

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

mortal repugnance that the good old lord had sacrificed to the happiness of his son, all the ideas of his life, all his principles of caste, and when, after a long and painful struggle with Albert and himself, he had consummated the sacrifice, the actual ratification of an act so terrible could not be divulged from his heart, through his lips, without a second effort.

This Consuelo foresaw or divined; for at the moment when Christian appeared to give up all hopes of obtaining her consent to this marriage, there was certainly a strange expression of involuntary joy mingled with a sort of consternation legible in the features of the old lord.

In an instant Consuelo understood her situation, and a pride, perhaps a little too personal in its nature, made her shrink from the alliance that was proposed to her. "Do you wish me to become Count Albert's wife?" she said, still struck with wonder at so strange a proposal. "Will you consent that I shall bear your name? will you call me your daughter? will you present me to your relatives, to your friends? Ah! Monseigneur, how much you must love your son, and how much he ought to love you!"

"If you consider this generosity so great, Consuelo, it must be either because your heart can conceive none such, or because the object of it appears unworthy to you."

"Monseigneur," said Consuelo, having collected herself, and hiding her face in her hands, "I think I am dreaming. My pride arouses in my own despite, at the thought of the humiliation in which my whole life would be steeped were I to accept the sacrifice which your paternal love leads you to offer me."

"And who would dare to humiliate you, Consuelo, when the father and the son alike would shield you with theegis of marriage and of our family?"

"And the aunt, Monseigneur; would the aunt, who is the true mother of this family, endure to look on that without a blush?"

"She will come herself and add her prayers to ours, if you will promise to be persuaded by them. Do not ask more than the weakness of human nature can grant. A lover, a father, may endure the humiliation and the pain of a refusal; my sister would not dare encounter it. But with the certainty of success we will bring her into your arms, my daughter."

"Monseigneur," asked Consuelo, trembling, "did Count Albert tell you that I loved him?"

"No," replied the Count, struck with a sudden reminiscence; "Albert told me a hundred times that the obstacle would be in your own heart. He repeated it to me time after time; but I—I could not believe it. Your reserve, I supposed, was founded on your uprightness and your delicacy; but I believed that delivering you of your scruples I would obtain from you the confession which you had refused to him."

"And what said he to you of our walk to-day?"

"One word only. 'Try, father. It is the only way to know whether it is pride or dislike that bars against me the avenues of her heart.'"

"Alas! Monseigneur, what should you say were I to tell you that I know not myself?"

"I should think it was dislike, my dear Consuelo. Alas! my son! my unhappy son! How frightful a destiny is this. That he cannot

be loved by the only woman whom he can ever love. This last misfortune was alone wanting to us!"

"Oh! Monseigneur, how you must hate me—oh, my God! you cannot understand how my pride can still resist when you have immolated your own. The pride of a girl, such as I, must seem to you to lack foundation, and yet, believe me, there is at this moment as violent a strife in my breast as that which you have vanquished in your own."

"I understand it. Believe not, Signora, that I do not respect enough the modesty, the uprightness, and the disinterestedness of your nature, not to comprehend the pride which is founded on the possession of such treasures. But that which paternal love has sufficed to conquer—you see that I speak to you with perfect openness—I do think the love of a woman may conquer also. Well, then, supposing that the whole life of Albert, my own life and yours, should be a struggle against the prejudices of the world—supposing that we must suffer much and long, all three of us, and my sister with us, would there not be in our mutual tenderness, in the evidences of our consciences, and in the fruits of our devotion, enough to make us stronger than the whole world combined against us. A great love makes all those evils appear light, which seem to you too heavy for yourself and for all of us. But this great love you seek for, timid and overcome, in the depths of your own soul, and you find it not, Consuelo, for it is not there."

"In truth, then, you are right," said Consuelo, pressing her hands strongly against her heart, "the question lies in that, entirely in that: all the rest is as nothing. I, also, I have had my prejudices: your conduct has proved to me that it is my duty to tread them under foot—to be as great, as heroic as you are. Let us say no more of my repugnances, of my false shame. Let us speak no more even of my future prospects, of my art," she added, with a deep sigh. "Even that I could abjure; if—if I love Albert, for it is that which I must learn. Listen to me, Monseigneur. I have asked myself that very question more than a hundred times; but never with that confidence which the knowledge of your decision gives me. How should I have been able to question myself seriously on that point, while to ask that question was in itself as I then regarded it, either a madness or a crime. Now I believe that I can know myself, and determine. I ask of you a few days to collect myself, and to know if the immense devotion which I feel for him, the unlimited respect and esteem with which his great qualities fill me, the powerful sympathy which he commands, that vast dominion which he exerts over me by his slightest word, arise from love, or from admiration only. For I feel all this, Monseigneur, and all this is combated within me by an inexplicable terror; by a deep melancholy; and I will confess it to you, O my noble friend, by the memory of a love less enthusiastical, but sweeter and more tender, and which resembles this in nothing."

"Strange and noble girl," replied Christian, tenderly, "what wisdom, and yet what wild fantasies, are mingled in your words. In many respects you resemble my poor Albert, and again, the vague agitation and uncertainty of your sentiments remind me of my wife, my noble, my lovely, my melancholy Wanda. O, Consuelo, you awaken in me recollections very tender, yet very bitter. I was about to say to you, Conquer this irresolution, overcome these prejudices: love, from virtue only from greatness of soul, from compassion,

from the exertion of a pious and ardent clarity, this unhappy man, who adores you and who, ever if he render you unhappy, will owe you his salvation, and will make you worthy of a celestial recompense. You have recalled to my mind his mother—his mother, who gave herself to me as a duty and an act of friendship. She could not feel for me, a plain, good-humored, shy man, that enthusiasm which burned in her imagination. She was, however, faithful and generous to the end; and yet how she suffered. Alas! her affection was my joy, and at the same time my torture; her constancy my pride and my remorse. She died in her undertaking, and my heart was broken for ever. And now if I am living without an object, obliterated, dead before my time, be not astonished at it, Consuelo; I have suffered what no one has ever understood, what no one has ever heard, and which I tremble in confessing to you. Oh! rather than induce you to make such a sacrifice, or urge Albert to accept it, may my eyes be closed in grief, and may my son fall a victim to the destiny which it would seem awaits him. I know too well the consequence of endeavoring to force nature, and of combating the irresistible propensities of living souls. Take time, then, to reflect, my daughter," added the old count, pressing Consuelo to his breast, swollen with sobs, and kissing her noble brow with all a father's love. "Thus all will be for the best. If you must refuse, Albert, prepared by previous anxiety, will not be thunderstruck by the shock, as he would have been to-day by the horrible information."

With this their interview was ended, and Consuelo, gliding timidly through the galleries, in constant apprehension of meeting Anzoleto, took refuge in her own chamber, wearied and exhausted with excitement.

First she endeavored to bring herself down to the requisite state of composure by trying to get a little sleep. She felt thoroughly broken, and scarcely had she thrown herself upon her bed than she fell into a state of somnolence which was painful rather than restorative. She was desirous of falling asleep with the thought of Albert on her mind, in order to assimilate it to herself during those mysterious manifestations of sleep, in which we sometimes believe that we find the prophetic meaning of things which pre-occupy our minds. But the interrupted dreams which flitted through her mind for several hours, incessantly, brought back to her eyes Anzoleto in lieu of Albert. It was ever Venice—ever the Corte Minelli. It was ever her first love, calm, full of promise, and poetical. And each time that she awoke the recollection of Albert must needs return to her, accompanied by sinister thoughts of the cavern, wherein sounds of the violin, repeated tenfold by the echoes of the solitude, seemed to evoke the dead, or to mourn over the scarce closed tomb of Zdenko. At that idea fear and sorrow closed her heart against any impression of tenderness. The future which was proposed to her, came to her fancy only through the medium of cold darkness and bloody visions, while the past, radiant and fertile of happiness, gave her bosom to expand, and filled her heart with joyous palpitations. She thought, as she dreamed of that past, that she heard her own voice echoing through boundless space, filling the void of nature, and widening in vast circles as it soared upward to the universe; while on the other hand, so often as the fantastical sounds of the cavern-violin returned to her mind, her voice became hollow and dismal, and lost itself like the death-rattle in the abyss of the earth.

Those vague dreame wearied her to such a degree that she arose in order to banish them; and the first tones of the bell informing her that dinner would be served within half an hour, she began to dress herself, still continuing to involve herself in all the same ideas. But strange as it may seem, for the first time in her life, she was more attentive to her mirror, and more occupied with her hair and its adjustment, than with the serious affairs of which she was seeking a solution. In spite of herself she made herself as handsome as she could, and desired to be so. And it was not to awaken the desires and arouse the jealousy of two rival lovers, that she felt that irresistible impulse of coquetry; she thought not, she could not think save of one only. Albert had never said a word to her of her face. In the enthusiasm of his passion he thought her more beautiful than she really was; but so elevated were his ideas, that he would have deemed it a profanation to look at her person with the eyes of a lover, or scrutinize her with the satisfaction of an artist. She was always enveloped in a cloud which his eyes could not penetrate, and which his fancy converted into a dazzling glory. Whether she looked better or worse, to him she was ever the same. He had seen her pale, emaciated, faded, struggling in the embrace of death, and resembling a spectre rather than a woman. He had then sought in her features, with attention and anxiety, the symptoms of her malady for the better or for the worse; but it never had occurred to him to think in that moment whether she was ugly or not, nor whether she could ever become an object of repugnance and disgust. And when she had recovered all the brilliancy of her youth, and the expression of life, he saw not whether she had lost or gained beauty. She was to him, whether in life or in death, the ideal of all youth, of all sublime expression, of all unmatched and incomparable beauty. Thus Consuelo had never once thought of him while she was dressing herself before her mirror.

But what a difference on the part of Anzoleto; with what minute attention he had gazed at her, judged and dissected her in his imagination, on the day when he had asked himself whether she was not ugly? Now, he had taken note of the smallest graces of her person, now admired the least pains she had taken to please him! How he knew her hair, her arms, her foot, her carriage, every tint that was blended in her beautiful complexion, every fold of her wavy garments! With what ardent vivacity he had praised her loveliness; with what voluptuous languishment he had perused her! At that time, the chaste girl understood not the beatings of her own heart. She wished not to understand them now; and yet she felt them grow more violent at the idea of reappearing before his eyes. She grew angry with herself; she blushed for very shame and vexation; she endeavored to beautify herself for Albert alone; and yet unconsciously she chose the head-dress, the riband, and even the expression of the eye which pleased Anzoleto. "Alas! alas!" she said to herself, as she tore herself away from the mirror, when her toilet was completed! "it is then true that I can think but of him alone, and that happiness overpassed exercises over me a power more puissant than that effected by present contempt, and the promise of a future love. I may look to the future as I will, witho it him it can be nothing but terror and despair. And what would it be with him? Do I not know that the happy days of Venice cannot return again; that innocence can never dwell with us again, that the soul of Anzoleto is so brutalized and cor-

rupted, that his caresses would debase me, and that my life would hourly be poisoned by shame, jealousy, terror and regret?"

While she questioned herself on this head with the strictest severity, Consuelo was assured that she was not deceiving herself, and that she had not the most secret emotion of desire for Anzoleto. She loved him not at the present—she feared and almost detested him in a futurity, wherein his perversity must needs increase constantly; but in the past, she loved him so passionately that her life and soul seemed inextricably bound up in the memory of him. He was henceforth to her as the portrait of a being whom she had once adored, reminding her of days of delights; and, like a newly married widow, who conceals herself from her new husband in order to gaze on the portrait of the old, she felt that the dead love had more vitality than the living within her heart.

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#### CHAPTER LX.

CONSUELO had too much judgment and too much elevation of spirit not to know that of the two loves which she inspired, that of Count Albert was, without a possibility of comparison, the truer, the nobler, and the more precious. So that when she found herself in the presence of the two, she believed she had triumphed over her enemy. The deep gaze of Albert, which seemed to sink to the very bottom of her soul, the slow and firm pressure of his loyal hand, made her aware that he was acquainted with the circumstance of her conference with Christian, and that he awaited her final decision submissively and gratefully. In truth, Albert had obtained more than he had expected; and the very uncertainty which he now felt was pleasurable to him as compared with that which he had apprehended; so far was he removed from the overbearing and insolent presumption of Anzoleto. He, on the contrary, had armed himself with all his resolution.

Having divined with considerable accuracy what was going on around him, he had determined to fight it foot by foot, and not to leave the house until he should be thrust out by the shoulders. His free and easy attitude, his ironical and impudent glance, disgusted Consuelo to the last degree; and when he came up to her with his usual effrontery, and offered his hand, she turned away and took that which Albert presented to conduct her to dinner. As was the usual habit, the young count took his place at table opposite to Consuelo, and the old Christian made her seat herself at his left, in the chair formerly occupied by the Baroness Amelia, which she had used since her departure. But in the place of the chaplain, who ordinarily sat there, the canonesse insisted upon the pretended brother to place himself between them; so that all Anzoleto's bitter sarcasms uttered in the lowest whisper could reach the ears of the young girl, while his irreverent sallies could offend as much as he desired, the aged priest, on whom he had already tried his hand.

Anzoleto's plan was very simple. He was anxious to render himself odious and insupportable to those members of the family whom he suspected of being averse to the projected marriage, in order to give them, by his own vulgarity, his familiar air, and his misapplica-

tion of words, the worst idea of the companions and family of Consuelo. "We shall see," thought he to himself, "how they will get down the brother, whom I am about to serve up to them."

Anzoleto, who was a very unfinished singer, and but a moderate tragedian, had an intuitive talent as a good comedian. He had already seen enough of the world to know how to imitate the elegant manners and the agreeable language of good society; but to play that part would have been only to reconcile the canonesse to the low extraction of her son-in-law, and he therefore undertook the opposite line, and with the more success in that it was more natural to him. Being well satisfied that, although Wenceslawa persisted in speaking no language but German, the Court tongue, and that used in grave business, she did not miss a word which he spoke in Italian; he set himself to chatting, right or wrong, to singing the praises of the good Hungarian wine, the effects of which he did not fear in the least, accustomed as he was of old to far more heady beverages, but of which he soon pretended to feel the hearty influences, in order to give himself a more inveterate character as a drunkard.

His project succeeded to a marvel. Count Christian, after having at first laughed indulgently at his sallies and his buffoonery, soon ceased to smile but with an effort, and required all the urbanity of his position as a lord in his own house, and all his affection as a father, to prevent his setting the odious brother-in-law, that was to be, of his noble son, in his proper place. The chaplain, perfectly indignant, could not sit easy on his chair, and murmured German exclamations which sounded like exorcisms. His meal was dreadfully disturbed, and never in his life was his digestion more uneasy. The canonesse listened to all the impertinences of her guest with a constrained contempt and a malignant satisfaction. At each new misdemeanor she raised her eyes to her brother as if to call him to witness; and the good Christian bowed his head, pretending to be absent, in order to distract the observation of the auditors. Then the canonesse would look toward Albert; but Albert was impassive. He seemed neither to hear nor see their unpleasant and jovial guest.

But the most cruelly annoyed of all the persons present was unquestionably poor Consuelo. At first she believed that Anzoleto, in his long career of debauchery, had contracted those dissipated manners and that impudent turn of mind which almost hindered her recognition of him. She was indeed disgusted and astounded to such a degree as to be on the point of leaving the table. But when she perceived that it was a *ruse de guerre*, she recovered the composure which became her innocence and her dignity. She had not mingled herself with the secrets and afflictions of that family, to win by intrigue the station that was offered to her. That rank had not flattered her ambition even for an instant, and she felt strong in her uprightness of conscience, to defy the secret suspicions of the canonesse. She saw at a glance that the love of Albert and the confidence of his father were superior to such a wretched trial; and the contempt which she felt for Anzoleto, cowardly and malicious in his vengeance, rendered her stronger yet. Her eyes once met those of Albert, and they understood each other. Those of Consuelo asked the question, "Yes?" and those of Albert replied, "In spite of all."

"It is not done yet," said Anzoleto, in a low voice to Consuelo, for he had seen and interpreted the glance.

"You are assisting me much," replied Consuelo, "and I thank you for it."

They were both speaking between their lips in that rapid Venetian dialect which seems to be composed almost entirely of vowels, and in which there are so many ellipses that even Italians of Rome or Florence have themselves some trouble in understanding it at a first hearing.

"I can easily imagine that you detest me at this moment," said Anzoletto; "and that you think it certain that you shall hate me forever. But you shall never escape me for all that."

"You have unmasked too soon," said Consuelo.

"But not too late," replied Anzoletto. "Come, *Padre mis Beneditto*," he continued, addressing himself to the chaplain, and nudging his elbow in such a sort as to make him spill half the glass of wine which he was raising to his lips over his hand. "Drink more courageously of this good wine, which does as much good both to soul and body as that of the holy mass. Seigneur Count," he continued, presenting his glass to the aged Christian, "you have in reserve by your side, a flask of yellow crystal, which shines like the sun. I am sure that if I were to swallow only one drop of the nectar it contains I should be changed into a demigod."

"Beware, my good youth," said the count laying his hand, covered with rings, on the cut neck of the flask. "Old men's wine sometimes shuts young men's mouths."

"You have a rage for being as pretty as a goblin," said Anzoletto in good clear Italian to Consuelo, so that every one at table could hear him. "You put me in mind of the *Diavolessa* of Galuppi, which you acted so well at Venice last year. Ah ha! Seigneur Count, do you expect to keep my sister long here in your golden cage, lined with silk. She is a song-bird, I can tell you, and the bird which is robbed of its voice soon loses its pretty feathers also. She is very happy here, I can well understand. But that good public, whom she turned giddy with admiration last season, is asking for her again, and that aloud, down yonder; and, as for me, if you would give me your name, your castle, all the wine in your cellar, and your venerable chaplain to boot, I would not renounce my quinquetoes, my buskins, and my flourishes."

"You are a comedian, then, too, are you?" asked the canoness, with dry, cold disdain.

"A comedian! a *mountebank*, at your service, *illustrissima*," replied Anzoletto, without being in the least disconcerted.

"Has he talent?" enquired the old Christian of Consuelo, with a tranquillity full of kindness and benevolence.

"None whatever," replied Consuelo, looking on her adversary with pity.

"If it be so, you accuse yourself," said Anzoletto, "for I am your pupil. I hope, nevertheless, that I have enough," he added in Venetian "to upset your game."

"It is yourself only that you will harm," replied Consuelo, in the same dialect. "Evil intentions corrupt the heart, and yours will lose more by all this than you can make me lose in the opinion of others."

"I am glad to see that you accept my challenge. It is needless to lower your eyes beneath the shade of your vigor, for I can see rage and spite sparkle in your eyes."

"Alas! you can read nothing in them but deep disgust on your own account. I hoped I should have been able to forget that I ought to despise you, but you take pleasure in recalling it to my mind."

"Contempt and love oftentimes go together."

"In evil spirits."

"In the proudest spirits—so it has been, so it shall ever be."

The whole dinner passed thus. When they withdrew into the drawing-room, the canoness, who appeared determined to amuse herself with Anzoletto's impertinence, asked him to sing something. He did not wait to be asked twice, and after running his fingers vigorously over the keys of the old groaning piano, he set up one of those energetic songs with which he was in the habit of enlivening the Count Zustiniani's private suppers. The words were loose enough, but the canoness did not hear them, and was amused by the vigor and energy of the singer. Count Christian could not help admiring the fine voice and prodigious facility of the singer. He gave himself up with perfect artlessness to the pleasure of listening, and when the first air was ended asked him for a second. Albert, who sat next to Consuelo, seemed entirely deaf, and did not utter a word. Anzoletto fancied that he was spiteful, and felt himself outdone in something. He forgot that it had been his intention to dismay his hosts by his musical improprieties, and moreover said that, whether for their innocence or their ignorance of the dialect, it was lost time, he gave himself up to the pleasure of exciting admiration, and sang for the pleasure of singing, desiring at the same time to let Consuelo see the progress which he had made. He had in truth gained in that order of musical power which nature had assigned to him. His voice had perhaps already lost some of its youthful freshness. Orgies and dissipation had robbed it of its velvet softness; but he was more perfectly the master of its effects, and more skillful in overcoming the difficulties towards which his taste and instinct always led him. He sang well, and received many praises from Count Christian and the canoness, and also from the chaplain, who loved above all things fine *strokes*, and who thought Consuelo's by far too simple and too natural to be very scientific. "You said that he had no talent," said the Count to Consuelo. "You are either too severe, or too modest in your opinion of your pupil. He has much; and I recognise something of you in his singing."

The good Count Christian wished to efface by this little triumph of Anzoletto, some of the mortification which his style of conduct had caused his pretended sister. He laid much stress, therefore, on the merits of the singer; and the latter, who was by far too fond of praise not to be wearied of the low part he was playing, returned to the piano, after having observed that Count Albert was becoming more and more pensive. The canoness, who had a habit of falling asleep sometimes in the middle of long pieces of music, asked for another Venetian song, and this time Anzoletto made a better choice. He knew that popular airs were those which he sang the best. Consuelo herself had not the *piquante* accentuation of the dialect so naturally and so characteristically as he, himself the child of the languages, and *par excellence* a Swiss singer.

He imitated, therefore, with such a grace, and such a charm, at one time the rude and frank manner of the fishermen of Istria, and at another, the spiritual and careless recklessness of the Venetian gondoliers, that it was impossible not to listen to him, and look at him with interest. His fine face, full of play and penetration, took at one time the grave and proud expression, at another the rollicking and sportive air, of those or of these. The very bad taste of his dress which could be recognised as Venetian at a league's distance, added

if anything, to the illusion, and served his personal advantages instead of injuring them, as it would have done on any other occasion. Consuelo, who was at first cold as marble, was first forced to assume indifference and abstraction, for emotion gained on her more and more every moment. She seemed to see all Venice again in Anzoleto, and in that Venice all the Anzoleto of old days, with his gayety, his innocent love, and his boyish haughtiness. Her eyes were filled with tears, and the merry features which excited all the rest to laughter, pierced her heart with the deepest tenderness.

After the songs, the Count Christian asked for chants. "Oh! if you come to that," said Anzoleto, "I only know those which are sung at Venice, and they are all arranged for two voices, so that if my sister does not choose to sing with me, I shall be unable to gratify your lordships."

Consuelo was immediately implored to sing. She resisted for a long time, although she felt a strong inclination to do so. But at last, yielding to the entreaties of the old Christian, who had set himself to effect a reconciliation between the brother and sister by pretending himself to be reconciled, she took her seat beside Anzoleto, and began to sing, trembling as she did so, one of those long canticles arranged in two parts, divided into strophes of three verses each, which are heard in Venice, during periods of devotion, resounding all night long around the Madonnas at the crossings of the streets. Their rhythm is rather animated than sad, but in the monotony of their burthen, and in the poetry of their words, having the impress of a half pagan piety, there is a sweet melancholy which gains on the hearer by degrees, and in the end takes full possession of him.

Consuelo sang in a sweet and veiled voice, in imitation of the Venetian women, and Anzoleto with the slightly hoarse and guttural accent of the young men of that country. At the same time he reproduced on the piano forte a feeble, but continuous and limpid accompaniment, which reminded his companion of the murmur of the water against the marble steps, and the whisper of the wind among the vine branches. She thought herself in Venice, on a fine summer's night, alone at the foot of one of those chapels in the open air, sheltered by arbors of the vine, and illuminated by a wavering lamp reflected in the gently undulating waters of the canals. Oh! what a contrast between the ominous and agonizing sensations which she had experienced that very morning on listening to Albert's violin on the margin of another stream, dark, stagnant, silent, crowded with phantoms, and that vision of Venice, with its fine sky, with sweet melodies, with waves of azure, showing long wakes of light from the rapidly glancing flambeaux or the resplendent stars. This magnificent spectacle Anzoleto brought back to her mind, this spectacle in which to her were concentrated all the ideas of liberty and of life; while the cavern, the fierce and fantastic strains of old time Bohemia, the bones lighted by funereal torches, and reflected in waters filled, perchance, with the same lugubrious relics, and in the midst of all the pale and ardent face of the ascetic Albert, the thought of an unknown world, the apparition of a symbolical scene, and the painful sensation of a fascination which she could not explain, were all too much for the simple and peaceful soul of Consuelo. In order to enter into that region of abstract ideas, it required her to make as great an effort as her imagination was capable of, but by which her whole nature was disturbed and tortured by nervous sufferings and agonising present-

ments. Her organization was all of the South, southern, and denied itself to the austere initiation of a mystic love. Albert was to her the genius of the North, deep, puissant, sometimes sublime, but always sad as the wind of icy nights and the subterranean roar of wintry torrents. It was the dreaming and investigating soul which interrogates and symbolizes all things,—the nights of storm, the savage harmonies of the forests, and the half-effaced inscriptions of antique monuments. Anzoleto, on the contrary, was the life of the South, the matter enkindled and fertilised by the great sun, by the broad light, drawing its poetry only from the intensity of its own growth, and its pride from the wealth of its own organic principles. It was the life of sentiment, with its greed of enjoyment, the intellectual carelessness and improvidence of the artist, a sort of ignorance of, or indifference to, the idea of good or evil, the easily-won happiness, the scorn or the impotence of reflection; in a word, the enemy and the antagonist of the ideal.

Between these two men, each of whom was the example of a type precisely the opposite and antipathic of the other, Consuelo had as little life, as little aptitude for energy or action as a body severed from its soul. She loved the beautiful, she thirsted for the ideal; Albert offered her and taught her these. But Albert, checked in the development of his genius, by something diseased in his intellect, had given himself up too much to the life of pure intellect. He knew so little of necessity and of real life, that he had often lost the faculty of feeling even his own existence. He did not even imagine how the ominous ideas and objects to which he had familiarised himself could, under the influence of love and virtue, inspire other feelings to his promised bride than the enthusiasm of faith, the tenderness of bliss. He had not foreseen, nor understood, that he was drawing her down into an atmosphere in which she must die as a tropical plant, in the twilight of the polar circles. In a word, he comprehended not the sort of violence which she was forced to put upon herself in order to identify her nature with his own.

Anzoleto, on the contrary, wounding the soul, and revolting the intellect of Consuelo at all points, still carried in his expanded breast, wide open to the breath of the breezes of the genial South—all that vital air which *the Flower of Spain*, as he was wont to call her in past time, required to animate her. She found in him a whole life of sensuous contemplation, animal, ignorant, and delicious—a whole world of tranquillity, carelessness, physical movements, uprightness without effort, and piety without reflection; in one word, almost the life of a bird. But is there not something of the bird in the artist, and must there be also some slight infusion of that cup, which is common to all other beings, in man himself, in order that he may be complete, and may bring to the best advantage the treasures of his intelligence?

Consuelo sung in a voice still more and more tender and touching, giving herself up with vague instinctive feelings to the distinctions, which I have drawn for her, though of course, too much at length. Let me be pardoned for it. Had I not done so it would be impossible to conceive by what fatal fitfulness of sentiment this young girl, so chaste and so sincere, who hated the treacherous Anzoleto a quarter of an hour before, and with good reason, could forget herself to such a point as to listen to his voice, to feel the waving of his hair, and to inhale his very breath with a sensation of delight. The drawing-room was too large to be at any time very well lighted, as has been already mentioned, and the day was fast closing. The desk of the piano forte,

on which Anzoletto had spread open a large folio of music, concealed their heads from those who were sitting at a distance, and gradually their heads came nearer and nearer together. Anzoletto now played the accompaniment with one hand only, the other arm he had passed around the flexible waist of his formerly betrothed, and with it was drawing her closer to his own body. Six months of indignation and of grief had passed away like a dream from the mind of the young girl. She fancied herself at Venice; she prayed the Madonna to bless her love for the handsome lover whom her mother had given her, and who was praying beside her, hand to hand and heart to heart. Albert had left the room without her perceiving it, and the air became lighter, the twilight softer around her. Suddenly at the end of one of the strophes she felt the burning lips of her first lover pressed to her own. She stifled a cry with difficulty, and leaning over her piano forte, burst into tears.

At this moment Count Albert re-entered the room, heard her sobs, and saw the insulting joy of Anzoletto. The interruption of the song by the emotions of the young artiste did not so much surprise any of the other spectators of that rapid scene. No one had seen the kiss, and every one supposed that the recollections of her childhood, and her love of the art had moved her to tears.

Count Christian was indeed somewhat vexed at this sensibility, which was an evidence of so much attachment for, and of so many regrets connected with the very things the sacrifice of which he required. The canoness and the chaplain were delighted, trusting that the sacrifice could now never be accomplished. Albert had not as yet thought to ask himself whether the Countess Rudolstadt would become an artiste again, or must cease to be one. He would have accepted anything, permitted anything, nay, even demanded anything, provided that she could be happy and free, whether in retirement, in the world, or on the stage, at her own option. His want of prejudices and selfishness went so far even as to the overlooking of the simplest circumstances. It never, therefore, entered his mind that Consuelo would impose on herself any sacrifices on his account, who demanded none. But though he overlooked this obvious point, he yet saw farther, as he ever did. His eye pierced to the very heart of the tree, and his hand was laid on the worm that gnawed it. The true position of Anzoletto with regard to Consuelo, the real object which he was pursuing, and the actual sentiment which inspired him, were revealed to him in an instant. He gazed attentively at this man, to whom he had in every respect an antipathy, and on whom he had hitherto avoided to cast his eyes, because he would not hate Consuelo's brother. He now saw in him an audacious, desperate, and dangerous lover. The noble Albert thought not of himself; no suspicion, no jealousy entered his clear mind. The danger was all Consuelo's; for at a single glance of his deep and lustrous eye, that man whose feeble sight and delicate vision could not brook the sun, and could scarce distinguish forms and colors, read the very bottom of the souls, and penetrated, by the mysterious power of divination, into the most secret thoughts of villains and impostors. I will not attempt to explain by any natural means this strange gift which he certainly at times possessed. He was possessed of certain faculties—not yet explored to the bottom, or defined by science—utterly incomprehensible to all those around, as they are to the historian who now narrates them, and who, in relation to matters of that nature, is no

more enlightened after the lapse of a hundred years, than were the great intellects of his century. Albert, however, when he saw the vain and selfish spirit of his rival, said not to himself, "Lo! my enemy!" but he said, "Lo! the enemy of Consuelo!" and without suffering his discovery to become apparent, he promised himself that he would watch over her, and preserve her.

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 CHAPTER LXI.

So soon as Consuelo found a favorable moment she went out of the saloon, and passed into the garden. The sun had set, and the first stars sparkled white and serene in a sky still rosy in the west, already black to the eastward. The young artist sought to inspire tranquillity of mind and calmness from the pure cool air of that early autumn evening. Her bosom was oppressed with voluptuous languor, and yet she felt remorse for it and summoned to the aid of her will all the strength of her spirit. She might have said to herself, "*Can I not discover whether I love or hate?*" She trembled as if she had felt her courage forsaking her at this, the most dangerous crisis of her life; and for the first time she did not find within herself that distinctness of the first impulse, that holy confidence in her intentions which had always upheld her in the time of trial. She had left the drawing-room in order to escape the fascination which Anzoletto exercised over her, and she had felt at the same moment a vague wish that he should follow her. The leaves were beginning to fall, and when the hem of her vestment rustled against them, she fancied that she heard his steps behind her, and, ready to fly, not daring to return, she remained rooted to the place where she stood, as it were by magic.

Some one was indeed following her, but without daring or desiring to be discovered. It was Albert. A stranger to all those small dissimulations which are called social proprieties, and feeling elevated above all false shame by the greatness of his love, he had left the apartment a moment after her, resolved to protect her, without her own knowledge, and to prevent her intended seducer from rejoining her. Anzoletto had also observed his artless ardor, without being much alarmed by it. He had seen too clearly the agitation of Consuelo not to look upon his victory as certain; and, thanks to the audacious folly which many easy conquests had awakened in him, he determined no longer to carry it with a rough hand, no longer to provoke his intended victim, and no longer to surprise the family by his rudeness of demeanor. "It is no longer necessary to hurry myself so much," he said. "Anger may give her strength. An air of grief and dejection will make her forget the relics of her anger against me. Her spirit is proud, let us attack her senses. She is certainly less strict here than she was at Venice; she has become civilized in these regions. What matters it whether my rival be happy a day longer or no? To-morrow she shall be mine—perhaps this very night. We shall soon see. Let me now, however, drive her through fear into any desperate resolution. She has not betrayed me to them. Whether from pity or fear, she has not dexiled my part as brother; and