

The chaplain now approached the harpsichord, hoping, as it would seem, to mask Albert's flight; the rest of the family stood around in a semicircle, to hear Consuelo's judgment of her pupil.

Amelia dashed bravely into an air of Pergolesi's *Archilles in Scyros*, and sang it intrepidly from end to end, with a fresh shrill voice, accompanied by so comical a German accent, that Consuelo, who never had heard aught the least like it, could hardly restrain a smile, at every word. She had no need to listen to four bars, before she saw that the young baroness had no true notion, no intelligence for music whatsoever. A flexible tone she had, and good lessons she might have taken, but her character was too trifling to allow of her studying anything faithfully. For the same reason she had no distrust whatever of her own powers, but hammered away with German matter-of-fact coolness at the most difficult and daring passages, and banging her accompaniment most strenuously, correcting her time as she best might, adding time to the bars following other bars which she had curtailed, and so utterly changing the character of the music, that Consuelo would really have doubted what she was listening to had the music not been before her eyes.

Nevertheless, Count Christian, who knew nothing at all about the matter, but who imagined his niece to be as shy as he would have been in her place, kept crying, to encourage her, "Very well—very well, Amelia! Beautiful music—truly beautiful music!"

The canoness, who was but little better informed, looked anxiously into Consuelo's eyes, to read her opinion; and the baron, who liked no music but the tantaras of the hunting-horn, and believing that her song was above his comprehension, confidently expected the approval of the judge. The chaplain also was charmed with her flourishes, nothing like which had ever reached his ears before Amelia's arrival at the castle, and nodded his great head to and fro, in absolute contentment.

Consuelo saw that to tell them the truth bluntly would be to thunderstrike the whole family. She reserved herself, therefore, for the enlightenment of her pupil in private, on all that she had forgot, and all that she had to learn; praised her voice, asked some questions as to her studies, approved the masters she had been taught, and forbore to tell her that she had studied the wrong end foremost.

The party then separated, all very well pleased with a trial which had really been a very severe one to Consuelo. She was obliged to go and shut herself up in her own room, with the music she had heard so profaned, and to read it over with her eyes, and sing it mentally, in order to efface from her brain the disagreeable impression which she had received.

CHAPTER XXX.

WHEN the family came together again in the evening, Consuelo, who was beginning to be more at her ease with these people, with whom she was gradually becoming acquainted, answered the questions, which, in their turn, they took courage to ask her, concerning her country, her art, and her travels, less briefly and more freely than

she had cared to do before. She, however, still carefully avoided, according to the rule which she had laid down to herself, to speak of her own concerns, and talked of the things among which she had lived, without any allusion to the part she had played therein. It was all in vain that the inquisitive Amelia endeavored to turn the conversation to points which should compel her to enter upon her own personal career, for Consuelo, easily perceiving her artifices, did not for a single instant betray the incognito which she had resolved to maintain. It would be difficult to explain why she found a peculiar charm in this sort of mystery. Several reasons conduced to it. In the first place she had promised, nay, even sworn, to Porpora to hold herself in such secrecy and solitude as should render it impossible for Anzoletto to discover her traces, even if he should endeavor to do so. A very needless precaution, by the way, for Anzoletto was now occupied only by his career and success at Venice.

In the second place, Consuelo, who was of course desirous of gaining the esteem and regard of a family which had so kindly granted a temporary asylum to her while thus sorrowful and deserted, felt instinctively that she should be much better regarded as a simple musician, a pupil of Porpora's, and a teacher of singing, than as a *prima donna*, a woman of the theatre, and a celebrated *cantatrice*. She knew that such a situation, once avowed, would leave her a very difficult part to play with that simple and religious family; and it is more than probable, that even in despite of Porpora's introduction, the arrival of the actress Consuelo, the wonder of San Samuel, would have surprised and dismayed them. But if these two powerful motives had not existed, Consuelo would have still felt an anxious desire to conceal from every one the splendors and the misery of her destiny. Everything in her whole life was so singularly complicated, her power with her weakness, her glory with her love, that she could not raise a corner of her mask without uncovering some wounded spot.

This renunciation of vanities, which might have solaced another woman, proved the salvation of this courageous being. In renouncing all compassion, as well as all human glory, she felt celestial strength come to her aid. "I must regain some portion of my former happiness," she said; "that which I so long enjoyed, and which consisted in loving and being beloved. The moment I sought the world's admiration it withdrew its love, and I have paid too dear for the honors men bestowed in place of their good-will. Let me begin again, obscure and insignificant, that I may be subjected neither to envy nor ingratitude, nor enmity on the earth. The least token of sympathy is sweet, and the highest testimony of admiration is mingled with bitterness. If there be proud and strong hearts to whom praise suffices, and whom triumph consoles, I have cruelly experienced that mine is not of the number. Alas! glory has torn my lover's heart from me; let humility yield me in return at least some friends."

It was not thus that Porpora meant. In removing Consuelo from Venice, and from the dangers and agonies of her love, he only intended to procure her some repose before recalling her to the scene of ambition, and launching her afresh into the storms of artistic life. He did not know his pupil. He believed her more of a woman—that is to say, more impressionable than she was. In thinking of her, he did not fancy her as calm, affectionate, and busied with others, as she had already been able to become, but plunged in tears and de-

voured with vain regret. But he thought at the same time that a re-
action would take place, and that he should find her cured of her love,
and anxious to recommence the exercise of her powers, and enjoy the
privilege of her genius.

The pure and religious feeling conceived by Consuelo, of the part
she was to play in the family of Rudolstadt, spread from this day a
holy serenity over her words, her actions, and her countenance.
Those who had formerly seen her dazzling with love and joy beneath
the sun of Venice, could not easily have understood how she could
become all at once calm and gentle in the midst of strangers, in the
depths of gloomy forests, with her love blighted, both as regarded the
past and the future. But goodness finds strength where pride only
meets despair. Consuelo was glorious that evening, with a beauty
which she had not hitherto displayed. It was not the half-developed
impulse of sleeping nature waiting to be roused, nor the expansion of
a power which seizes the spectators with surprise or delight; neither
was it the hidden, incomprehensible beauty of the *scolare zingarella*:
no, it was the graceful, penetrating charm of a pure and self-possessed
woman, governed by her own sacred impulses.

Her gentle and simple hosts needed no other than their generous
instincts to drink in, if I may use the expression, the mysterious in-
cense which the angelic soul of Consuelo exhaled in their intellectual
atmosphere. They experienced, even in looking at her, a moral ele-
vation which they might have found it difficult to explain, but the
sweetness of which filled them as with a new life. Albert seemed for
the first time to enjoy the full possession of his faculties. He was
obliging and good-natured with every one. He was suitably so with
Consuelo, and spoke to her at different times in such terms as showed
that he had not relinquished, as might be supposed, the elevated in-
tellect and clear judgment with which nature had endowed him. The
baron did not once fall asleep, the canoness ceased to sigh, and Count
Christian, who used to sink at night into his arm-chair, bent down
under the weight of old age and vexation, remained erect with his
back to the chimney, in the centre of his family, and sharing in the
easy and pleasant conversation, which was prolonged till nine in the
evening.

"God has at length heard our prayers," said the chaplain to Count
Christian and the canoness, who remained in the saloon after the de-
parture of the baron and the young people. "Count Albert has this
day entered his thirtieth year, and this solemn day, so dreaded by
him and ourselves, has passed over calmly and with unspeakable hap-
piness."

"Yes, let us return thanks unto God," said the old count. "It may
prove but a blessed dream, sent for a moment to comfort us, but I
could not help thinking all this day, and this evening in particular,
that my son was perfectly cured."

"Brother," replied the canoness, "and you, worthy chaplain, I en-
treat pardon, but you have always believed Albert to be tormented
by the enemy of human kind. For myself, I thought him at issue
with opposing powers which disputed the possession of his poor soul,
for often, when he repeated words of the bad angel, Heaven spoke
from his mouth the next moment. Do you recollect what he said
yesterday evening during the storm, and his words on leaving us?—
'The peace of God has come down on this house.' Albert experi-
enced the miracle in himself, and I believe in his recovery as in the
divine promise."

The chaplain was too timid to admit all at once so bold a proposi-
tion. He extricated himself from his embarrassment by saying—"Let
us ascribe it to eternal goodness;" "God reads hidden things;" "The
soul should lose itself in God;" and other sentences, more consolatory
than novel.

Count Christian was divided between the desire of conforming to
the somewhat exaggerated asceticism of his good sister, and the re-
spect imposed by the prudent and unquestioning orthodoxy of his
confessor.

He endeavored to turn the conversation by speaking of the charm-
ing demeanor of Porporina. The canoness, who loved her already,
praised her yet more; and the chaplain sanctioned the preference
which they experienced for her. It never entered their heads to at-
tribute the miracle which had taken place among them, to Consuelo.
They accepted the benefit without considering its source. It was
what Consuelo would have asked of God, could she have been con-
sulted.

Amelia was a closer observer. It soon became evident to her that
her cousin could conceal the disorder of his thoughts from persons
whom he feared, as well as from those whom he wished to please.
Before relations and friends of the family whom he either disliked or
esteemed, he never betrayed by any outward demonstration the eccen-
tricity of his character. When Consuelo expressed her surprise at
what had been related the preceding evening, Amelia, tormented by a
secret uneasiness, tried to make her afraid of Count Albert by reci-
tals which had already terrified herself. "Ah, my poor friend," said
she, "distrust this deceitful calm; it is a pause which always inter-
venes between a recent and an approaching crisis. You see him to-
day as I first saw him, when I arrived here in the beginning of last
year. Alas! if you were destined to become the wife of such a vis-
ionary, and if, to combat your reluctance they had determined to keep
you prisoner for an indefinite period in this frightful castle, with sur-
prises, terrors, and agitations for your daily fare—nothing to be seen
but tears, exorcisms, and extravagances—expecting a cure which will
never happen—you would be quite disenchanted with the fine man-
ners of Albert, and the honied words of the family."

"It is not credible," said Consuelo, "that they would unite you
against your will to a man whom you do not love. You appear to be
the idol of your relatives."

"They will not force me; they know that would be impossible.
But they forget that Albert is not the only husband who would suit
me, and God knows when they will give up the foolish hope that the
affection with which I at first regarded him will return. And then
my poor father, who has here wherewith to satisfy his passion for the
chase, finds himself so well off in this horrible castle, that he will
always discover some pretext for retarding our departure. Ah! if
you only knew some secret, my dear Nina, to make all the game in
the country perish in one night, you would render me an inestimable
service."

"I can do nothing, unfortunately, but try to amuse you by giving
you lessons in music, and chatting with you in the evening when
you are not inclined to sleep. I shall do my utmost to soothe and to
compose you."

"You remind me," said Amelia, "that I have not related the re-
mainder of the story. I shall begin at once, that I may not keep you
up too late."

"Some days after his mysterious absence, which he still believed had only lasted seven hours, Albert remarked the absence of the abbé, and asked where he had gone.

"His presence was no longer necessary," they replied; "he returned to his own pursuits. Did you not observe his absence?"

"I perceived," replied Albert, "that something is taken from the sum of my suffering, but I did not know what it was."

"You suffer much then, Albert," asked the canoness.

"Much," he replied, in the tone of a man who is asked what sort of night he has passed.

"And the abbe was obnoxious to you?" said Count Christian.

"Very," he replied, in the same tone.

"And why, my son, did you not say so sooner? Why have you borne for so long a time the presence of a man whom you so much disliked, without informing me of it? Do you doubt, my dear child, that I should have quickly terminated your sufferings?"

"It was but a feeble addition to my grief," said Albert, with frightful tranquillity; "and your kindness which I never distrusted, my dear father, would have but slightly relieved it, by giving me another superintendent."

"Say another travelling companion, my son; you employ an expression injurious to my tenderness."

"Your tenderness was the cause of your anxiety, my father. You could not be aware of the evil you inflicted on me in sending me from this house, where it was designed by Providence I should remain till its plans for me should be accomplished. You thought to labor for my cure and repose; but I knew better what was good for us both—I knew that I should obey you—and this duty I have fulfilled."

"I know your virtue and your affection, Albert; but can you not explain yourself more clearly?"

"That is very easy," replied Albert; "and the time is come that I should do so."

Albert spoke so calmly that we thought the fortunate moment had arrived when his soul should cease to be a melancholy enigma. We pressed around him, and encouraged him by our looks and caresses to open his heart for the first time in his life. He appeared at length inclined to do so, and spoke as follows:—

"You have always looked upon me," said he, "and still continue to look upon me, as in ill-health and a madman. Did I not feel for you all infinite respect and affection, I should perhaps have widened the abyss which separates us, and I should have shown you that you are in a world of errors and prejudices, whilst Heaven has given me access to a sphere of light and truth. But you could not understand me without giving up what constitutes your tranquillity, your security, and your creed. When borne away by my enthusiasm, imprudent words escaped me, I soon found I had done you harm in wishing to root up your chimeras and display before your enfeebled eyes the burning flame which I bore about with me. All the details and the habits of your life, all the fibres of your heart, all the springs of your intellect, are so bound up together, so trammelled with falsehood and darkness, that I should but seem to inflict death instead of life. There is a voice, however, which cries to me in watching and in sleep, in calm and in storm, to enlighten and convert you. But I am too loving and too weak a man to undertake it. When I see your eyes full of tears your bosoms heave, your foreheads bent down—when I

feel that I bring only sorrow and terror—I fly, I hide myself, to resist the cry of conscience and the commands of destiny. Behold the cause of my illness! Behold my torment, my cross, my suffering—do you understand me now?"

"My uncle, my aunt, and the chaplain, understood this much—that Albert had ideas of morality and religion totally different from their own; but, timid as devout, they feared to go too far, and dared not encourage his frankness. As to myself, I was only imperfectly acquainted with the peculiarities of his childhood and youth, and I did not at all understand it. Besides, I was at this time, like yourself, Nina, and knew very little of this Hussitism and Lutheranism which I have since heard so much of, whilst the controversies between Albert and the chaplain overwhelmed me with weariness. I expected a more ample explanation, but it did not ensue. 'I see,' said Albert, struck with the silence around him, 'that you do not wish to understand me, for fear of understanding too much. Be it so, then. Your blindness has borne bitter fruits. Ever unhappy, ever alone, a stranger among those I love, I have neither refuge nor stay but in the consolation which has been promised me.'

"What is this consolation, my son?" said Count Christian, deeply afflicted. "Could it not come from us? Shall we never understand each other?"

"Never, my father; let us love each other, since that alone is allowed. Heaven is my witness, that our vast and irreparable misunderstanding has never diminished the love I bear you."

"And is not that enough?" said the canoness, taking one hand, while her brother pressed Albert's other hand in his own. "Can you not forget your wild ideas, your strange belief, and live fondly in the midst of us?"

"I do not live on affection," replied Albert. "It is a blessing which produces good or evil, according as our faith is a common one or otherwise. Our hearts are in union, dear Aunt Wenceslawa, but our intellects are at war; and this is a great misfortune for us all. I know it will not end for centuries. Therefore I await the happiness that has been promised me, and which gives me power to hope on."

"What is that happiness, Albert? can you not explain?"

"No, for I am myself ignorant of it; but it will come. My mother has never missed a week without announcing it to me in my dreams, and the voices of the forest whisper it back to me, whensoever I interrogate them. An angel often flutters around me, showing me its pale but lustrous countenance above the Stone of Horror, whither, at the time when my contemporaries called me Ziska, I was transported by the indignation of the Lord, and became for the first time the minister of his vengeance—that stone, whereon, when I was called Wratislaw, I saw the mutilated and disfigured head of my father Withold roll beneath the sabre's edge—horrible expiation, which taught me the meaning of sorrow and of pity—day of fatal remuneration, when the Lutheran blood washed the stain of Catholic blood, and made me a man of tenderness and mercy, instead of the man of fanaticism and horror I had been for a hundred years before."

"Merciful Providence!" cried my aunt. "His madness is coming on him again."

"Do not vex him, sister," said Count Christian, making a great effort over himself; "suffer him to explain himself. Speak, my son, what has the angel told you about the Rock of Horror?"

"He has told me that my consolation was near at hand," Albert answered him, with a face radiant with enthusiasm, "and that it would descend upon my heart so soon as my twenty-ninth year should be fulfilled."

"My uncle let his head droop wearily on his breast, for Albert seemed to him to allude to his own death by mentioning the age at which his mother had died; and it seems that she had often predicted, during her malady, that neither herself nor her son should ever attain the age of thirty; for it would seem that my aunt Wanda was somewhat given to supernatural sights also; but I knew nothing precise on the subject. It is too painful a recollection for my uncle, and no one dares to awaken it in his bosom."

"The chaplain then proceeded to make an endeavor at removing the sad thoughts created by this mournful prediction, by inducing Albert to explain himself in regard to the abbe, which was the point from which the conversation had branched off."

"Albert, in his turn, made an effort to reply to him. 'I talk to you, said he, 'of things everlasting and divine; you recal me to swift fleeting instants, puerile cares, which I at once forget.'

"Speak, my son, nevertheless; let us try at all events this day to comprehend you."

"You never have understood, never will understand me, father, in what you call this life," said Albert. "But if you would know why I travelled, why I endured that faithless and careless guardian whom you tied to my steps like a greedy and lazy dog to a blind man's arm, I will tell you, and briefly. I had seen you suffer cruelly. It was necessary to withdraw from your eyes the sight of a son rebellious to your lessons, deaf to your reproaches. I knew that I should never recover of what you termed my insanity, but I desired to give you rest and hope, and withdrew myself voluntarily. You asked my promise that I would not without your consent rid myself of the guide you had given me, and that I would let him conduct me through the world. I was resolved to keep my promise; I wished also that he should keep up your hopes and your tranquillity. I was gentle and enduring, but I closed both heart and ears against him, and he had at least the sense never to attempt the opening them. He led me to walk, dressed me, fed me, as if I were a child. I gave up living as I wished to live; I grew accustomed to see misery, injustice, and madness reign over the earth; I looked on men and their institutions, and indignation made way for pity in my heart, as I perceived that the misery of the oppressed is inferior to that of the oppressors. In my childhood I had no love but for victims; now I learned to compassionate their executioners, unhappy penitents, who undergo in this generation the penalty of crimes committed by them during their previous existences, and whom God has condemned to be wicked, a punishment a thousand times severer than it is to be their innocent prey. It is therefore that I gave no charities any longer, except to rid myself personally of the weight of wealth, without tormenting you by my preachings, knowing now that the time to be happy has not arrived, because, to speak the language of men, the time to be good is yet afar off."

"And now that you are free from this supervisor, as you call him—now that you can live in tranquillity, beyond the sight of miseries which you extinguish, one by one, as they occur around you—now that no one will counteract your generous enthusiasm, will you not make an effort with yourself to repel and conquer your mental agitation?"

"Ask me no further, my beloved parents," replied Albert, "for this day I will speak no word more."

"And he kept his promise; and yet more, for he never unclosed his lips for an entire week."

 CHAPTER XXXI.

"A FEW words will conclude Albert's history, my dear Porporina, for this reason, that unless I were to repeat what I have already told you, I have but little more to mention. My cousin's whole conduct during the year and a half which I have spent here, has been one continued repetition of the whims and fantasies of which you are now aware. The only exception is, that his pretended recollection of bye-gone ages began to assume a really alarming character of reality, when Albert suddenly manifested a particular and marvellous faculty, of which you have, perhaps, heard tell, but which I certainly had never believed till he gave indubitable proofs of it. This faculty is called, as I learn, second sight in other countries, and those who possess it are often the objects of a sort of religious veneration among superstitious persons. As to me, I know not what to think of it; but I find in it another reason for never becoming the wife of a man who could see all my actions at the distance of a hundred leagues, and who could read my very thoughts. Such a woman should at the very least be a saint; and how should one be such toward a man who seems to be devoted to the devil?"

"You have the faculty," said Consuelo, "of jesting at everything, and I cannot but admire the merriment with which you talk of things that make the very hair stand up on my head. In what does this gift of second sight consist?"

"Albert sees and hears that which no one but he can see or hear. When a person whom he likes is about to arrive here, he announces his coming, and goes forth to meet him an hour before the time. In like manner he retires, and goes and shuts himself up in his own room, when he feels the approach of any one who is disagreeable to him."

"One day when he was walking with my father along the mountain path, he stopped short on a sudden, and made a great circuit over stones and through briars, to avoid a certain spot which did not seem, however, to have any peculiarity. They returned the same way, and, at the expiration of a few minutes, Albert performed the same manoeuvre. My father, pretending to have lost something, endeavored to bring him to the foot of a fir tree which appeared to be the object of his repugnance. Not only, however, did Albert avoid approaching it, but took pains not so much as to tread upon the shadow which the tree projected across the road; and while my father crossed and re-crossed the spot, he showed a disturbance and agony of mind that were really remarkable. At length, when my father stopped close to the foot of the tree, Albert uttered an outcry, and called him back hastily. It was a long time, however, before he could be induced to explain this whim, and it was only when completely overcome by the prayers of the whole family, that he declared this tree to be the mark

of a burial place, and asserted that a great crime had been committed there.

"The chaplain thought that if Albert was cognizant of any murder committed in that place, it was his duty to be informed of it, in order to give Christian burial to those abandoned relics of humanity.

"Beware what you shall do," said Albert, with the melancholy and sarcastic expression which he sometimes assumes. "The man, woman and child whom you will find there, were Hussites, and it is the drunkard, Wenceslawa, who caused them to be slaughtered by his soldiers, one night when he was hiding in the woods, and expected to be observed or betrayed by them."

"No more was said on the subject to my cousin; but my uncle, who was anxious to discover whether this was merely fancy on his part, or a species of inspiration, caused the place to be explored by night, and the skeletons of a man, a woman and a child were there discovered. The man was covered by one of those enormous wooden shields worn by the Hussites, which are easy to be recognised by the chalice which is engraved upon them, with this device around them in Latin—"O, death,* how bitter is the memory of thee to the unjust—how quiet and calm to the man, all whose actions are ordered rightly, and with a view to this end."

"These bones were removed and re-interred in a different part of the forest; and when Albert passed several times close to the foot of the fir tree, my father observed that he had not the least repugnance to walking over the spot, although it had been carefully filled up as before with sand and stones, so that no traces were left of what had occurred. He did not even remember the emotion which he had testified, and had some trouble in recalling it to mind when mentioned to him.

"You must be mistaken, father," he said, "and it must have been in some other place that I was warned. I am certain that there is nothing here. For I have neither chill nor pain, nor trembling of my body."

"My aunt is much inclined to ascribe this poetic power to the especial favor of Providence. But Albert is so gloomy, so unhappy, and suffers so much from it, that it is difficult to conceive to what end Providence should have endowed him with a gift so fatal.

"If I believed in the existence of the devil, the chaplain's suggestion would leave it on far more reasonable grounds, who lays all Albert's hallucinations to his charge. My uncle Christian, who is a man of more sense and firmness in his religious views, sees for all these things explanations which are probable enough on common-sense considerations. He thinks that, notwithstanding all the pains the Jesuits took for so many years, after the Thirty Years' War, in forming all the heretics in Bohemia, and especially in the vicinity of the Giant's Castle,—in spite of the close investigation made in every nook after the death of my aunt Wanda, there must have remained in some corner, of which no one was aware, some historical documents which have been found by Albert—that the reading of those unlucky papers must have taken strange effect on his diseased imagination—and that he attributes, unconsciously of the self-deceit, to those wonderful memories of a prior existence on earth, the impression which he has received from documents now wholly unknown,

* A French version of Ecclesiasticus xii. 1. 2.

which he, nevertheless, repeats with the minute details and close connection of historic chronicles. By these means are easily accounted for all the strange tales he tells us, as well as his disappearance for days and weeks together; for it is right to tell you that these disappearances have several times recurred, and that it is impossible to suppose that he spends the time out of the castle. Whenever he has disappeared it has proved utterly impossible to discover him, and we are certain that no peasant has ever given him either food or shelter. We know also that he has fits of lethargy which keep him confined to his chamber for whole days; and when the doors are forced, or any disturbance is made about him, he falls into convulsions so that great care is now taken not to disturb him. Free scope is now given to his lethargic seizures, during which extraordinary things seem to pass through his mind; but no sound, no outward agitation, betray them, and it is from his conversation only that we learn their character. When he recovers, he is calmer and more reasonable for a few days, but by degrees his agitation returns, and goes on increasing until the recurrence of his seizure, the period and duration of which he appears to foresee; for when they are long, he either retires to some distant place, or takes refuge in his hiding place, which we imagine must be some vault of the castle, or some cavern in this mountain, known to himself alone. Up to this time, it has been impossible to discover him, which is the more difficult that he will not endure to be watched, and that to be followed, observed, or even seriously questioned, renders him seriously ill. Thus the plan has been adopted of leaving him entirely free, and we have now accustomed ourselves to regard these disappearances, which were at first so fearfully alarming, as favorable crises in his malady; when they come about, my aunt is miserable, and my uncle prays, but no one stirs; and as for me, I confess that I have become very much hardened on such account. Vexation has brought in its train weariness and disgust. I should prefer death to marriage with this maniac. I admit his noble qualities; but, although you may think that I ought to pay no regard to his fantasies, I confess that I am irritated by them as the torment of my life, and of my whole family."

"That seems to me a little unjust, my dear baroness," said Consuelo. "How repugnant soever you may feel to becoming the wife of Count Albert, I can well conceive; but how you should lose all interest in him, is beyond my comprehension."

"It is because I cannot avoid believing that there is something voluntary in this man's madness. It is certain that he has great strength of character; and on a thousand occasions, he has much command over himself. He has the power of retarding, when he chooses it, the approach of these attacks. I have seen him master them with great power when persons seemed indisposed to treat them seriously. On the contrary, when he sees us disposed to credulity or fear, he seems to desire, by his extravagances, to produce an effect upon us, and he abuses our weakness toward him. It is on this account that I feel bitterly toward him, and often ask Beelzebub, his patron, to come and rid us of him, once for all."

"These are very cruel jokes," said Consuelo, "to be used concerning a man so unhappy, and on whose affliction seems to me romantic and poetical, rather than marvellous or repulsive."

"Take it as you please, my dear Porporina," resumed Amelia. "Admire his sorceries as much as you please, but I do as our chaplain

does, who commends his soul to God, and seeks not to comprehend. I take shelter in the bosom of reason, and do not attempt to explain to myself that which, I doubt not, has a very simple explanation, though it is utterly unknown to all of us at present. The only thing that is certain about my unfortunate cousin is, that his reason has completely packed its baggage—that his imagination has unfolded within his brain wings so wide, that the case is bursting with their expansion. And, since I must speak out clearly and say the word which my poor uncle Christian was compelled to utter in tears at the feet of the Empress Maria Theresa, who will not be satisfied with half answers, or half affirmations, in three words, 'Albert Rudolstadt is mad—deranged,' if you think that a more genteel expression."

Consuelo replied only by a deep sigh. Amelia appeared to her at that moment a hateful and iron-hearted person. She strove to excuse her in her own eyes, by conjuring up to herself all that she must have suffered during eighteen months of a life so sad, yet filled with emotions so strange and varied. Then recollecting her own misfortunes—"Ah!" she said to herself, "why cannot I lay the blame of Anzoleto's faults to madness. Had he fallen into delirium in the midst of the intoxications and deceptions of his debut, I feel, for my own part, that I should have loved him no less; and I should only ask to know that his infidelity and ingratitude arose from frenzy, to adore him as before, and to fly to his succor."

Some days elapsed without Albert's manner, conversation, or demeanor, giving the slightest confirmation to his cousin's assertions, relative to the derangement of his intellect. But, on a day when the chaplain chanced unintentionally to cross him, he began talking incoherently, and then, as if he became himself aware of it, left the drawing-room abruptly, and went away to shut himself up in the seclusion of his own chamber. All expected that he would remain there some time; but within an hour he returned, pale and disordered, moved himself languidly from chair to chair, and kept hovering around Consuelo, although he did not appear to take any more notice of her than usual. At length he retreated to the embrasure of a window, in which he sat down with his face buried in his hands, and so continued wholly motionless.

It was now about the time at which Amelia was used to take her music lesson, and she now desired to do so, as she whispered to Consuelo, if it were only for the purpose of driving away that ill-omened face, which banished all her gaiety, and seemed, as she said in her fancy, to fill the very room with odors of the grave. "I think," said Consuelo, in answer to her, "that we shall do better to go up to your room, where we can make your spinet serve us for accompaniment. If it be true that music is disagreeable to Count Albert, to what end increase his disturbance, and by that means the sufferings of his parents?" And to this consideration Amelia having yielded, they went up together to her chamber, the door of which they left ajar, because there was some smoke in the room. Amelia wanted to have her own way, as usual, and to sing loud, showy cavatinas; but this time Consuelo showed that she was in earnest, and made her try some very simple movements and some serious passages from Palestina's sacred songs. The young baroness began to yawn, grew fretful, and declared that the music was barbarous, and would put her to sleep.

"That is because you do not understand it," replied Consuelo.

"Suffer me to sing you a few airs, to show you how admirably it is adapted for the voice, in addition to the grandeur and sublimity of its thoughts and suggestions."

She seated herself at the spinet, and began to sing. It was the first time she had awakened the echoes of the old chateau, and she found the bare and lofty walls so admirably adapted for sound, that she gave herself up entirely to the pleasure which she experienced. Her voice, long mute, since the last evening when she sang at San Samuel—that evening when she fainted, broken down by fatigue and sorrow—instead of being impaired by so much suffering and agitation, was more beautiful, more marvelous, more thrilling than ever. Amelia was at the same time transported and affrighted. She was at length beginning to understand that she did not know anything, and that perhaps she could never learn anything, when the pale and pensive figure of Albert suddenly appeared in the middle of the apartment, in front of the two young girls, and remained motionless and apparently deeply moved until the end of the piece. It was only then that Consuelo perceived him, and was somewhat frightened. But Albert, falling on his knees, and raising towards her his large dark eyes, swimming in tears, exclaimed in Spanish, without the least German accent, "O Consuelo! Consuelo! I have at last found thee!"

"Consuelo?" cried the astonished girl, expressing herself in the same language, "Why, señor, do you call me by that name?"

"I call you Consolation," replied Albert, still speaking in Spanish, "because a consolation has been promised to my desolate life, and because you are that consolation which God at last grants to my solitary and gloomy existence."

"I did not think," said Amelia, with suppressed rage, "that music could have produced so prodigious an effect on my dear cousin. Nina's voice is formed to accomplish wonders, I confess; but I may remark to both of you, that it would be more polite towards me, and more according to general etiquette, to use a language which I can understand."

Albert appeared not to have heard a word of what his betrothed had said. He continued kneeling, and looking at Consuelo, with eyes beaming with delight and wonder, and reiterated in a soft, low tone, the words, "Consuelo! Consuelo!"

"What is this name that he is calling you?" asked Amelia of her companion, somewhat angrily.

"He is asking me," replied Consuelo, now a good deal embarrassed, for a Spanish air with which I am unacquainted; and I think, moreover, that we had better stop where we are, for the music appears to affect him to-day far too strongly." And with these words she arose to leave the room.

"Consuelo," repeated Albert, in the Spanish tongue, "if you depart from me, my life is over, and I will never return to the earth for evermore." And as he spoke thus he fell at her feet and fainted, while the two frightened girls called servants to his aid, who carried him away to his own room.

CHAPTER XXXII.

COUNT ALBERT was gently deposited on his own bed, while two of the servants who had brought him thither, went in search of the chaplain, who was in some sort the family physician, and for Count Christian, who had left directions that he should be informed of the slightest affection of his son, while the young ladies set off to find the canoness. Before, however, any one of these several persons had returned to his bed, though each and all made the best speed, Albert had disappeared. His door was discovered open, his bed scarcely disarranged by the momentary repose which he had taken upon it, and his chamber in its accustomed order. He was sought for everywhere, as was always the case when events of this nature occurred. He was nowhere to be found; whereupon the family at once relapsed into one of those states of gloomy resignation which had been described to Consuelo by Amelia, and all appeared to be awaiting, in that dumb consternation, the expression of which they no longer sought to conceal, the return, rather to be hoped for than expected, of the young and extraordinary baron.

Although Consuelo would have desired to make no allusion to his parents of the singular scene which had been transacted in the chamber of the young baroness, the latter failed not to recount to them, in the warmest and most vivid colors, the instantaneous and potent effect which Porporina's song had produced on her cousin. "It is then very certain that music has a bad effect on him," observed the chaplain.

"If that be the case," Consuelo answered him, "I will take good heed that he shall not hear me: and when I shall be at work with our young baroness, we shall take heed to shut ourselves up so closely that no sound may by chance reach the ears of Count Albert."

"It will be very irksome to you, my dear young lady," said the canoness. "Ah! it is not in my power to render your sojourn here agreeable to you."

"I am willing to participate both in your sorrows and your pleasures; and I seek no other satisfaction than that of being permitted to share in both, through your confidence and friendship."

"You are a noble girl," the canoness made answer, offering her long and emaciated hand to her pressure; "but listen to me, I am of opinion that music is not in reality injurious to my dear Albert. According to what I have gathered from Amelia of this morning's scene, I judge contrariwise—that he was too powerfully delighted. It may even be that his illness was occasioned by the too sudden suspension of your admirable melodies. What said he to you in Spanish? That is a tongue which he speaks thoroughly, as I am told, with many others which he acquired during his travels with prodigious quickness. If asked how he retains in memory so many languages, he replies, that he knew them before he was born, and remembers them—this one, because he spoke it twelve hundred years ago—that, when he was at the crusades, or I know not where. Alas! you will hear strange narratives of his anterior existences, as he calls them. But translate for me into our German language, which you already speak so well, the meaning of what he said to you in your language, which none of us know."

Consuelo was for a moment embarrassed to a point which she could not explain, even to herself. She determined, however, to tell nearly the whole truth, explaining that Count Albert had begged her to remain with him, declaring that she afforded him exceeding consolation.

"Consolation!" said Amelia, who was not lacking in quickness. "Did he use that word? You know, aunt, the peculiar signification which he attaches to that word."

"Truly it is a word which he uses often," said Wenceslawa, "and to which he appears to attach a prophetic meaning; but I do not see any reason for applying any other than its ordinary meaning to the use of it, on that occasion."

"But what means the word which he repeated to you so often, dear Porporina," persisted Amelia. "I thought he used one word very often, though in my agitation I lost its sound."

"I did not understand it myself," said Consuelo, not speaking falsely without an effort.

"My dear Nina," Amelia whispered to her, "you are as quick as you are prudent. I am not myself quite an idiot, and I perfectly comprehend that you are the mystical consolation promised to Albert by the vision, during his thirtieth year. Do not endeavor to conceal from me that you have understood it as I—for I assure you I am in nowise envious of a mission so celestial."

"Listen to me, dear Porporina," interposed the canoness, who had been musing for a minute or two. "It has ever been a fancy of ours that when Albert disappears from us, as I might say magically, he is hidden not far from us, perhaps in this very house, in some secret place known to himself alone. I know not why, but I have an idea that were you to sing now, he might hear you and return to us."

"Could I but suppose so," said Consuelo, doubtfully. "Suppose, however, if Albert be so near us, that music augments his delirium," interposed Amelia, who was really jealous.

"At all events," exclaimed Count Christian, "it is an experiment that must be tried. I have heard that Farinelli had a charm in his song to dissipate the black melancholy of the King of Spain, as had young David to appease the fury of Saul by the witchery of his harp. Make the trial, then, Porporina; a soul so pure as yours can have none but beneficent influences on all around."

Consuelo, who was now touched, sat down at the piano and began to sing a Spanish canticle in honor of our Lady of Consolation, which her mother had taught her in her childhood, beginning with the words "*Consuelo de mi alma—O solace of my soul,*" &c. She sang it so purely and with so marked an accent of piety, that the owner of the old manor-house almost forgot the subject of their anxieties in the sentiments of faith and hope which the music excited within them. Deep silence dwelt within and without the castle wall; the doors and windows had been thrown open, in order to give its widest and fullest scope to the voice of Consuelo, and the moon was pouring her pale bluish lustre through the embrasures of the large windows. All was calm; and a sort of serenity of soul had succeeded to despair in the hearts of all—when a deep long sigh, like that of a human being, was heard at the close of Consuelo's last tones. That sigh was so long drawn and so well defined, that every person present heard it, even the Baron Frederick, who startled from his dose and half awoke, as if he had been suddenly called. Every one turned pale, and all gazed

each at the other, as if to say—"It is not I; is it you who did that?"—and Consuelo, who fancied that the sigh was uttered close beside her at the piano, though she sat apart from all the family, was so terrified that literally she could not speak.

"Mercy of heaven!" cried the canoness aghast; "seemed not that sigh to exhale from the bowels of the earth?"

"Say rather, aunt," exclaimed Amelia, "seemed it not to pass over our heads like the night-wind?"

"Perhaps some screech-owl, attracted by the lights, flitted through the room while we were all suspended on the music, and we caught the rustle of his pinions as he passed through the windows." Such was the chaplain's explanation, but for all that, his teeth chattered with very fear.

"Perhaps it is Albert's dog!" said the Count Christian.

"Cynabre is not here," replied Amelia; "Wherever Albert is, Cynabre is with him there. Some one hereabout, undoubtedly, sighed strangely. If I were not afraid of going to the window, I would go and see if some one be not listening in the garden; but were my life at stake, I have not strength to do it."

"For a person so free from all prejudice," said Consuelo with a low voice and a forced smile; "for one boasting herself a little French philosopher, you are not very courageous, dear baroness. I will see if I cannot prove myself more so."

"Do not try it, my dear," answered Amelia aloud; "and don't affect to be brave, for you are as pale as death now, and you will be ill the next thing."

"What silly whims you indulge in, my dear Amelia," answered Count Christian, directing his steps firmly and gravely to the open window.—"There is no one," he said, after looking out; and then added, after shutting the casement—"it seems to me that real ailments are not keen enough for the excited fancies of women; and that they must always add the creatures of their own brains to real sorrows which need no addition. There is assuredly nothing mysterious in that sigh. Some one of us, moved by the signora's fine singing, probably without self-consciousness, uttered that deep-sown aspiration. Perhaps it is I who did so, yet I know it not. Ah Porporina, though you succeed not in curing Albert, at the least you have discovered how to pour a heavenly balm into wounds as deeply seated as his own."

The words of this good old man, who was ever calm and self-restrained amid the deepest domestic troubles, were in themselves in some sort a healing balm, and as such Consuelo felt them. She felt almost inclined to cast herself on her knees before him, and implore his benediction, such a benediction as she had received from Porpora before leaving him, and from Marcell, on that brightest day of her existence, which had beer to her but the beginning of an unbroken series of misfortunes

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SEVERAL days passed over without their hearing any news of Count Albert; and Consuelo, to whom this position of things appeared dismal in the extreme, was astonished to see the Rudolstadt family bear so frightful a state of uncertainty without evincing either despair or much impatience. Familiarity with the most cruel anxieties, produce a sort of apparent apathy, or else real hardness of heart, which wounds and almost irritates those minds whose sensibility has not yet been blunted by long-continued misfortune. Consuelo, subject to a sort of nightmare in the midst of these doleful impressions and inexplicable occurrences, was astonished to see that the order of the house was hardly disturbed, that the canoness was equally vigilant, the baron equally eager for the chase, the chaplain regular as ever in the same devotional exercises, and Amelia gay and trifling as usual. The cheerful vivacity of the latter was what particularly offended Consuelo. She could not conceive how the baroness could laugh and play, while she herself could hardly read or work with her needle. The canoness, however, employed herself in embroidering an altar front for the chapel of the castle. It was a masterpiece of patience, exquisite workmanship, and neatness. Hardly had she made the tour of the house, when she returned to seat herself at her work, were it only to add a few stitches, while waiting to be called by new cares to the barns, the kitchens, or the cellars. One should have seen with how much importance these little concerns were treated, and how that fragile being was hurried along, at a pace always regular, always dignified and measured, but never slackened, through all the corners of her little empire; crossing a thousand times daily in all possible directions the narrow and monotonous surface of her domestic demesnes. What also seemed strange to Consuelo was the respect and admiration which the family and country in general attached to this indefatigable housekeeping—a pursuit, which the old lady seemed to have embraced with such ardor and jealous observance. To see her parsimoniously regulating the most trivial affairs, one would have thought her covetous and distrustful; and yet on important occasions she displayed a soul deeply imbued with noble and generous sentiments. But these excellent qualities, especially her motherly affections, which gave her in Consuelo's eyes so sympathizing and venerable an air, would not of themselves have been sufficient in the eyes of others to elevate her to the rank of the heroine of the family. She required, besides, the far more important qualification of a scrupulous attention to the trifling details of the household, to cause her to be appreciated for what she really was, notwithstanding what has been said, a woman of strong sense and high moral feeling. Not a day passed that Count Christian, the baron, or the chaplain, did not repeat every time she turned her back, "How much wisdom, how much courage, how much strength of mind does the canoness display!" Amelia herself, not distinguishing the true and ennobling purpose of life, in the midst of puerilities which, under another form, constituted the whole of hers, did not venture to disparage her aunt under this point of view, the only one that, in Consuelo's eyes, cast a shadow upon the bright light which shone from the pure and loving soul of the hunchback Wenceslawa. To the *zingarella*, born upon the

highway and thrown helpless on the world without any other master, or any other protection than her own genius, so much care, so much activity and intensity of thought to produce such miserable results as the preservation and maintenance of certain objects and certain provisions, appeared an absurd perversion of human intelligence. She who possessed none and desired none of the world's riches, was grieved to see a lovely and generous soul suffer itself to be absorbed wholly in the business of looking after wheat, wine, wood, hemp, cattle, and furniture. If they had offered her all these goods, so much desired by the greater part of mankind, she would have asked, instead, a moment of her former happiness, her rags, the clear and lovely sky above her head, her fresh young love and her liberty upon the lagunes of Venice—all that was stamped on her memory in more and more glowing colors, in proportion as she receded from that gay and laughing horizon to penetrate into the frozen sphere which is called real life!

She felt her heart sink in her bosom when at nightfall she saw the old canoness, followed by Hans, take an immense bunch of keys, and make the circuit of all the buildings and all the courts, closing the least openings, and examining the smallest recesses into which an evil-doer could have crept; as if no one could sleep in security within those formidable walls, until the water of the torrent, which was restrained behind a neighboring dam came rushing and roaring into the trenches of the chateau, whilst in addition the gates were locked and the draw-bridge raised. Consuelo had so often slept, in her distant wanderings by the roadside, with no covering save her mother's torn cloak thrown over her for shelter! She had so often welcomed the dawn upon the snowy flagstones of Venice, washed by the waves, without having a moment's fear for her modesty, the only wealth she cared to preserve! "Alas!" said she, "how unhappy are these people in having so many things to take care of! Security is the aim of their pursuits by day and night, and so carefully do they seek it, that they have no time to find or enjoy it." Like Amelia, therefore, she already pined in her gloomy prison—that dark and sombre Castle of the Giants, where the sun himself seemed afraid to penetrate. But while the young baroness only thought of fetes, of dresses, and whispering suitors, Consuelo dreamt of wandering beside her native wave-washed shores—a thicket or a fisher-boat for her palace, the boundless heavens for her covering, and the starry firmament to gaze on!

Forced by the cold of the climate, and the closing of the castle gates, to change the Venetian custom which she had retained, of watching during a part of the night, and rising late in the morning, she at last succeeded, after many hours of sleeplessness, agitation, and melancholy dreams, in submitting to the austere law of the cloister, and recompensed herself by undertaking, alone, several morning walks in the neighboring mountain. The gates were opened and the bridges lowered at the first dawn of day, and while Amelia, secretly occupied in reading novels during one half the night, slept until awakened by the first breakfast bell, Porporina sallied forth to breathe the fresh air, and brush the early dew from the herbage of the forest. One morning, as she descended softly on tiptoe, in order to awaken no one, she mistook the direction she ought to take, among the numberless staircases and interminable corridors of the chateau, of which she had not yet informed herself. Embarrassed in a maze of galleries and passages, she passed through a sort of antechamber, which she

had never seen before, still expecting to find a way through it into the garden. But she merely reached the entrance of a little chapel, built in a beautiful but antique style, and dimly lighted from above by a circular window of stained glass in the vaulted ceiling, which threw a feeble light upon the centre of the pavement, and left the extremities of the building in mysterious gloom. The sun was still below the horizon, and the morning grey and foggy. At first, Consuelo thought herself in the chapel of the chateau, where she had heard mass the preceding Monday. She knew that the chapel opened upon the gardens; but before crossing it to go out, she wished to honor the sanctuary of prayer, and knelt upon the first step of the altar. But, as it often happens to artists to be preoccupied with outward objects in spite of their attempts to ascend into the sphere of abstract ideas, her prayer could not absorb her sufficiently to prevent her casting a glance of curiosity around her; and she soon perceived that she was not in the chapel, but in a place to which she had not before penetrated. It was neither the same shrine nor the same ornaments. Although this unknown chapel was very small, she could hardly as yet distinguish objects around her; but what struck Consuelo most was a marble statue kneeling before the altar, in that cold and severe attitude in which all figures on tombs were formerly represented. She concluded that she was in a place reserved for the sepulchres of some distinguished ancestors, and having become somewhat fearful and superstitious since her residence in Bohemia, she shortened her prayer, and rose to retire.

But just as she was turning a last half-timid glance toward the kneeling statue which was scarce ten paces distant, she saw the marble figure unclasp its stony fingers, and make the sign of the cross.

Consuelo was on the point of fainting, yet she lacked power to withdraw her glaring eyes from that horrible statue. What held her firm in the conviction that it was but a statue, was perceiving that it did not hear the outcry which broke from her lips, and that it again folded its massive white hands, all unconscious in appearance of any exterior world.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HAD the ingenious and imaginative Anne Radcliffe found herself in the place of the candid and unskilful narrator of this true narrative, she would not have allowed so good an opportunity to escape, of conducting you, fair reader, through corridors, trap-doors, winding staircases, and subterranean passages, through half-a-dozen flowery and attractive volumes, to reveal to you only at the seventh, all the mysteries of her skilful labors. But the unsuperstitious reader, whom it is for me to entertain, would not probably lend herself so willingly at the present period, to the innocent stratagem of the romancer. Besides, as it might be difficult to make her believe them, we will give her the key to all our mysteries, as quickly as we can. And to explain two of them at once, we will confess that Consuelo, after some moments of self-collectedness, recognised, in the animated statue before her eyes, the old Count Christian, who was mentally reciting his morning prayers in his oratory, and in the sigh of compunction