

who desired to be the object of an illimitable passion—I, who regretted that I had been but so feebly loved—I then have received from heaven such a love as this for a compensation.”

Then she began once more to consider at what moment Albert could have performed his horrible sacrifice, and she began to imagine that it must have been during the time when her terrible malady did not permit her to take the slightest notice of external events. Then again when she called to mind the delicate and tender attentions which Albert had lavished on her, she could not reconcile the two several phases of this man's character, who was at once so different from himself and from other men.

Absorbed in these painful musings, she received the flowers which Albert, knowing that she was very fond of them, was wont to gather for her as they walked along; but it was with a trembling hand and an abstracted mind that she received them. She did not even think to leave him so as to enter the chateau alone, and suffer it to appear that they had not been so together tête-à-tête. Whether it so happened that Albert thought of it no more than she, or that he was determined to carry on his deception with his family no longer, he did not remind her of it, so that at the entrance of the chateau, they found themselves face to face with the canoness. Consuelo, and probably Albert also, now for the first time saw the features of this woman, whose goodness of heart, for the most part, concealed her ugliness, despite her leanness and deformity, kindled by anger and disdain.

“It is, indeed, time that you should return home, Mademoiselle,” said she to La Porporina, in tones trembling and broken with agitation. “We were greatly alarmed concerning Count Albert. His father, who has not chosen to breakfast without him, was anxious to have a conversation with him this morning, which you have thought proper to forget. And as regards yourself, there is a slight young man in the drawing-room, who calls himself your brother, and who is waiting for you with more impatience than politeness.”

And with these singular words, poor Wenceslawa, alarmed at her own courage, turned her back abruptly, and ran to her room, where she wept and coughed for above an hour.

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## CHAPTER LVII.

“My aunt is in a strange mood,” said Albert to Consuelo, as they ascended the steps leading to the terrace. “I ask your pardon in her behalf, dear lady; be sure that this very day she will change both her manners and language toward you.”

“My brother!” cried Consuelo, astonished at the message which had been delivered to her, and not hearing what the Count had said.

“I did not know that you had a brother,” said Albert, who had paid more attention to his aunt's ill temper than to that event. “Undoubtedly it will be a pleasure to you to see him, dear Consuelo, and I am rejoiced—”

“Rejoice not, Monsieur Le Count,” said Consuelo, of whom a sad presentiment was rapidly taking possession. “Perhaps it is a great

calamity which is at this moment preparing for me, and I—” she stopped trembling and disturbed, for she had been on the point of asking his advice and protection, but she feared to connect herself with him too closely, and scarcely knowing whether to receive or to avoid one who introduced himself to her presence through the medium of a lie; she felt her limbs yielding under her, and turning very pale, clung to the balustrades on the last step of the terrace stair.

“Do you apprehend some painful intelligence from your family?” asked Albert, who was beginning to grow uneasy.

“I have no family,” replied Consuelo, compelling herself to proceed. She was on the point of saying “I have no brother,” but a vague apprehension prevented her from doing so. But as she crossed the dining-room, she heard the boot of the traveller creaking on the drawing-room carpet, as he walked to and fro impatiently. With an involuntary movement she drew nearer to the young count, and pressed his arm, entwining her own around it, as if to take refuge in his love from the sufferings whose approach she foresaw.

Albert, as he perceived the movement, felt all his mortal apprehensions awakening anew. “Do not go in without me,” he whispered “I divine some presentiments which never have deceived me, that this brother is your enemy and mine. I am chilled to the heart; I am terrified; as if I were about to be compelled to hate some one.”

Consuelo disengaged the arm which Albert held tightly clasped to his bosom. She trembled at the idea that he was about to conceive one of those singular notions, one of those implacable conclusions, of which the supposed death of Zdenko had given her so frightful an example. “Let us separate here,” she said, speaking in German, for what was said could be heard in the adjoining room. “I have nothing to fear at this time, but if in future any peril should threaten me, count upon me, Albert, I will apply to you.”

Albert yielded with visible reluctance. But, fearing to offend her delicacy, he did not dare to disobey her; still he could not resolve to leave the dining-room, and Consuelo, who understood his hesitation, closed the double doors of the drawing-room behind her, in order that he might neither hear or see what should pass therein.

Anzoleto, for it was he, as she had but too surely divined through his audacity, and too well recognised by the sound of his footsteps, had prepared himself to meet her impudently with a fraternal embrace on her entrance in the presence of witnesses. But when he saw her enter alone, pallid, indeed, but cold and stern, he lost all his courage, and cast himself stammering before her feet. He had no occasion to feign tenderness or joy, for he really felt the two sentiments on seeing her once again whom he had never ceased to love amid all his treasons. He burst into tears, and as she would not let him take her hands, he covered the skirts of her raiment with tears and kisses. Consuelo had not looked to find him thus. During four months she had thought of him continually as he had showed himself on the night of their rupture, bitter, ironical, despicable and hateful above all men. That very morning she had seen him pass by, with an insolent deportment and an air of recklessness which was all but impudent; and now he was on his knees, humbled, repentant, bathed in tears, as in the stormiest days of their passionate reconciliations. Handsomer than ever, for his simple travelling costume, which, though rude, became him well; his fine features had gained a more masculine character, from the exposure to the weather on his road.

Panting like the dove which is already in the falcon's grasp, she was compelled to seat herself, and bury her face in her hands, in order to shield herself from the fascination of his gaze. This movement, which Anzoletto took for one of shame, encouraged him; and the return of evil thoughts soon destroyed the favorable impression made by his first transports. Anzoletto, when he fled from Venice, and from the mortifications he had experienced as the punishment of his faults, had but one idea, that, namely, of seeking his fortunes. But at the same time he had never abandoned either the desire or the hope of recovering his beloved Consuelo. Talents so dazzling as hers could not, he thought, long continue hidden, and in no place did he neglect to inquire for her, by inducing the inn-keepers, the guides, and such chance-travellers as he met, to enter into conversation. At Vienna he had become acquainted with many persons of distinction of his own country, to whom he confessed the outrageous blunder of which he had been guilty, and his flight from Venice. They had all advised him to go yet farther from Venice, and to wait patiently until Count Zustiniani should have either forgotten or pardoned his escapade, and promising to interest themselves in his behalf, had given him letters of recommendation to Prague, Dresden, and Berlin. As he passed before the Giant's Castle, Anzoletto had not thought of questioning his guide; but after an hour's rapid travelling, having checked his pace a little in order to permit his horses to recover their breath, he had resumed the conversation, asking him various questions concerning the country and its inhabitants. The guide had naturally spoken to him of the lords of Rudolstadt, of their mode of life, of Albert's extravagances, and of his madness, which was no longer a secret to anybody, especially since the hatred which Doctor Wetzelius had so earnestly sworn against him. The guide, however, had not failed, in order fully to complete his scandalous chronicles of the province, to tell him how Count Albert had put the cope-stone on all his extravagances, by refusing to marry his noble cousin, the beautiful Baroness Amelia, of Rudolstadt, having entangled himself with an adventuress who was merely good-looking, but with whom the whole world fell in love as soon as they heard her sing, on account of the exceeding beauty of her voice.

These two circumstances were so wonderfully applicable to Consuelo, that our traveller lost not a moment before enquiring her name, and as soon as he heard that she was called La Porporina, he no longer doubted the truth. He immediately retraced his steps, and after having hastily stricken out the title and pretext under which he might hope to introduce himself into a castle so well guarded, he proceeded to extract some farther reports of bad repute from his guide. The gossip of this man had led him to receive it as a certain fact that Consuelo was the young count's mistress, awaiting the time when she should become his wife; for she had bewitched, as he said, the whole family; and instead of sending her off, as she deserved, they paid her more attention, and lavished more cares upon her than they had ever done with the Baroness Amelia. This narrative excited Anzoletto yet more, if possible, than his real attachment to Consuelo. He had constantly sighed for the restoration of the life which she had rendered so delicious to him. He had long been thoroughly aware that in losing her advice and her directions, he had lost, or at the least, compromised, for many a day to come, his musical reputation; and more than all, he was still forcibly attracted to her by a love at once selfish

deep, and invincible. But to all this was added the vain-glorious temptation of disputing the possession of Consuelo with a rich and noble lover; of tearing her from a brilliant marriage, and causing it to be said that this girl, who was so nobly provided for, had preferred following his adventures to becoming a countess, and a chatelaine. He amused himself, therefore, with making his guide repeat that the Porporina reigned as absolute sovereign at Riesenberg, and delighted himself with the puerile idea of leaving it for that man to tell thereafter to all the travellers whom he should guide, that a handsome youth, passing by accident, had ridden rough-shod into the inhospitable Castle of the Giants, and had but to COME, SEE AND CONQUER, in order, at the end of a few hours, or days, more or less, to carry off the pearl of songstresses from the very high, and very puissant lord, the Count of Rudolstadt.

At that idea he plunged his rowels into his horse's sides, and laughed until his guide believed that the madder of the two was not the Count Albert.

The canoness received him with distrust, but dared not actually eject him, on account of the hope she entertained that he might perhaps carry away with him his pretended sister. He learned of her that Consuelo was out walking, and was sulky at hearing it. Breakfast was served to him, and he questioned the servants; and one of them, who alone understood a few words of Italian, thought there could be no harm in telling him that he had seen the signora on the mountain with the young count. Anzoletto had feared that on their first meeting he should find Consuelo haughty and distant. He had said to himself that if as yet she were but the honorably betrothed of the eldest son of the family she would wear the proud bearing of one confident of her own position; but if she were already his mistress she would be less sure of her standing, and would tremble before an old friend who might have it in his power to disarrange all her plans. If innocent, her conquest would be the prouder feat: if she were already corrupted, it would be otherwise in that respect, but in neither case would there be any reason to despair.

Anzoletto was too shrewd not to discover the uneasiness and ill-humor with which the long excursion of Porporina and her nephew appeared to affect the Canoness, and, as he did not see Count Christian, it was an easy matter for him to disbelieve the guide, and to fancy that the family were indisposed and hostile to the union of the young Count with the adventuress, and that she would smile abashed in the presence of her first lover.

After awaiting her four weary hours, Anzoletto, who had the time for much consideration, and whose morals were not pure enough to augur well of such a circumstance, looked on it as certain that so long an interview between Consuelo and his rival, argued an intimacy without any limit. He was therefore the more daring, the more resolute in his determination to wait for her, without suffering himself to be repulsed; and after the first irresistible fit of tenderness, with which he was plunged by her first glance, he believed himself safe in daring all things so soon as he had seen that she was overcome, and that she sank conquered by the violence of her emotions upon the nearest chair. His tongue therefore speedily broke its bonds. He accused himself of all that had occurred, he humbled himself hypocritically, wept as much as he chose, related his remorse and his torments, painting both more romantically than the disgusting interludes

between them had allowed him really to feel them, and in conclusion implored her pardon, with all the eloquence of a Venetian and of a consummate actor.

Though at first she had been moved by the sound of his voice, and alarmed more by the sense of her own weakness, than at the strength of his seductions, Consuelo, who had no less than he reflected much during the last four months, soon recovered enough clearness of intellect to recognise in all these protestations, all this passionate eloquence, the same jargon to that she had heard fifty times during the latter days of their unhappy connection while at Venice. She was disgusted at hearing repeated the same old oaths, the same old prayers, as if nothing had occurred since those old quarrels at a day when she had so little understood the real odiousness of Anzoleto's conduct. Indignant alike at his audacity and at his pouring forth such elegant harangues, when nothing was in truth desirable but the silence of shame and the tears of repentance, she cut short all his fine declarations, by rising to her feet, and replying coldly: "Enough! enough! Anzoleto. I have long since pardoned you, and I have no longer an ill feeling toward you. Indignation has made way for pity, and forgetfulness of the wrongs you have done me has come with the forgetfulness of what I have suffered. I thank you for the good feeling which led you to interrupt your journey, in order to seek a reconciliation with me. Your pardon, as you see, had been granted beforehand; so now, fare you well, and do you proceed on your way."

"What, I! I leave you, I leave you again!" cried Anzoleto, now really alarmed. "No. Rather would I have you order me to kill myself outright. No: how can I resolve to live without you. I could not do it, Consuelo. I have endeavored, and I know that it is useless. Where you are not, to me there is nothing—all is void. My hateful ambition, my miserable vanity, to which I would in vain have sacrificed my love, are additions to my torture, and give me no longer even a momentary pleasure. Your image pursues me everywhere—the memory of our happiness so pure, so chaste, so delicious—and whither should I go to seek for another like unto you—is ever before my eyes, and all the fantasies with which I would surround myself now, cause me only the deepest disgust. Oh! Consuelo! call to mind our lonely Venetian nights, our boat, our stars, our interminable songs, your admirable lessons, our long thrilling kisses. Call to mind your little bed whereon I slept alone, while you were saying your rosary aloft on the terrace. Did not I love you then? Is it possible that a man who has ever respected you, even when you were asleep, and when shut up with you alone, should be held incapable of loving you? Say that I have been infamous in my conduct toward others, have I not been as an angel toward you? And God knows alone what it cost me. Oh! forget not all this! You, who declared that you loved me so well, you have forgotten all this! and I, who am an ungrateful wretch, a monster, a coward, I have been unable to forget, no not for a single instant; and I will not renounce my recollections, although you renounce them at once and without an effort. But you have never loved me, although you are an angel, and I have ever adored you, although I be a demon."

"It is possible," returned Consuelo, struck by the accent of truth with which he uttered these words, "that you do feel a sincere regret for that happiness which was tainted and destroyed by yourself alone. If so, it is a punishment which it is for you to accept humbly, and

which it is not for me to turn away from you. Happiness corrupted you, Anzoleto. It is necessary now, that punishment should purify you. Go, then, and remember me, if the bitterness of that remembrance be salutary to you. If not, forget me, as I forget you. I, who have no fault to expiate or to redress."

"Ah! you have a heart of steel," cried Anzoleto, surprised and offended by her incomprehensible calmness. "But do not imagine that you can thus drive me hence. It is possible that my arrival annoys, that my presence wearies you. I know well that you desire to sacrifice the memory of our love to rank and fortune. But it shall not be so. I have attached myself to you, and if I lose you, it shall not be without a struggle. I will recall the past to your memory, and I will do so in the presence of your new friends, if you desire it. I will repeat the oaths that you made by your dying mother's bedside, which you have renewed to me a hundred times upon her tomb, and in the churches, whither we used to go and kneel side by side among the crowds to listen to the fine music, and to speak in subdued whispers. I will recall to your mind, humbly kneeling upon my knees, things which you will not refuse to hear; and if you do refuse, we to us twain. I will proclaim, before your new lover, things of which he has no suspicions. For they know nothing of you, not even that you have been an actress. Well; I will tell it then, and we will see whether the noble Count Albert will recover reason enough to dispute you with an actor, a friend, an equal, a betrothed, a lover! Ah! drive me not to despair, Consuelo, or soon—"

"Threats! At length then I find, and I recognise you, Anzoleto," cried the girl, now thoroughly indignant. "Ah, I prefer you thus; I thank you for having raised the mask. Yes, thanks to heaven! henceforth, I have neither regret for you, nor pity. I see all the gall that is in your heart, all the baseness in your character, all the hatred in your love. Go, satiate your spite. Thus, you will render me a service; but unless you are as deeply used to calumny as you are to insult, you can say nothing of me, which can call up a blush to my cheek."

As she spoke thus, she turned to the door, opened it, and was on the point of leaving the room, when she found herself face to face with Count Christian. At the mere sight of that venerable old man, who advanced toward him, after kissing Consuelo's hand with an air of mingled majesty and affability, Anzoleto, who was in the act of springing forward to retain the girl, willing or unwilling, returned intimidated, and lost the boldness of his demeanor.

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## CHAPTER LVIII.

"DEAR SIGNORA," said the old count, "pardon me for not having given Monsieur, your brother, a better reception. I had given orders that I should not be interrupted this morning, because I was occupied with some unusual business; and I was not informed timely enough to receive a guest who must, both as regards myself and all my family, be welcome in this house. Be assured, Monsieur," he added turning toward Anzoleto, "that it is with the greatest pleasure I see so near a

relation of our well-beloved Porporina. I beg you, therefore, to remain with us so long as it shall be agreeable to you. I presume that after so long a separation you must have many things to say one to the other; must feel much joy at finding yourselves again together. I hope therefore, that you will allow no foolish scruples to prevent you from taking time to the enjoyment of a happiness, which I myself share with you."

Contrary to his wont, the old Count Christian was speaking at his ease with a stranger; for long since his shyness had evaporated whenever he was in the company of the gentle Consuelo; and on this day in particular, his countenance seemed to be illuminated by a ray of life more brilliant than usual, like the rays which the sun pours abroad over the country at the hour of his setting. Anzoleto was as it were stupefied before that peculiar majesty with which uprightiness and serenity of soul shed on the brow of a venerable old man. He knew well how to fear and cringe before nobles and lords, but he hated them all the while, and mocked them inwardly while he fawned upon them. He had found but too many objects for his scorn in the great world, among which he had lived so short a time. Never yet had he seen dignity so well maintained, and politeness so cordial, as that of the old Chatelaine of Riesenbergh. He was confused as he thanked him, and almost repented of having cheated him out of the almost fatherly reception which he had given him, by an act of imposture. He feared above all that Consuelo would expose him, and declare to the count that he was not her brother. He felt at the time that if she did so, he had it not in his power to play his part with effrontery, or even to aim at avenging himself upon her.

"I am penetrated by your goodness, Monsieur le Comte," said Consuelo, after a moment's reflection; "but my brother, who feels it as deeply as I do, cannot have the honor of partaking of it. Pressing business calls him to Prague, and he has but now bid me adieu."

"That is impossible," said the count. "You have seen one another but a moment."

"He lost several hours waiting for me," she replied, "and now his minutes are numbered. He well knows," she added, looking significantly at her pretended brother, "that he cannot stay here a minute longer."

The coldness with which she insisted on this, restored to Anzoleto all the hardihood of his character, and all the coolness of the part which he was playing. "Let whatever the devil will—I would say God will," (he corrected himself) "come of it, but I cannot leave my sister so speedily as she would have me, in her prudence and reason. I know no business which is worth a minute's happiness: and since Monseigneur permits me so generously, I gratefully accept his invitation. I will stay. My engagements at Prague will be fulfilled a little later in the day. That is all."

"This is talking like a vain boy," replied Consuelo, deeply annoyed. "These are matters of business in which honor should stand above all interests."

"It is talking like a brother," replied Anzoleto; "and you are always talking like a queen, my good little sister."

"It is talking like a good young man," added the old count, again offering his hand to Anzoleto. "I know no business that may not be deferred until the morrow. It is true that I have always been reproached for my indolence, but for my own part I have always found

worse consequences arise from rashness than from delay. For instance, my dear Porporina, for these two days, I might say these two weeks past, I have said a prayer to offer to you, and yet, I have put it off until now. I think that I have done well, and that the moment has arrived. Can you grant me to-day the hour's conversation which I was coming to ask of you, when I was informed of your brother's arrival? It seems to me that this fortunate circumstance has fallen out quite *apropos*, and perhaps he will not be out of place in the conference which I propose to you."

"I am always and at all hours at your lordship's commands," replied Consuelo. "As to my brother, he is a mere boy whom I do not, without special reason, associate in my personal affairs."

"I know that well," answered Anzoleto impudently: "but since Monseigneur thinks fit to authorize me, I have no need of any permission but his, to enter into this confidential interview."

"You will be so kind as to allow me to judge of what is fitting between me and yourself," replied Consuelo, haughtily. "Monsieur le Comte, I am ready to follow you into your apartment, and to listen to you with respect."

"You are very stern with this good young man, who looks so frank and good-humored," said the Count, smiling; and then turning to Anzoleto, he added, "Be not impatient, my son. Your turn will soon come. What I have to say to your sister can not be long concealed from you; and as you say, I trust that ere long she will permit me to take you into our confidence."

Anzoleto had the impertinence to reply to the frank gaiety of the old nobleman, by retaining his hand between both his own, as if he had wished to attach himself to him, and to surprise him of the secret from which Consuelo desired to exclude him.

He had not even the good taste to understand that he ought to leave the drawing-room, in order to spare the count the trouble of leaving it himself. But when he found himself once more alone, he stamped with rage, fearing that this young girl, who had now become entirely the mistress of herself, might disconcert all his plans, and cause him to be turned out of the house in spite of all his cleverness. He took it into his head, then, to glide out into the body of the house, and to go and listen at all the doors. He left the drawing-room with this intent, wandered for a few moments about the gardens, then ventured into the galleries, pretending, whenever he met any of the servants, to be admiring the fine architecture of the castle. But on three different occasions he observed a singularly grave person, dressed in black, pass by, whose attention he felt no particular inclination to call toward himself. This was Albert, who did not seem to remark him, but who at the same time never lost sight of him. Anzoleto, observing that he was taller than himself by a head, and noticing the remarkable beauty of his features, began to understand that in the madman of Riesenbergh he had a much more formidable rival than he had imagined. He determined, therefore, on returning to the drawing-room, where he tried his fine voice in that large area, running his fingers abruptly over the notes of the piano forte.

"My daughter," said Count Christian to Consuelo, after he had led her into his study and seated her in his great velvet arm-chair, fringed with velvet, while he sat on a folding chair by her side. "I have now to ask your pardon, and I scarcely know with what right I can do so, until you are aware of my intentions. May I flatter myself that my

grey hairs, my tender regard for you, and my friendship for the noble Porpora, your adopted father, may give you confidence enough in me, that you will consent unreservedly to open your heart to me?"

Affected, and at the same time a little alarmed by this preamble, Consuelo raised the old man's hand to her lips, and replied, earnestly:

"Yes, Monsieur le Comte, I respect and love you as if I had the honor to have had you for my father; and I can answer all your questions, so far as they concern myself, without fear or equivocation."

"I will ask no more of you, my dear daughter, and I thank you for the promise. Believe that I am as incapable of abusing it, as I believe you to be of breaking it."

"I believe you, Monsieur le Comte. Pray proceed."

"Well, my daughter," asked the old man, with an artless yet encouraging curiosity, "what is your name?"

"I have no name," replied Consuelo, without hesitation. "My mother had no other name than Rosmunda. At my birth I was called 'Mary of Consolation;' my father I never knew."

"But you know his name?"

"I do not, my lord. I never heard him even spoken of."

"Master Porpora adopted you, I think. Did he give you his name by a legal process?"

"No, my lord. Among artists, such things are not usual, nor are they deemed necessary. My generous master has no property, nor anything to leave to me. As to his name, it is a matter of no consequence to one in my social position, whether I bear it of justice or of right. If I justify it by the possession of any talents, I shall have acquired it fairly. If not, I shall have received an honor of which I am unworthy."

The count was silent for a few moments. Then, taking Consuelo's hand once again: "The noble frankness," he said, "with which you reply to me, gives me the highest opinion of you. Do not imagine that I have asked these details in order to undervalue you, either for your birth or your condition. I wished to perceive whether you had any reluctance to tell me the truth, and I perceive that you have none. I give you infinite credit for it, and I hold you nobler through your virtues than we are ourselves, we nobles, by virtue of our titles."

Consuelo smiled at the good taste with which the old patrician admired her making so ready a confession, and that without a blush. In that surprise there was visible to her a remnant of those prejudices which existed in the mind of Christian, the more tenaciously in proportion as he resisted them the more nobly; for it was evident that he was combating them, and that he desired to conquer them.

"Now," he resumed, "my dear child, I am about to put you a question yet more delicate than these, and I have cause to ask all your indulgence to my temerity."

"Fear nothing, monseigneur," said she. "I will answer everything and that with as little hesitation as the last."

"Well, my child, you are not married, are you?"

"No, monseigneur; not that I am aware."

"And—you are not a widow?—you have no children?"

"I am not a widow, and have no children," said Consuelo, now half inclined to laugh, not guessing at what the count was aiming.

"To be short then," he resumed, "you have not engaged yourself to any one—are you perfectly free?"

"Pardon me, monseigneur, I had engaged myself with the consent, and even by the commands of my dying mother, to a youth whom I had loved from my childhood, with whom I was brought up, and whose betrothed I was when I left Venice."

"Ah! you are engaged, then," said the count with a strange mixture of regret and satisfaction.

"No, monseigneur, I am perfectly free," replied Consuelo. "He whom I loved broke faith with me disgracefully, and I left him forever."

"You loved him, then?" asked the count, after a pause.

"I did. With my whole soul."

"And—perhaps you love him yet?"

"No, monseigneur, that is impossible."

"And should you have no pleasure in seeing him again?"

"The sight of him would be torture to me."

"And you never permitted—I mean to say he never dared—, but you will say that I am intrusive, and seek to know too much."

"I understand you, monseigneur; and since I am called upon to confess, and do not desire to obtain your esteem surreptitiously, I will put it in your power to judge, to a tittle, whether I deserve it or not. He dared many things—but nothing save what I permitted. We have often drank from the same cup, rested on the same bench. He has slept in my room while I have told my beads. He has watched over me when I have been sick. I did not keep myself fearfully. We were alone in the world, therefore we loved one another; we were to be married, therefore we respected one another. I had sworn to my mother to be what is called a prudent girl; and I have kept my word—if it be prudent for one to believe a man who is bound to deceive her, and to give confidence, affection, and esteem, to a man who deserves no one of these. It was when he wished to cease being my brother without becoming my husband, that I began to defend myself. It was when he began to be faithless to me that I rejoiced that I had defended myself. It was in the power of that man, utterly void as he is of honor, to boast to the contrary. But to a poor girl like me that matters little. So long as I sing truly, the world asks no more of me. So long as I can look without remorse to the crucifix, on which I swore to my mother that I would be chaste, I shall not trouble myself much what the world says of me. I have no family to blush for me; no brothers, no cousins to fight for me—"

"No brothers?—you have one."

Consuelo felt herself on the point of revealing the whole truth to the old count, under the seal of secrecy. But she feared that it would be cowardly in her to seek otherwise than from herself, protection against one who had menaced her so cowardly. She thought that she ought to have within herself firmness enough to defend and deliver herself from Anzoleto. And farther yet, the generosity of her nature forbade her to think even of having a man turned out of doors whom she had loved so religiously. How politely soever Count Christian might contrive to rid himself of Anzoleto, how infamous soever the conduct of Anzoleto might have been, she could not find it in her heart to subject him to so terrible a humiliation. She replied, therefore, to the old man's explanation by saying that she regarded her brother as a wrong-headed, hair-brained boy, whom she had never been used to treat except as a child.

"But he is not a bad character, is he?" asked the count.

"Perhaps he is a bad character" she replied. "I have as little to do with him as possible; our characters and manners are very different. Your lordship must have remarked that I was by no means anxious to keep him here."

"That shall be as you will, my child. I believe that your judgment is excellent; and now that you have confided everything to me, with a frankness so noble——"

"Pardon me, monseigneur," Consuelo interrupted him. "I have not told you *all* that relates to me; for you have not asked me all. I am ignorant of the motives for that interest which you have this day deigned to take in my existence: but I presume that some one has spoken to you more or less unfavorably of me, and that you are desirous of knowing whether my presence here is a dishonor to your house. Thus far you have questioned me only on very superficial points, and I should have thought myself very deficient in modesty had I presumed to enter into conversation with you on my own private affairs, without your permission; but since you seem to wish to be acquainted with everything concerning me, I ought to inform you of a circumstance which will, perhaps, lower me in your opinion. It is not only possible, as you have often imagined, that I may be induced to adopt the stage as a profession, although I have at present no such intention; but it is also true that I made my debut at Venice last year, under the name of Consuelo. I was surnamed the Zingarella, and all Venice is acquainted with my face and my voice."

"Hold!" cried the count, astonished at this new revelation, "You!—are you, then, that wonder, concerning whom there was such an ado at Venice last year, and who was mentioned in all the Italian papers, with such pompous eulogiums? The finest voice, the greatest genius, that has been displayed within the memory of man."

"On the stage of San Samuel, monseigneur, doubtless those praises were grossly exaggerated; but it is incontestable that I am that very same Consuelo, that I sang in several operas, and that I am an actress, or as people call me more politely, a cantatrice. You can judge now whether I deserve the continuance of your goodness."

"These are very extraordinary circumstances, and a very singular destiny!" said the count, enwrapped in deep reflections. "Have you ever mentioned this, here to—to any other than myself, my child?"

"I have told nearly all of it to your son, Monseigneur, although I have not gone into all the details which you have heard."

"Albert, then, is acquainted with your extraction, your first love, your profession?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"It is well, my dear signora. I cannot thank you enough for the admirable uprightness of your conduct in regard to us; and I promise you that you shall have no cause to repent of it. Now, Consuelo—(yes, I remember that is the name by which Albert has called you from the first, whenever he spoke Spanish with you)—permit me to collect myself a little, for I feel greatly moved, and we have yet many subjects on which I wish to talk with you, my dear, and you must pardon the trouble I am giving you, as I draw near to a decision on so grave a subject. Do me the favor to wait for me an instant here."

He went forth; and Consuelo following him with her eyes saw him, through the gilded doors adorned with panes of plate glass, pass into his oratory, and there kneel down and pray fervently.

Gradually become herself vehemently excited she became lost in

conjectures, as to what should be the result of a conversation so solemnly introduced. At first, she thought that while waiting for her, Anzoleto had already done, in his spiteful mood, what he had threatened to do; that he had talked with the chaplain, or with Hanz, and that in a manner in which he had spoken of her had raised serious scruples in the mind of her hosts. But Count Christian was one to whom it was impossible to feign; and up to this moment his demeanor and his words both implied an increase, not a falling off, of affection. Moreover, the frankness of her replies had struck him, as if they had been most unexpected disclosures, and the last, more especially, had overcome him like a clap of thunder. And now he was praying God to enlighten him, or to sustain him in the performance of some great resolution. Is he about, she asked herself, to require me to separate myself from my brother? Is he about to offer me money?—ah! Heaven preserve from that outrage. But no; he is too delicate, too kind, to dream of so humiliating me. What, then, could he have desired to say to me, in the first instance? what can he desire to say to me now? Doubtless my long walk with his son has alarmed him, and he is about to blame me. I have, perhaps, deserved, and I will accept the lecture, since I cannot reply sincerely to the questions which he may put to me, with regard to Albert. This has been a hard day; and if I pass many more such I shall no longer be able to dispute the palm of song with Anzoleto's jealous mistresses. I feel as though my breast were in flames and my throat parched.

Count Christian now returned to her. He was calm, and his pale face bore witness to a victory gained with the noblest intentions. "My daughter," he resumed, seating himself again beside Consuelo, and compelling her to retain the sumptuous arm-chair, which she would fain have resigned to him, and on which she sat enthroned, against her own will, with an expression of fear, "it is time that I should reply frankly to the frankness which you have given me. Consuelo, my son loves you."

Consuelo turned red and pale by turns. She endeavored to speak, but Christian interrupted her.

"I am not asking you a question," said he. "I should have no right to do so, nor you any to reply to me; for I know that you have in no wise encouraged Albert's hopes. He has himself told me all; and I believe him, because he has never lied—nor have I."

"Nor I," said Consuelo, raising her eyes to heaven, with the most candid expression of pride. "Count Albert should have told you, monseigneur——"

"That you rejected every idea of a union with him."

"It was my duty so to do. I knew the usages and ideas of the world, I knew that I was not made to be a wife for Count Albert, if for this reason only, that I hold myself inferior to no living being before God, and that I would not receive as grace or favor, that which I hold to be just before men."

"I know your just pride, Consuelo. I should think it exaggerated if Albert depended on himself alone; but believing, as you did, that I should not approve such a union, you were bound to reply as you did reply."

"Now, Monseigneur," said Consuelo, rising, "I understand all that is to follow. Spare me, I beseech you, the humiliation which I have been dreading. I will leave your house, as I would have left it long ago, had I not feared by doing so to compromise the reason or the life

of Count Albert; on which I have greater influence than I have ever desired to possess. Since you know that which I was not permitted to reveal to you, you can now watch over him, prevent the consequences of this separation, and resume that care for him which belongs to you, and not to me. If I have indiscreetly arrogated it to myself, it is a fault which God will pardon me; for he knows with what purity of sentiment I have conducted myself thus far."

"I know it," replied the Count; "and God has spoken to my conscience, even as Albert has spoken to my affections. Remain seated, therefore, Consuelo, and do not be in haste to condemn my intentions. It is not to order you to leave my house, that I asked you hither; but rather to implore you, with clasped hands, never again to leave it."

"Never again!" cried Consuelo, sinking back in her chair, overpowered alike by the pleasure she felt at the reparation made to her dignity by this generous offer, and the alarm which its meaning caused her. "What! Stay here all my life! Your lordship cannot appreciate what you have done me the honor to offer me."

"I have thought of it much, my daughter," replied the count, with a melancholy smile; "and I feel that I have no reason to repent of it. My son loves you desperately; you have all power over his spirit. It is you who restored him to me—you who sought him out in that mysterious place which he will not disclose to me, but to which, he has told me, no other than a mother or a saint would have dared to penetrate. It is you who risked your life to save him from the solitude and the frenzy in which he was wearing away his existence. It is, thanks to you, that he has ceased to give such terrible cause for uneasiness, by his long and unaccountable absences. It is you who has restored him to calmness, health, and reason by a single word; for it must not be dissembled that my unhappy child was mad, and it is certain that he is mad no longer. We passed the whole of last night conversing together, and he showed me that he possessed a wisdom superior to my own. I knew that you were about to go out together this morning. I had given him authority, therefore, to ask you that to which you would not listen. You were afraid of me, dear Consuelo; you thought that the old Rudolstadt, thickly swathed in his aristocratic prejudices, would be ashamed to owe you his son. Well, you were deceived. The old Rudolstadt had his pride and his prejudices, doubtless, perhaps, some of them he has yet—he will not paint himself as pure before you—but he abjures them, and under the impulse of an illimitable gratitude, he thanks you for having restored to him his last, his only child."

#### CHAPTER LIX.

CONSUELO was deeply affected by a demonstration which re-established her in her own opinion, and quieted her conscience. Up to that moment, she had often feared that she had given way imprudently to her generosity and her courage. Now she received their sanction and their reward. Her tears of joy were mingled with those of the old man, and they sat a long time side by side, both too much affected to resume the conversation.

Nevertheless, Consuelo did not yet understand the proposition which had been made to her; and the Count, fancying that he had explained himself sufficiently, looked on her silence and her tears as signs of her consent and gratitude. "I will go now," he said at length, "and bring my son to your feet, that he may join his blessings to mine on learning the full extent of his happiness."

"Hold, Monseigneur!" cried Consuelo, astonished at his precipitation. "I do not understand what you require of me. You approve of the affection which Count Albert has bestowed on me, and the devotedness which I have exhibited for him. You grant me all your confidence; you know that I will not betray it; but how can I engage to consecrate my whole life to a friendship of so delicate a nature? I see that you rely on time and on my reason to maintain the holy and moral disposition of your son, and to tranquilize the vivacity of his attachment to myself; but I know not whether I shall be able long to maintain that power; and, moreover, if such an intimacy with a man so enthusiastic were not in itself too dangerous, I am not at liberty to consecrate myself even to a task so glorious—I do not belong to myself."

"Heavens! what say you, Consuelo? Have you, then, misunderstood me? or did you deceive me when you told me that you were free—that you had no attachment of the heart, nor engagement, nor family?"

"But, Monseigneur," replied Consuelo, still more astonished, "I have a profession, a calling, a position. I belong to the art to which from my infancy I was consecrated."

"What do you say? Great God! Do you wish to return to the stage?"

"I do not say that. I told you the truth when I said that my wishes point not that way. I have not yet experienced aught but horrid sufferings during that stormy career. But I feel, nevertheless, that I should be rash were I to pledge myself to renounce it. It is my destiny, and perhaps it is not in the power of mortal to elude the future which he has traced out unto himself. Whether I return to the boards, or give lessons and concerts, I must be still a cantatrice. For what should I be good, if not for that? Where should I find independence? With what should I occupy my spirit, wearied with toil and thirsting for that species of excitement?"

"O, Consuelo! Consuelo!" cried Count Christian, with a painful cry, "all that you say to me is true. But I thought that you loved my son—and now I see that you love him not."

"And if I did love him with that degree of passion which is necessary to self-renunciation, what should you say then, Monseigneur?" cried Consuelo, impatiently. "Do you suppose it absolutely impossible that a woman should fall in love with Count Albert, that you ask me to stay with him always?"

"What! have I then explained myself so ill, or do you think me an idiot, my dear Consuelo? Have I not asked your heart and hand for my son? Have I not laid at your feet a legitimate and, certainly, an honorable alliance? If you love Albert you will find, doubtless, in the happiness of sharing his life, a recompense for the glory and the triumphs which you will forsake. But you love him not, since you cannot regard it but as impossible to sacrifice what you call the destiny of your life."

This explanation was certainly tardy, though the good Count Christian knew it not. It was not without a mixture of fear and