

of no more. The new performer assumed the exercise of her part, with much grace and histrionic skill; but at the first notes of her voice, in the glorious "*Quest'amore*," the audience started as with an electric shock. What a voice!—it was like the music, that those of us who are poets sometimes conceive in our dreams, but never hear on earth. The listeners were thrilled, subdued—awed; they never thought of applauding, they felt as if raised on some elevation above the ordinary feelings of pleasure. And so she sang through the remaining airs of her part, with the same matchless skill; difficulties of execution seemed child's play to her. Hitherto unequalled parts of dexterity—triumphs of vocalisation, that could only have been accomplished by the highest musical talent, joined to laborious study and practice of the art—genius perfected by science—and whence had this prodigy been wafted hither? Nobody knew—nobody could tell! she seemed like a star fallen at their feet; and mystery, lending its charm to her other fascinations, the whole theatre remained in a trance of delight.

There was one effort more to be made—the grand finale, in which the Assyrian Queen appears with her Lord on the funeral pile, whereon they are destined to immolate themselves along with the treasures of their fallen empire. The unknown singer appeared in the "*Morte gloriosa*," like one inspired! Her *spirituelle* countenance flushed; and her glorious eyes shone like stars. Angelica, who with Borello had retired to a private box on the side scenes, from whence they could watch the progress of the play unobserved, noticed that in this air she by no means adhered to the notes of her score. There seemed something more pathetic and impassioned and true to nature in these improvisings, than even the great Mozart had been able to attain. There was something frightfully true and natural in the notes of the death song, and an idea flashed on the mind of Borello occasionally, as if he had listened to them long ago, like the revivings of a half forgotten dream. Still the glorious song proceeded, and the theatre, mute and apparently awe-stricken—in whose rapt silence one might have discerned the rustle of a bird's wing—resounded with that full triumphant voice, as it recounted the victory of the lofty soul over the pangs of death. But again, as if in the succumbing of nature, the notes became melancholy, panting, almost gasping; and the face and attitude of the cantatrice so faithfully true to nature, that many shuddered and turned pale, as if looking on something too terribly akin to reality, to be only a triumph of histrionic art. Angelica, herself, a slave to the beauties of her art, with

too much of the generosity of true talent, to be actuated by feelings of envy, was entranced with admiration and pity—and I do not know what of mingled sensations—for her interesting and magnificent rival.

"There has been nothing like this," whispered she to Borello, "ever heard or seen;" and as the song ceased, animated by an impulse for which she could not account, she rushed on the stage to the cantatrice, and unbinding the splendid coronal of diamonds from her brow—the coronal which Borello gave her—she clasped it, with trembling and eager fingers, round the long black curls of the cantatrice.

"It was bestowed upon Angelica Romano," said she, "as the crowned Queen of Song; now she confesses herself dethroned!"

The strange cantatrice reeled and staggered—her eyes swam. A sudden recollection seized Borello, as he sprang on the stage to support her.

"It is! it is!" said he; "Pepita, the Gipsy of the Appenines. Dear, unhappy, too long forgotten girl!" and the curtain falling, amid wreaths and bouquets, she was borne away in his arms, followed by Angelica, who already felt for her all the tenderness and affection of a cherished sister.

Alas! alas! it was the lay of a broken heart! She survived but a few hours. Worn down, and with her faculties exhausted by the long course of study she had prescribed herself in fulfilment of the rash wish she had formed for the attainment of the affections of Borello, that idol of her own—the impetuous and impassioned girl had hastened a climax, which one day, sooner or later, would not have failed quickly to overturn a shattered frame and a broken heart. Borello attended her to the last, and, poor girl, she had all she desired—the applauses and the tenderness of one who was to her all the world; nor was it, perhaps, a flaw in her lot that she did not live to attain the fame to which this evening was most probably destined to usher her, and only remained to be the marvel and glory of a night, like a sudden star, which shoots across the horizon towards the unknown void, while we have only time to exclaim, "How beautiful!" and we see it no more.

She was soon forgotten by all except by Borello, and especially by Angelica, who could never be persuaded to re-assume her coronal of diamonds, insisting, with a determination which all will know how to appreciate, that it should be buried in the same grave with the devoted and gifted, though unknown and hapless Cantatrice.