

down on his white beard, and way beyond, near the door of the church, the old Swiss guard nodding his head and shaking his halberd, repeated to himself, in a low voice, his presentiments of the other day.

"Tell some one to bring Alessandro to me after the office," said the Holy Father, leaning over to whisper in the ear of the grand chamberlain. "I wish to reward him for his heavenly voice, and to keep him with me always." And, in a majestic manner, this prelate communicated the order to his neighbor, who passed it on to another, and at last it reached the chapel master, who repeated it to Alessandro, Alessandro reflected for a few moments--then, with a resolute air: "If I go there, that ends it," he thought. "I will never have the courage to leave." And, threading his way through the corridors, he hastily disappeared.

Two months later, he was singing in Paris before the splendid court of the King of France, and his wonderful voice made a shiver run through the magnificent halls adorned with the *fleur-de-lis*. The queen smiled upon him and even the courtiers who did not care for music were unwearied in their applause. Alessandro's fortune was made, and the King's favorite singer was almost dying with rage to see himself supplanted. Alas! it was quite the contrary. With a grave air, the King dismissed the Roman singer with these short words: "Fair son, we are charmed to have heard you, but good musicians are not wanting in the land of France and we cannot keep you here."

"Pleasant excuse," thought the artist. "My good patron, the Pope, was not as hard to please as the King of France, and perhaps I did wrong to leave him. However, let us try something else." So he kissed the Pope's medallion and resumed journeying.

But it was no better at the other courts. One after another, the King of England and the Emperor, the Princes of the empire and the King of Spain, gave him the same reception. What in the world was the matter? How could these unfortunate coincidences be explained? Were these kings and princes all insensible to the charms of this melodious voice that had seemed, however, to carry them away?