

cousins. This second marriage has brought him issue, a boy and a girl, and the fact that he has now four children to provide for has had much to do with his activity in affairs. He was among the first to see that an enormous fortune was to be made in the first rush for land in the city, and he realised all he possessed, and borrowed to the full extent of his credit to pay the first instalments on the land he bought, risking everything with the calm determination and cool judgment which lay at the root of his strong character. He was immensely successful, but though he had been bold to recklessness at the right moment, he saw the great crash looming in the near future, and when the many were frantic to buy and invest, no matter at what loss, his millions were in part safely deposited in national bonds, and in part as securely invested in solid and profitable buildings of which the rents are little liable to fluctuation. Brought up to know what money means, he is not easily carried away by enthusiastic reports. He knows that when the hour of fortune is at hand no price is too great to pay for ready capital, but he understands that when the great rush for success begins the psychological moment of finance is already passed. When he dies, if such strength as his can yield to death, he will die the richest man in Italy, and he will leave what is rare in Italian finance, a stainless name.

Of one person more I must speak, who has played a part in this family history. The melancholy Spicca still lives his lonely life in the midst of the social world. He affects to be a little old-fashioned in his dress. His tall thin body stoops ominously and his cadaverous face is more grave and ascetic than ever. He is said to have been suffering from a mortal disease these fifteen years, but still he goes everywhere, reads everything and knows every one. He is between sixty and seventy years old, but no one knows his precise age. The foils he once used so well hang untouched and rusty above his fireplace, but his reputation survives the lost strength of his

supple wrist, and there are few in Rome, brave men or hairbrained youths, who would willingly anger him even now. He is still the great duellist of his day; the emaciated fingers might still find their old grip upon a sword hilt, the long, listless arm might perhaps once more shoot out with lightning speed, the dull eye might once again light up at the clash of steel. Peaceable, charitable when none are at hand to see him give, gravely gentle now in manner, Count Spicca is thought dangerous still. But he is indeed very lonely in his old age, and if the truth be told his fortune seems to have suffered sadly of late years, so that he rarely leaves Rome, even in the hot summer, and it is very long since he spent six weeks in Paris or risked a handful of gold at Monte Carlo. Yet his life is not over, and he has still a part to play, for his own sake and for the sake of another, as shall soon appear more clearly.

CHAPTER II.

Orsino Saracinesca's education was almost completed. It had been of the modern kind, for his father had early recognised that it would be a disadvantage to the young man in after life if he did not follow the course of study and pass the examinations required of every Italian subject who wishes to hold office in his own country. Accordingly, though he had not been sent to public schools, Orsino had been regularly entered since his childhood for the public examinations and had passed them all in due order, with great difficulty and indifferent credit. After this preliminary work he had been at an English University for four terms, not with any view to his obtaining a degree after completing the necessary residence, but in order that he might perfect himself in the English language, associate with young men of his

own age and social standing, though of different nationality, and acquire that final polish which is so highly valued in the human furniture of society's temples.

Orsino was not more highly gifted as to intelligence than many young men of his age and class. Like many of them he spoke English admirably, French tolerably, and Italian with a somewhat Roman twang. He had learned a little German and was rapidly forgetting it again; Latin and Greek had been exhibited to him as dead languages, and he felt no more inclination to assist in their resurrection than is felt by most boys in our day. He had been taught geography in the practical, continental manner, by being obliged to draw maps from memory. He had been instructed in history, not by parallels, but as it were by tangents, a method productive of odd results, and he had advanced just far enough in the study of mathematics to be thoroughly confused by the terms "differentiation" and "integration." Besides these subjects, a multitude of moral and natural sciences had been made to pass in a sort of panorama before his intellectual vision, including physics, chemistry, logic, rhetoric, ethics and political economy, with a view to cultivating in him the spirit of the age. The Ministry of Public Instruction having decreed that the name of God shall be for ever eliminated from all modern books in use in Italian schools and universities, Orsino's religious instruction had been imparted at home and had at least the advantage of being homogeneous.

It must not be supposed that Orsino's father and mother were satisfied with this sort of education. But it was not easy to foresee what social and political changes might come about before the boy reached mature manhood. Neither Giovanni nor his wife were of the absolutely "intransigent" way of thinking. They saw no imperative reason to prevent their sons from joining at some future time in the public life of their country, though they themselves preferred not to associate with the party at present in power. Moreover Giovanni

Saracinesca saw that the abolition of primogeniture had put an end to hereditary idleness, and that although his sons would be rich enough to do nothing if they pleased, yet his grandchildren would probably have to choose between work and genteel poverty, if it pleased the fates to multiply the race. He could indeed leave one half of his wealth intact to Orsino, but the law required that the other half should be equally divided among all; and as the same thing would take place in the second generation, unless a reactionary revolution intervened, the property would before long be divided into very small moieties indeed. For Giovanni had no idea of imposing celibacy upon his younger sons, still less of exerting any influence he possessed to make them enter the Church. He was too broad in his views for that. They promised to turn out as good men in a struggle as the majority of those who would be opposed to them in life, and they should fight their own battles unhampered by parental authority or caste prejudice.

Many years earlier Giovanni had expressed his convictions in regard to the change of order then imminent. He had said that he would fight as long as there was anything to fight for, but that if the change came he would make the best of it. He was now keeping his word. He had fought as far as fighting had been possible and had sincerely wished that his warlike career might have offered more excitement and opportunity for personal distinction than had been afforded him in spending an afternoon on horseback, listening to the singing of bullets overhead. His amateur soldiering was over long ago, but he was strong, brave and intelligent, and if he had been convinced that a second and more radical revolution could accomplish any good result, he would have been capable of devoting himself to its cause with a single-heartedness not usual in these days. But he was not convinced. He therefore lived a quiet life, making the best of the present, improving his lands and doing his best to bring up his sons in such

a way as to give them a chance of success when the struggle should come. Orsino was his eldest born and the results of modern education became apparent in him first, as was inevitable.

Orsino was at this time not quite twenty-one years of age, but the important day was not far distant and in order to leave a lasting memorial of the attaining of his majority Prince Saracinesca had decreed that Corona should receive a portrait of her eldest son executed by the celebrated Anastase Gouache. To this end the young man spent three mornings in every week in the artist's palatial studio, a place about as different from the latter's first den in the Via San Basilio as the Basilica of Saint Peter is different from a roadside chapel in the Abruzzi. Those who have seen the successful painter of the nineteenth century in his glory will have less difficulty in imagining the scene of Gouache's labours than the writer finds in describing it. The workroom is a hall, the ceiling is a vault thirty feet high, the pavement is of polished marble; the light enters by north windows which would not look small in a good-sized church, the doors would admit a carriage and pair, the tapestries upon the walls would cover the front of a modern house. Everything is on a grand scale, of the best period, of the most genuine description. Three or four originals of great masters, of Titian, of Reubens, of Van Dyck, stand on huge easels in the most favourable lights. Some scores of matchless antique fragments, both of bronze and marble, are placed here and there upon superb carved tables and shelves of the sixteenth century. The only reproduction visible in the place is a very perfect cast of the Hermes of Olympia. The carpets are all of Shiraz, Sinna, Gjordez or old Baku—no common thing of Smyrna, no unclean aniline production of Russo-Asiatic commerce disturbs the universal harmony. In a full light upon the wall hangs a single silk carpet of wonderful tints, famous in the history of Eastern collections, and upon it is set at

a slanting angle a single priceless Damascus blade—a sword to possess which an Arab or a Circassian would commit countless crimes. Anastase Gouache is magnificent in all his tastes and in all his ways. His studio and his dwelling are his only estate, his only capital, his only wealth, and he does not take the trouble to conceal the fact. The very idea of a fixed income is as distasteful to him as the possibility of possessing it is distant and visionary. There is always money in abundance, money for Faustina's horses and carriages, money for Gouache's select dinners, money for the expensive fancies of both. The paint pot is the mine, the brush is the miner's pick, and the vein has never failed, nor the hand trembled in working it. A golden youth, a golden river flowing softly to the red gold sunset of the end—that is life as it seems to Anastase and Faustina.

On the morning which opens this chronicle, Anastase was standing before his canvas, palette and brushes in hand, considering the nature of the human face in general and of young Orsino's face in particular.

"I have known your father and mother for centuries," observed the painter with a fine disregard of human limitations. "Your father is the brown type of a dark man, and your mother is the olive type of a dark woman. They are no more alike than a Red Indian and an Arab, but you are like both. Are you brown or are you olive, my friend? That is the question. I would like to see you angry, or in love, or losing at play. Those things bring out the real complexion."

Orsino laughed and showed a remarkably solid set of teeth. But he did not find anything to say.

"I would like to know the truth about your complexion," said Anastase, meditatively.

"I have no particular reason for being angry," answered Orsino, "and I am not in love——"

"At your age! Is it possible!"

"Quite. But I will play cards with you if you like," concluded the young man.

"No," returned the other. "It would be of no use. You would win, and if you happened to win much, I should be in a diabolical scrape. But I wish you would fall in love. You should see how I would handle the green shadows under your eyes."

"It is rather short notice."

"The shorter the better. I used to think that the only real happiness in life lay in getting into trouble, and the only real interest in getting out."

"And have you changed your mind?"

"I? No. My mind has changed me. It is astonishing how a man may love his wife under favourable circumstances."

Anastase laid down his brushes and lit a cigarette. Reubens would have sipped a few drops of Rhenish from a Venetian glass. Teniers would have lit a clay pipe. Dürer would perhaps have swallowed a pint of Nürnberg beer, and Greuse or Mignard would have resorted to their snuff-boxes. We do not know what Michelangelo or Perugino did under the circumstances, but it is tolerably evident that the man of the nineteenth century cannot think without talking and cannot talk without cigarettes. Therefore Anastase began to smoke and Orsino, being young and imitative, followed his example.

"You have been an exceptionally fortunate man," remarked the latter, who was not old enough to be anything but cynical in his views of life.

"Do you think so? Yes—I have been fortunate. But I do not like to think that my happiness has been so very exceptional. The world is a good place, full of happy people. It must be—otherwise purgatory and hell would be useless institutions."

"You do not suppose all people to be good as well as happy then," said Orsino with a laugh.

"Good? What is goodness, my friend? One half of the theologians tell us that we shall be happy if we are good and the other half assure us that the only way to be good is to abjure earthly happiness. If you will be-

lieve me, you will never commit the supreme error of choosing between the two methods. Take the world as it is, and do not ask too many questions of the fates. If you are willing to be happy, happiness will come in its own shape."

Orsino's young face expressed rather contemptuous amusement. At twenty, happiness is a dull word, and satisfaction spells excitement.

"That is the way people talk," he said. "You have got everything by fighting for it, and you advise me to sit still till the fruit drops into my mouth."

"I was obliged to fight. Everything comes to you naturally—fortune, rank—everything, including marriage. Why should you lift a hand?"

"A man cannot possibly be happy who marries before he is thirty years old," answered Orsino with conviction. "How do you expect me to occupy myself during the next ten years?"

"That is true," Gouache replied, somewhat thoughtfully, as though the consideration had not struck him.

"If I were an artist, it would be different."

"Oh, very different. I agree with you." Anastase smiled good-humouredly.

"Because I should have talent—and a talent is an occupation in itself."

"I daresay you would have talent," Gouache answered, still laughing.

"No—I did not mean it in that way—I mean that when a man has a talent it makes him think of something besides himself."

"I fancy there is more truth in that remark than either you or I would at first think," said the painter in a meditative tone.

"Of course there is," returned the youthful philosopher, with more enthusiasm than he would have cared to show if he had been talking to a woman. "What is talent but a combination of the desire to do and the power to accomplish? As for genius, it is never selfish when it is at work."

"Is that reflection your own?"

"I think so," answered Orsino modestly. He was secretly pleased that a man of the artist's experience and reputation should be struck by his remark.

"I do not think I agree with you," said Gouache.

Orsino's expression changed a little. He was disappointed, but he said nothing.

"I think that a great genius is often ruthless. Do you remember how Beethoven congratulated a young composer after the first performance of his opera? 'I like your opera—I will write music to it.' That was a fine instance of unselfishness, was it not. I can see the young man's face——" Anastase smiled.

"Beethoven was not at work when he made the remark," observed Orsino, defending himself.

"Nor am I," said Gouache, taking up his brushes again. "If you will resume the pose—so—thoughtful but bold—imagine that you are already an ancestor contemplating posterity from the height of a nobler age—you understand. Try and look as if you were already framed and hanging in the Saracinesca gallery between a Titian and a Giorgione."

Orsino resumed his position and scowled at Anastase with a good will.

"Not quite such a terrible frown, perhaps," suggested the latter. "When you do that, you certainly look like the gentleman who murdered the Colonna in a street brawl—I forget how long ago. You have his portrait. But I fancy the Princess would prefer—yes—that is more natural. You have her eyes. How the world raved about her twenty years ago—and raves still, for that matter."

"She is the most beautiful woman in the world," said Orsino. There was something in the boy's unaffected admiration of his mother which contrasted pleasantly with his youthful affectation of cynicism and indifference. His handsome face lighted up a little, and the painter worked rapidly.

But the expression was not lasting. Orsino was at the age when most young men take the trouble to cultivate a manner, and the look of somewhat contemptuous gravity which he had lately acquired was already becoming habitual. Since all men in general have adopted the fashion of the mustache, youths who are still waiting for the full crop seem to have difficulty in managing their mouths. Some draw in their lips with that air of unnatural sternness observable in rough weather among passengers on board ship, just before they relinquish the struggle and retire from public life. Others contract their mouths to the shape of a heart, while there are yet others who lose control of the pendant lower lip and are content to look like idiots, while expecting the hairy growth which is to make them look like men. Orsino had chosen the least objectionable idiosyncrasy and had elected to be of a stern countenance. When he forgot himself he was singularly handsome, and Gouache lay in wait for his moments of forgetfulness.

"You are quite right," said the Frenchman. "From the classic point of view your mother was and is the most beautiful dark woman in the world. For myself—well in the first place, you are her son, and secondly I am an artist and not a critic. The painter's tongue is his brush and his words are colours."

"What were you going to say about my mother?" asked Orsino with some curiosity.

"Oh—nothing. Well, if you must hear it, the Princess represents my classical ideal, but not my personal ideal. I have admired some one else more."

"Donna Faustina?" enquired Orsino.

"Ah well, my friend—she is my wife, you see. That always makes a great difference in the degree of admiration——"

"Generally in the opposite direction," Orsino observed in a tone of elderly unbelief.

Gouache had just put his brush into his mouth and held it between his teeth as a poodle carries a stick,

while he used his thumb on the canvas. The modern painter paints with everything, not excepting his fingers. He glanced at his model and then at his work, and got his effect before he answered.

"You are very hard upon marriage," he said quietly. "Have you tried it?"

"Not yet. I will wait as long as possible, before I do. It is not every one who has your luck."

"There was something more than luck in my marriage. We loved each other, it is true, but there were difficulties—you have no idea what difficulties there were. But Faustina was brave and I caught a little courage from her. Do you know that when the Serristori barracks were blown up she ran out alone to find me merely because she thought I might have been killed? I found her in the ruins, praying for me. It was sublime."

"I have heard that. She was very brave——"

"And I a poor Zouave—and a poorer painter. Are there such women nowadays? Bah! I have not known them. We used to meet at churches and exchange two words while her maid was gone to get her a chair. Oh, the good old time! And then the separations—the taking of Rome, when the old Princess carried all the family off to England and stayed there while we were fighting for poor France—and the coming back and the months of waiting, and the notes dropped from her window at midnight and the great quarrel with her family when we took advantage of the new law. And then the marriage itself—what a scandal in Rome! But for the Princess, your mother, I do not know what we should have done. She brought Faustina to the church and drove us to the station in her own carriage—in the face of society. They say that Ascanio Bellegra hung about the door of the church while we were being married, but he had not the courage to come in, for fear of his mother. We went to Naples and lived on salad and love—and we had very little else for a year or

two. I was not much known, then, except in Rome, and Roman society refused to have its portrait painted by the adventurer who had run away with a daughter of Casa Montevarchi. Perhaps, if we had been rich, we should have hated each other by this time. But we had to live for each other in those days, for every one was against us. I painted, and she kept house—that English blood is always practical in a desert. And it was a desert. The cooking—it would have made a billiard ball's hair stand on end with astonishment. She made the salad, and then evolved the roast from the inner consciousness. I painted a chafedroid on an old plate. It was well done—the transparent quality of the jelly and the delicate ortolans imprisoned within, imploring dissection. Well, must I tell you? We threw it away. It was martyrdom. Saint Anthony's position was enviable compared with ours. Beside us that good man would have seemed but a humbug. Yet we lived through it all. I repeat it. We lived, and we were happy. It is amazing, how a man may love his wife."

Anastase had told his story with many pauses, working hard while he spoke, for though he was quite in earnest in all he said, his chief object was to distract the young man's attention, so as to bring out his natural expression. Having exhausted one of the colours he needed, he drew back and contemplated his work. Orsino seemed lost in thought.

"What are you thinking about?" asked the painter.

"Do you think I am too old to become an artist?" enquired the young man.

"You? Who knows? But the times are too old. It is the same thing."

"I do not understand."

"You are in love with the life—not with the profession. But the life is not the same now, nor the art either. Bah! In a few years I shall be out of fashion. I know it. Then we will go back to first principles. A garret to live in, bread and salad for dinner. Of course

—what do you expect? That need not prevent us from living in a palace as long as we can.”

Thereupon Anastase Gouache hummed a very lively little song as he squeezed a few colours from the tubes. Orsino's face betrayed his discontentment.

“I was not in earnest,” he said. “At least, not as to becoming an artist. I only asked the question to be sure that you would answer it just as everybody answers all questions of the kind—by discouraging my wish do anything for myself.”

“Why should you do anything? You are so rich!”

“What everybody says! Do you know what we rich men, or we men who are to be rich, are expected to be? Farmers. It is not gay.”

“It would be my dream—pastoral, you know—Normandy cows, a river with reeds, perpetual Angelus, bread and milk for supper. I adore milk. A nymph here and there—at your age, it is permitted. My dear friend, why not be a farmer?”

Orsino laughed a little, in spite of himself.

“I suppose that is an artist's idea of farming.”

“As near the truth as a farmer's idea of art, I dare say,” retorted Gouache.

“We see you paint, but you never see us at work. That is the difference—but that is not the question. Whatever I propose, I get the same answer. I imagine you will permit me to dislike farming as a profession.”

“For the sake of argument, only,” said Gouache gravely.

“Good. For the sake of argument. We will suppose that I am myself in all respects what I am, excepting that I am never to have any land, and only enough money to buy cigarettes. I say, ‘Let me take a profession. Let me be a soldier.’ Every one rises up and protests against the idea of a Saracinesca serving in the Italian army. Why? ‘Remember that your father was a volunteer officer under Pope Pius Ninth.’ It is comic. He spent an afternoon on the Pincio for his

convictions, and then retired into private life. ‘Let me serve in a foreign army—France, Austria, Russia, I do not care.’ They are more horrified than ever. ‘You have not a spark of patriotism! To serve a foreign power! How dreadful! And as for the Russians, they are all heretics.’ Perhaps they are. I will try diplomacy. ‘What? Sacrifice your convictions? Become the blind instrument of a scheming, dishonest ministry? It is unworthy of a Saracinesca!’ I will think no more about it. Let me be a lawyer and enter public life. ‘A lawyer indeed! Will you wrangle in public with notaries’ sons, defend murderers and burglars, and take fees like the old men who write letters for the peasants under a green umbrella in the street? It would be almost better to turn musician and give concerts.’ ‘The Church, perhaps?’ I suggest. ‘The Church? Are you not the heir, and will you not be the head of the family some day? You must be mad.’ ‘Then give me a sum of money and let me try my luck with my cousin San Giacinto.’ ‘Business? If you make money it is a degradation, and with these new laws you cannot afford to lose it. Besides, you will have enough of business when you have to manage your estates.’ So all my questions are answered, and I am condemned at twenty to be a farmer for my natural life. I say so. ‘A farmer, forsooth! Have you not the world before you? Have you not received the most liberal education? Are you not rich? How can you take such a narrow view! Come out to the Villa and look at those young thoroughbreds, and afterwards we will drop in at the club before dinner. Then there is that reception at the old Principessa Befana's to-night, and the Duchessa della Seccatura is also at home.’ That is my life, Monsieur Gouache. There you have the question, the answer and the result. Admit that it is not gay.”

“It is very serious, on the contrary,” answered Gouache who had listened to the detached Jeremiad with more curiosity and interest than he often shewed.

"I see nothing for it, but for you to fall in love without losing a single moment."

Orsino laughed a little harshly.

"I am in the humour, I assure you," he answered.

"Well, then—what are you waiting for?" enquired Gouache, looking at him.

"What for? For an object for my affections, of course. That is rather necessary under the circumstances."

"You may not wait long, if you will consent to stay here another quarter of an hour," said Anastase with a laugh. "A lady is coming, whose portrait I am painting—an interesting woman—tolerably beautiful—rather mysterious—here she is, you can have a good look at her, before you make up your mind."

Anastase took the half-finished portrait of Orsino from the easel and put another in its place, considerably further advanced in execution. Orsino lit a cigarette in order to quicken his judgment, and looked at the canvas.

The picture was decidedly striking and one felt at once that it must be a good likeness. Gouache was evidently proud of it. It represented a woman, who was certainly not yet thirty years of age, in full dress, seated in a high, carved chair against a warm, dark background. A mantle of some sort of heavy, claret-coloured brocade, lined with fur, was draped across one of the beautiful shoulders, leaving the other bare, the scant dress of the period scarcely breaking the graceful lines from the throat to the soft white hand, of which the pointed fingers hung carelessly over the carved extremity of the arm of the chair. The lady's hair was auburn, her eyes distinctly yellow. The face was an unusual one and not without attraction, very pale, with a full red mouth too wide for perfect beauty, but well modelled—almost too well, Gouache thought. The nose was of no distinct type, and was the least significant feature in the face, but the forehead was broad and massive, the chin soft, prominent and round, the brows much arched and divided by

a vertical shadow which, in the original, might be the first indication of a tiny wrinkle. Orsino fancied that one eye or the other wandered a very little, but he could not tell which—the slight defect made the glance disquieting and yet attractive. Altogether it was one of those faces which to one man say too little, and to another too much.

Orsino affected to gaze upon the portrait with unconcern, but in reality he was oddly fascinated by it, and Gouache did not fail to see the truth.

"You had better go away, my friend," he said, with a smile. "She will be here in a few minutes and you will certainly lose your heart if you see her."

"What is her name?" asked Orsino, paying no attention to the remark.

"Donna Maria Consuelo—something or other—a string of names ending in Aragona. I call her Madame d'Aragona for shortness, and she does not seem to object."

"Married? And Spanish?"

"I suppose so," answered Gouache. "A widow I believe. She is not Italian and not French, so she must be Spanish."

"The name does not say much. Many people put 'd'Aragona' after their names—some cousins of ours, among others—they are Aranjuez d'Aragona—my father's mother was of that family."

"I think that is the name—Aranjuez. Indeed I am sure of it, for Faustina remarked that she might be related to you."

"It is odd. We have not heard of her being in Rome—and I am not sure who she is. Has she been here long?"

"I have known her a month—since she first came to my studio. She lives in a hotel, and she comes alone, except when I need the dress and then she brings her maid, an odd creature who never speaks and seems to understand no known language."

"It is an interesting face. Do you mind if I stay till she comes? We may really be cousins, you know."

"By all means—you can ask her. The relationship would be with her husband, I suppose."

"True. I had not thought of that; and he is dead, you say?"

Gouache did not answer, for at that moment the lady's footfall was heard upon the marble floor, soft, quick and decided. She paused a moment in the middle of the room when she saw that the artist was not alone. He went forward to meet her and asked leave to present Orsino, with that polite indistinctness which leaves to the persons introduced the task of discovering one another's names.

Orsino looked into the lady's eyes and saw that the slight peculiarity of the glance was real and not due to any error of Gouache's drawing. He recognised each feature in turn in the one look he gave at the face before he bowed, and he saw that the portrait was indeed very good. He was not subject to shyness.

"We should be cousins, Madame," he said. "My father's mother was an Aranjuez d'Aragona."

"Indeed?" said the lady with calm indifference, looking critically at the picture of herself.

"I am Orsino Saracinesca," said the young man, watching her with some admiration.

"Indeed?" she repeated, a shade less coldly. "I think I have heard my poor husband say that he was connected with your family. What do you think of my portrait? Every one has tried to paint me and failed, but my friend Monsieur Gouache is succeeding. He has reproduced my hideous nose and my dreadful mouth with a masterly exactness. No—my dear Monsieur Gouache—it is a compliment I pay you. I am in earnest. I do not want a portrait of the Venus of Milo with red hair, nor of the Minerva Medica with yellow eyes, nor of an imaginary Medea in a fur cloak. I want myself, just as I am. That is exactly what you are doing for me. My-

self and I have lived so long together that I desire a little memento of the acquaintance."

"You can afford to speak lightly of what is so precious to others," said Gouache, gallantly. Madame d'Aranjuez sank into the carved chair Orsino had occupied.

"This dear Gouache—he is charming, is he not?" she said with a little laugh. Orsino looked at her.

"Gouache is right," he thought, with the assurance of his years. "It would be amusing to fall in love with her."

CHAPTER III.

Gouache was far more interested in his work than in the opinions which his two visitors might entertain of each other. He looked at the lady fixedly, moved his easel, raised the picture a few inches higher from the ground and looked again. Orsino watched the proceedings from a little distance, debating whether he should go away or remain. Much depended upon Madame d'Aragona's character, he thought, and of this he knew nothing. Some women are attracted by indifference, and to go away would be to show a disinclination to press the acquaintance. Others, he reflected, prefer the assurance of the man who always stays, even without an invitation, rather than lose his chance. On the other hand a sitting in a studio is not exactly like a meeting in a drawing-room. The painter has a sort of traditional, exclusive right to his sitter's sole attention. The sitter, too, if a woman, enjoys the privilege of sacrificing one-half her good looks in a bad light, to favour the other side which is presented to the artist's view, and the third person, if there be one, has a provoking habit of so placing himself as to receive the least flattering impression.