

and guests, Angelo was first presented to the young Isaura, gave promise of fulfilment. She heard the same voice which in such thrilling and impassioned accents had once addressed her in the church of Santa Maria, and as she raised her timid eyes to answer the salutation, she recognized, as she supposed, the handsome features and graceful figure of the young cavalier, who had stolen into her heart and left his image there beyond her power to displace it. She started with surprise and pleasure, the delicate hue of her cheek deepened with emotion, and her eyes met his with a tender glance of glad, yet bashful recognition—yet, as the evening wore on, there was somewhat in the manner and conversation of Angelo, that disappointed her. She shrank from his brilliant repartee, and his gay laugh chilled her—for the sweet seriousness, the gentle dignity, visible even in the deportment of Ziani, had not escaped her observation; and during those brief and silent interviews that occurred in the church, she had rightly divined his character, and it was one in perfect contrast to that now exhibited by him, who in exterior, seemed the same.

When, therefore, she was informed by her father, that she was to look upon the young Justiniani as her affianced husband, she felt that her heart did not warm towards him as it should, and she marvelled at its coldness, when once it throbbed almost to bursting if but his shadow, for she thought it his, crossed the marble pavement of the church. The agitation of her mind, combined with some latent causes, hastened the illness, which for several weeks forbade a second interview with her lover, and in this interval doubt had strengthened to certainty—for she learned from her women, that Angelo had a brother who strongly resembled him.—but how perfect the likeness was, she could not know, or believe, without ocular demonstration. The feeling, however, that Angelo was not the stranger of the church, amounted to certainty in her mind, and tintured her manner with a coldness and reserve, when next she saw him, which could not escape his notice. But it did not pain him so much as her emotion, when he spoke of his brother,—there was a mystery in her embarrassment, her mantling blushes, that awakened dark thoughts in his mind, and a secret distrust, that had never before mingled with his affection for Ziani. He had of late been so absorbed in his newly awakened passion, that he had scarcely heeded the sadness, and absence of his brother. But now he recalled some instances in which he had noted the former, and remembered that almost his whole time Ziani had recently spent with the monks of San Francesco, that he shunned society and had never, since Isaura's return, appeared at the Urseolo palace. He knew not how to shape his doubts, yet undefined as they were, they haunted him, and he resolved to force Ziani into attending the birth-night fête of his mistress.

This, however, was no easy task to effect. Ziani, shuddered at the thought of such a trial to his firmness, when he had so hardly struggled, even for that degree of calmness, with which, as a man, it became him to bear his fate,—and long he resisted by every allowable plea, the importunities of Angelo. Finding at last that coldness, if not an open breach must ensue between them should he persist in his refusal, he consented to the wishes of his brother, resolving at the same time to hide himself if possible, in the crowd, and so avoid immediate contact with Isaura; but in case this were not practicable, to meet her as a stranger, and on the ensuing day, retire forever from the world. But he knew not his own weakness, nor was it till he felt himself borne rapidly towards the Urseolo palace, that the sickness of his failing heart, warned him how powerless he was, to meet, with even affected composure, the lost idol of his affection.

Then he made a last effort to excuse himself from mingling in a scene of gaiety so ill suited to his feelings,—but it was ineffectual, and reluctantly he followed Angelo to the palace. But when at the entrance of the principal saloon, he found himself separated, not without some little finesse on his part, from his brother, and borne on by the crowd, till he paused in the remote and silent gallery, where harmony and beauty presided, he felt like one set free from menaced danger, and secretly he congratulated himself on his escape.

None came to disturb his solitude, and as a feeling of security crept over him, he lost the poignant sense of his wretchedness, in the rapidly increasing interest, with which he continued to regard the rare collection of the gallery; nay, for a few brief moments, he almost ceased to remember where he was, and under what circumstances of hopeless regret, he stood in the home of Isaura, when a painting that occupied a recess, and was half hidden by a group of statuary placed before it, attracted his attention, and as he paused to gaze upon it, the vivid recollection of her he had loved and lost, returned with painful emotion to his heart.

The subject of the picture was the desertion of Ariadne, and the artist had seemingly chosen that moment for portraying his heroine, when the first agony of grief for the flight of Theseus had given place to a dawning hope of his return which beautifully mingled with and brightened the lingering expression of despair that still hung upon her brow. She stood upon the shore of Naxos, sending her eager gaze far over the blue waters, in the vain expectation of beholding the homeward sail of her unfaithful lover, and her attitude, was one of such perfect abandonment to grief and love, yet withal, so femininely graceful, so exquisitely expressive of all that woman suffers when betrayed, that one might almost have read her history, by gazing on it.