

Esteban, though reluctant to give up the luxury of indulging his own excited feelings, could not refuse his cousin. As she took his hand to lead him from his room, he with an effort shook off the weight that oppressed him :

"Yes, I will go with you ; I can refuse you nothing. Tomorrow will be time enough to mature some plan for future improvement."

They joined the gay circle below, where Esteban was welcomed with a shout of delight, and many questions asked as to his tardy appearance. The evening passed away most merrily—the wild fandango, the light coquetish bolero, the guitar, the song, occupying every moment, till the striking of the great clock at midnight warned the party to retire.

As soon as the festive group was broken up, and Esteban had printed a good night kiss on the fair hand of Petrilla, he sought his own room, but not to sleep ; plan after plan was formed, and then rejected. The last words of De Mayo had made a great impression upon him, and he thought it was only by going to Italy, he could obtain the necessary instruction in the art, and by studying the most perfect models, learn to imitate them. But how could he obtain the means for so expensive a journey ? A thought, which soon became a hope, floated through his mind. His little sketches had been most popular among his own circle—had been even prized by Father Muratari—perhaps he could sell enough to enable him to carry out his darling project. This plan seemed more feasible than any other that had presented itself ; and full of hope, no sooner had the day dawned, and the tread of feet been heard in the streets, than he sallied forth with the small sum he owned—purchased with it a large piece of canvas—hurried home, and, with the eager trembling hand of excitement, divided it into different sized squares, and seated himself, with his pallet and brush, at his work.

Most rapidly did the beautiful sketches grow beneath his touch ; now an exquisite landscape—the spreading cork tree—the silvery Guadiana winding through its verdant banks—the village chapel—the picturesque peasant—the fleecy clouds—all combined with that sweetness of colouring and harmony of detail, which, when perfected in after life, placed him at the head of the Spanish school of art. Exquisite bunches of flowers, too, sprang blushing with their beautiful tints, upon the coarse canvas. Petrilla brought him, day by day, bouquets from her own garden: the delicate jessamine, the graceful fuschia, the bright-hued carnation, with the fragrant orange, and living myrtle ; and she watched to see them grow beneath the young artist's pencil, almost as eagerly as she had for their first bloom in the sunny nook

of her own parterre. A month thus passed on, Esteban scarcely leaving his room till evening came ; and then, when he could no longer see to distinguish the colours, or sketch the outline, he would wander forth, his guitar carelessly slung upon his shoulder, and seek rest and refreshment by sauntering on the banks of the Guadalquivir, with Petrilla ; the connexion between the two families allowing him much more familiar intercourse with his pretty cousin than was usual between the sexes, even among the lower classes of the country.

All the canvas was soon filled, but the two largest squares, and it was quite a subject of wonder and speculation to Petrilla, what Esteban designed to fill these with ; but some evasive reply was always given to her questionings. One day when she went, as usual, to watch his progress, she found his door fastened, and no answer was returned to her pleadings for admittance. Day after day she came again and again, but without being able to obtain an entrance. All at once, too, Esteban's evening visits were discontinued. She wearied herself with vain conjectures ; but she was too proud to complain ; her heavy step and languid eye were the only murmurs. What would have been the effect of this neglect upon her sensitive nature, if long continued, it is impossible to say ; but one evening, after a fortnight had elapsed, she was walking alone in her quiet garden, recalling the happy days when her cousin was ever by her side, when she heard a light step behind her—an arm was thrown around her waist—and the voice of Esteban sounded joyously in her ear.

"Ah, cousin mine !" he said, "sad truant that you are ; why have I not seen you ? indeed you have deserted me of late."

She looked up in surprise at this speech, and would have uttered the reproaches and complaints which her heart had been dictating only a moment before ; but the peculiarly happy expression of Esteban's face, the beaming smile, so full of love, and the soul's first affections, with which he was gazing upon her, produced such a revulsion of feeling, that, bursting into tears, she laid her head upon his shoulder, and wept away the grief which had for so many days embittered her cup. She looked down to weep—she looked up to smile—and in an instant all was forgotten. She did not even remember to question the truant as to where he had been, and why he had so neglected her.

"Come, dearest," he said, "arrange your mantilla, and come home with me ; I have become possessor of a treasure, and I cannot enjoy it till you share it with me."

With graceful hand she folded the mantilla over