

graciously received by the duke and princess; and no allusion was made by them to his appearance before, although the chain of Lucretia still glittered on his neck. The dance and the song went on. The masks were retained till supper was announced, when each one removed the velvet covering which had concealed his or her face, and gathered round the table, heaped with all the luxuries of the time.

Tasso, the favored poet, was placed next to the fair Leonora; and his expressive, intellectual face, spoke deeply of his happiness. She, too, was not indifferent. Her playful fancy, her highly cultivated intellect, were all called into play; and no one who listened to her could have wondered at the poet's fascination. But little recked that gay circle, who looked with admiring and envying eyes at the distinction shown the poet, that this night, so fraught with pleasure, was but the herald of a morn of darkness—that the light which now illuminated all Italy, and to whom every one turned as the mid-day effulgence of a glorious sunrise, would so soon go down in whirlwind and storm! Why did not some kind voice whisper the child of destiny to beware how he drank of the Circean cup which was hurrying him on to destruction.

"Before you is Sorrento., Dwelling there
Was Tasso's sister, when the pilgrim came
Asking asylum 'gainst the prince unjust,
From former friends. Long grief had almost quenched
Reason's clear light, but *genius* still was left."

It was just at twilight, on the 25th July, 1577, that a man with bent form and whitened hair stood at the portal of one of the noblest houses in Sorrento. With trembling voice he asked of the menials who waited in the hall, if their lady was at home, and whether he could have audience with her. With a sneering look at his humble dress, the servants coldly answered, that their lady was not wont to give audience to such as himself; but if he had *business* with her, he could be attended to by the steward of her household.

"No," replied the old man, taking from his bosom a letter. "I have promised to give this into her own hand; and I must receive the answer from herself, which I am to carry to her brother in his prison home."

Well did the servants of that lofty mansion know, that, however humble the messenger, one who bore tidings to their lady from her idolized brother would be welcome; and with added courtesy, they asked the old man to be seated while they went to see when it was her pleasure to receive him.

They soon returned to conduct him to the apartment, where, surrounded by every luxury which the taste and refinement of the sixteenth century could devise, was seated a lovely woman just past the prime of life. The traces of sorrow were upon her pale cheeks, which not even the sunset glow that came through the rose-tinted curtains could colour. A small marble table, covered with richly illuminated books, was by her side. The old man entered with trembling steps, and advancing to the couch where the lady was reclining, dropped upon one knee, and gave her the letter. With a soft, low voice, she bade him rise; and after she had read her brother's epistle she would question him farther.

The man withdrew himself into a shaded recess opposite the lady, and watched her intently, while with eager haste she read the scroll. As she perused it, the tears fell thick and fast upon the page, and she was almost suffocated with her emotion. The old man caught the infection of her sadness, and brushed away the tears which blinded his heavy eyes. When she had finished reading the letter, she almost reverently kissed it, and placed it in her bosom. Looking up, she caught the eye of the messenger gazing earnestly upon her. In her excitement, she had forgotten his presence, and she involuntarily uttered a slight scream, when she met his piercing gaze; but recollecting herself, and the many questions about her brother which she wished to ask, she called him to her side. He sprang forward, and seizing her hand, pressed it to his lips.

"Oh my sister! my sister!" he exclaimed, "my beloved Cornelia, am I indeed so changed that you, the child of the same mother, the companion of my childish sports, and the sympathiser of my maturer years know me not?"

The bewildered and terrified lady looked with fascinated eye upon the stranger. Could it be? Was it indeed *possible*? The voice was the same that had soothed her infantile griefs, and aided in her studies; but not one trace could she find, in the stooping and worn figure before her, of the noble form and lineaments of him whose wandering mind and prisoned body she had mourned for many a long year, with the grief of the mourner who has laid the loved and lost in the cold earth. To such, time brings the healing balm, and fans with his cooling wings the fever of bereaved affliction; but to her each day had brought the bitter recollection, that he, the gifted and loving, was condemned, not only through his own imprudence, but from the envy of those above him in rank, to a life of solitary confinement, where his lofty mind, deprived of the companionship of those who would sympa-