

The potter, yielding to the solicitude of his attentive auditors, began the introduction to the Orlando Furioso, and soon became so interested in it that he did not notice that one had drawn near to the window of his establishment, whose restlessness and grimaces indicated that he listened with no pleased ear to the charming poem. Once or twice he turned to leave, but an invisible spell kept him rivetted to the spot. Occasionally he raised his hand as if in deprecation of some sentiment uttered by the reciter. Finally, as if moved by some irresistible impulse, he seized a large ewer, which stood upon the window, and hurled it with great force at the potter. It dashed the beautiful vase he had just completed from his hand, and broke it into a thousand fragments! Another and another followed, and the poor potter hardly escaped being seriously wounded by the creations of his own hand.

The people rushed out from the shop to seize the madman, as they deemed him, when what was their surprise to behold Ariosto himself? The potter began to expostulate; Ariosto exclaimed:

"Beware! I have not yet revenged myself!"

"What mean you? What have I done to incur your displeasure?" said the poor man, who, knowing Ariosto's connexion with the noblest family of Ferrara, dared not resist him.

"Villain!" said the enraged poet, "I have only broken a few worthless pots; you have spoiled my most beautiful compositions to my face!"

In a quiet nook of one of the suburbs of Ferrara, was a sequestered cottage:

Low and white, yet scarcely seen,
Were its walls for mantling green;
Not a window let in light,
But through tall flowers, clust'ring bright;
Not a glance might wander there,
But it fell on something fair.

This was the home of Ariosto, his pride and delight; humble, but exquisitely beautiful; fit residence for such a poet. Amidst the green shades of his garden he found that repose which he needed, and derived new inspiration from the refreshing solitudes. One of his friends asked him one day how it chanced that he, who could describe such stately castles and magnificent palaces, should have built himself so lowly a tenement?

"Ah!" he replied, "it costs much less money to build houses of verse than of stone!"

This retreat was shared by one of long tried love and truth, who, on the day of Ariosto's encounter with the potter, was seated in a recess of the room that opened out upon the lawn. She was copying in a clear and beautiful hand in a

small book some poems which lay before her. Her lovely face, for lovely it was, though bereft of the first bloom of youth, was full of enthusiasm, and the words she wrote seemed rather her own inspirations than the writings of another. At her feet, upon a soft mat, and with a wreath of flowers he had been weaving, thrown carelessly upon his head, was sleeping a boy, whose rosy face upturned, drew her frequent gaze, and ever and anon she fanned his cheek and fair young brow. This was Alessandra, the beloved of Ariosto, who won his affections by her beauty, and kept them by the charm of her manners, the cultivation of her mind, and her deep sympathy with his poetic tastes. Her influence was used to stimulate him to the exercise of his talent, and for the producing of those works which have brought his name down to posterity with those of the glorious triumvirate of the previous age.

Ariosto was indolent and Alessandra was his amanuensis. Willingly had she relinquished her embroidery, (an art in which she was most skilful, and in which she was engaged when she first captivated the poet's fancy,) for the delightful task of copying Ariosto's poems, and her whole time was occupied in this, and in instructing her two boys, Virginio and Giovanni Battista, whom she wished to render worthy of their father.

She was now copying one of those playful comedies, written for the amusement of the Duke of Ferrara. She had almost completed her work, when she was interrupted by the murmur of many voices approaching her quiet dwelling, mingled with sounds of lamentation and wailing. She hastily sprang to the window, and putting aside the embowering leaves, saw, as she thought, her beloved Ariosto dead. He was upon a litter, his face covered with blood and sadly disfigured. Alessandra uttered a loud shriek, which rang through the house, startling the coming crowd and arousing Ariosto himself, who feebly raised his head and asked what all this meant? but he soon relapsed into insensibility and was carried into his own room. The best leech in Ferrara was summoned to attend him, and for many days his devoted and untiring companion watched over him without hope of his recovery.

Ariosto's constitution was exceedingly delicate, and he could not bear the violent excitement to which he had that morning subjected himself. While in the very fever of his rage he had fallen, and striking his head heavily against the window nearly lost his life by the vehemence of his passion; and thus was the potter revenged for the injury done to his work, and the still greater wound inflicted upon his literary pride. The choleric temperament of the poet subjected him