturally and with greater sensibility. But as her character and the essence of her nature were thus as it seemed inverted; as it required a sort of internal convulsion to effect this change, her bodily strength gave way in the combat, and each day they observed—some with malicious joy, others with serious alarm—the failure of her powers. Her brilliant execution was impeded by shortness of breath and false intonations. The annoyance and terror which she experienced, weakened her still further, and at the representation which took place previous to the debut of Consuelo, she sang so false, and failed in so many brilliant passages, that her friends applauded faintly, and were soon reduced to silence and consternation by the murmurs of her opponents.

At length the great day arrived: the house was filled to suffocation. Corilla, attired in black, pale, agitated, more dead than alive, divided between the fear of seeing her lover condemned and her rival triumph, was seated in the recess of her little box in the theatre. Crowds of the aristocracy and beauty of Venice, tier above tier, made a brilliant display. The boxes were crowded behind the scenes, and even in the front of the stage. The lady of the Doge took her place along with the great dignitaries of the republic. Porpora directed the orchestra in person; and Count Zustiniani waited at the door of Consuelo's apartment till she had concluded her toilet, while Anzoleto, dressed as an antique warrior, with all the absurd and lavish ornaments of the age, retired behind the scenes to swallow a draught of Cyprus wine, in order to restore his courage.

The opera was neither of the classic period nor yet the work of an

innovator. It was the unknown production of a stranger. To escape the cabals which his own name or that of any other celebrated person would have caused, Porpora, above all things anxious for the success of his pupil, had brought forward *Ipermestra*, the lyrical production of a young German, who had enemies neither in Italy nor elsewhere, and who was styled simply Christopher Gluck.

When Anzoleto appeared on the stage a murmur of admiration burst forth. The tenor to whom he succeeded—an admirable singer who had had the imprudence to continue on the boards till his voice became thin and age had changed his looks—was little regretted by an ungrateful public; and the fair sex, who listen oftener with their eyes than with their ears, were delighted to find, in the place of a fat, elderly man, a fine youth of twenty-four, fresh as a rose, fair as Phœbus, and formed as if Phidias himself had been the artist—a true son of the lagunes, *Bianco crespo, e grassotto*.

He was too much agitated to sing his first air well, but his magnificent voice, his graceful attitudes, and some happy turns, sufficed to propitiate the audience and satisfy the ladies. The débutant had great resources; he was applauded threefold, and twice brought back before the scenes, according to the custom of Italy, and of Venice in particular.

Success gave him courage, and, when he reappeared with *Ipermestra*, he was no longer afraid. But all the effect of this scene was for Consuelo. They only saw, only listened to her. They said to each other, "Look at her—yes, it is she!" "Who?—the Spaniard?" "Yes—the débutante, *l'anante del Zustiniani*."

Consuelo entered, self-possessed and serious. Casting her eyes around, she received the plaudits of the spectators with a propriety of manner equally devoid of humility and coquetry, and sang a recitative with so firm a voice, with accents so lofty, and a self-possession so victorious, that cries of admiration from the very first resounded from every part of the theatre. "Ah! the perfidious creature has deceived me," exclaimed Corilla, darting a terrible look towards Anzoleto, who could not resist raising his eyes to hers with an ill-disguised smile. She threw herself back upon her seat, and burst into tears.

Consuelo proceeded a little further; while old Lotti was heard muttering with his cracked voice from his corner, "*Amici miei, questo è un portento!*"

She sang a bravura, and was ten times interrupted. They shouted "Encore!" they recalled her to the stage seven times, amid thunders of applause. At length the furor of Venetian dilettantism displayed itself in all its ridiculous and absurd excesses. "Why do they cry out thus?" said Consuelo, as she retired behind the scenes only to be brought back immediately by the vociferous applause of the pit. "One would think that they wished to stone me."

From that moment they paid but a secondary attention to Anzoleto. They received him very well indeed, because they were in a happy vein; but the indulgence with which they passed over the passages in which he failed, without immediately applauding those in which he succeeded, showed him very plainly, that however he might please the ladies, the noisy majority of males held him cheaply, and reserved their tempestuous applause for the prima donna. Not one among all those who had come with hostile intentions, ventured a murmur; and in truth there were not three among them who could withstand the irresistible inclination to applaud the wonder of the day.



The piece had the greatest success, although it was not listened to and nobody was occupied with the music in itself. It was quite in the Italian style—graceful, touching, and gave no indication of the author of *Alceste* and *Orpheus*. There were not many striking beauties to astonish the audience. After the first act, the German maestro was called for, with Anzoletto, the débutante, and Clorinda, who, thanks to the protection of Consuelo, had sung through the second part with a flat voice, and an inferior tone, but whose beautiful arms propitiated the spectators—Rosalba, whom she had replaced, being very lean.

In the last act, Anzoletto, who secretly watched Corilla, and perceived her increasing agitation, thought it prudent to seek her in her box, in order to avert any explosion. So soon as she perceived him she threw herself upon him like a tigress, bestowed several vigorous cuffs, the least of which was so smart as to draw blood, leaving a mark that red and white could not immediately cover. The angry tenor settled matters by a thrust on the breast, which threw the singer gasping into the arms of her sister Rosalba. "Wretch!—traitor!" she murmured in a choking voice, "your Consuelo and you shall perish by my hand!"

"If you make a step, a movement, a single gesture, I will stab you in the face of Venice," replied Anzoletto, pale and with clenched teeth, while his faithful knife, which he knew how to use with all the dexterity of a man of the lagunes, gleamed before her eyes.

"He would do as he says," murmured the terrified Rosalba; "be silent—let us leave this; we are here in danger of our lives."

Although this tragic-comic scene had taken place after the manner of the Venetians, in a mysterious and rapid *sotto voce*, on seeing the débutante pass quickly behind the scenes to regain his box, his cheek hidden in his hand, they suspected some petty squabble. The hair-dresser, who was called to adjust the curls of the Grecian prince, and to plaster up his wound, related to the whole band of choristers that an amorous cat had sunk her claw into the face of the hero. The aforesaid barber was accustomed to this kind of wounds, and was no new confidant of such adventures. The anecdote made the round of the stage, penetrated no one knew how, into the body of the house, found its way into the orchestra, the boxes, and with some additions, descended to the pit. They were not yet aware of the position of Anzoletto with regard to Corilla; but some had noticed his apparent devotion to Clorinda, and the general report was, that the *seconda donna*, jealous of the *prima donna*, had just blackened the eye and broken three teeth of the handsomest of tenors.

This was sad news for some, but an exquisite bit of scandal for the majority. They wondered if the representation would be put off, or whether the old tenor Stefanini, should have to appear, roll in hand, to finish the part. The curtain rose, and everything was forgotten on seeing Consuelo appear, calm and sublime as at the beginning. Although her part was not extremely tragical, she made it so by the power of her acting and the expression of her voice. She called forth tears, and when the tenor reappeared, the slight scratch only excited a smile; but this absurd incident prevented his success from being so brilliant, and all the glory of the evening was reserved for Consuelo, who was applauded to the last with frenzy.

After the play, they went to sup at the Palace Zustiniani, and Anzoletto forgot Corilla, whom he had shut up in her box, and who was

forced to burst it open in order to leave it. In the tumult which always follows so successful a representation, her retreat was not noticed; but the next day, this broken door coincided so well with the torn face of Anzoletto, that the love affair, hitherto so carefully concealed, was made known.

Hardly was he seated at the sumptuous banquet which the count gave in honor of Consuelo, and at which the Venetian dilettanti handed to the triumphant actress sonnets and mandrivals composed the evening before, when a valet slipped under his plate a little billet from Corilla, which he read aside, and which was to the following effect:—

"If you do not come to me this instant, I shall go to seek you openly, were you even at the end of the world—were you even at the feet of your Consuelo, thrice accursed!"

Anzoletto pretended to be seized with a fit of coughing, and retired to write an answer with a pencil on a piece of ruled paper which he had torn in the antechamber of the count from a music-book:—

"Come if you will. My knife is ready, and with it my scorn and hatred."

The despot was well aware that with such a creature fear was the only restraint; that threats were the only expedient at the moment; but in spite of himself he was gloomy and absent during the repast, and as soon as it was over he hurried off to go to Corilla.

He found the unhappy girl in a truly pitiable condition. Convulsions were followed by torrents of tears. She was seated at the window, her hair dishevelled, her eyes swollen with weeping, and her dress disordered. She sent away her sister and maid, and in spite of herself, a ray of joy overspread her features, at finding herself with him whom she had feared she might never see again. But Anzoletto knew her too well to seek to comfort her. He knew that at the first appearance of pity or penitence he would see her fury revive, and seize upon revenge. He resolved to keep up the appearance of inflexible harshness; and although he was moved with her despair, he overwhelmed her with cruel reproaches, declaring that he was only come to bid her an eternal farewell. He suffered her to throw herself at his feet, to cling to his knees even to the door, and to implore his pardon in the anguish of grief. When he had thus subdued and humbled her, he pretended to be somewhat moved, and promising to return in the morning, he left her.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

WHEN Anzoletto awoke the following morning, he experienced a reverse of the jealousy with which Count Zustiniani had inspired him. A thousand opposing sentiments divided his soul. First, that other jealousy which the genius and success of Consuelo had awakened in his bosom. This sank the deeper in his breast in proportion as he measured the triumph of his betrothed with what in his slighted ambition he was pleased to call his downfall. Again,