

life was pledged to the freedom and independence of Italy, while the stars shone over head, and the firefly lamps glittered in the myrtle hedges; the draught of sweet hot milk you gave me when I came down the stone stairs in the morning, and met you just coming from milking the goats; the pitcher of water I snatched from you at the fountain; the ripe figs I helped you to gather:—all and every thing, from the moment I first saw your skiff coming over the little bay, to that in which our arms unlocked from our last embrace, and I jumped on board Jacopo's boat, and left you standing on the lonely shore. What day has there been since, that I have not thought of these things? What night that they have not been with me in my dreams? Don't you, too, think of them sometimes, my Carmina?"

"Yes, Signor, I think of them always," said Carmina.

"Carmina," said Paolo, "I may soon have to leave Naples, and go where I can serve Italy better than here; but before I go, I must see you again, and get one more kind glance from your eyes. It may be for the last time. Will you think of me till I come?"

"Signor, I will think of nothing else," said Carmina.

Paolo turned hastily away, and going up to Ninetta, stroked her hair, and said a kind word or two to her; then throwing some coins into her lap to buy *confetti*, he left the stall.

It must be remembered that poor Carmina was only an Italian peasant girl, with hardly any other code of morals than the instincts of her own heart. She could not unlove Paolo because she might no longer hope to be his wife; her love was too unworldly and unselfish for that. Neither could she help the deep joy it gave her to know that he, too, loved her still; but she never thought or dreamed of their being any thing more to each other than they were now—separated and unhappy lovers. And

she grieved for his unhappiness far more than for her own. She was a woman, and had learned to be patient and to bear what was laid upon her: but to the proud, strong spirit of a man she knew that endurance must be hard. Oh, if there was anything in the world she could do to help or comfort him, how blessed she would think herself, and what joy it would give her. Such joy as she had not known since that night which had been so sweet, yet so bitter,—that night which he, too, remembered so well—when she had watched the phosphor fire flashing round the keel of the boat that bore him away from her, and kneeling on the rocks, she had prayed the Madonna to protect him, and bring him back soon.

She was still standing, looking out into the gathering darkness with bright dreamy eyes, and recalling all Paolo's words and looks over and over again, when Ninetta came running up to her, and opening her apron which she held by the corners, showed her that it was full of cakes and sugar-plums.

"See, Carmina," she exclaimed joyfully, "see all the nice things I have got, and I have money enough to buy as many more. Won't we have a brave feast to-night, and wasn't the Signor good?"

Putting her arm round her sister's neck, Carmina stooped and kissed her, and as she did so, Ninetta felt a tear fall on her cheek.

"Carmina, *mia* Carmina, you are crying!" exclaimed Ninetta. "Why are you crying? I thought you would not cry any more now the Signor has come."

"Little sister," said Carmina, "I don't know why I am crying. Perhaps it is for joy; perhaps it is for sorrow."

IV.

ON the road to Posilippo there is a church called the Church of Santa Maria di Piedigrotto, which possesses a picture of the Madonna, much revered by the devout in Naples, as the numerous *votos*