

deed, as a certain lady said of a green door. The idea of Miss Alida being once entertained, the shrubberies about the Van Der Benschoten cottage, consisting of three altheas, a privet hedge, and a Madeira vine, seemed to invite a Romeo, and our hero resolved to open his first act with a balcony scene. Not that he had a speech ready, for if he had he would have delivered it in the parlour; but he had heard much of the power of sweet sounds, and conceived the idea of trying them upon the heart of Miss Alida before he ventured upon words, as Hannibal (wasn't it?), having rocks to soften, tried vinegar before pickaxes. Having often encountered bands of music in the streets at night—or rather in the evening, for his grandmamma never allowed him to be out after ten—he concluded the business of these patrols to be serenading; and, making great exertions to find one of the most powerful companies, he engaged their leader to be in full force before Mrs. Van Der Benschoten's door on a certain evening, resolved himself to lie *perdu*, in a convenient spot, ready to speak if the young lady should appear on the balcony, as he did not doubt she would. The Corypheus of the band was true to his promise, and he and his followers had played with all their might for half an hour or so, when, observing no demonstration from the house, and feeling rather chilly, they consulted their employer as to the propriety of continuing. "Oh! go on, go on," whispered Mr. Alonzo; "she isn't waked up yet!" (The youth understood the true object of a serenade.) "Play away till you hear something."

And, on the word, "Washington's March" aroused the weary echoes, if not Miss Alida.

This new attack certainly was not in vain. A window was softly opened, and as the band, inspired by this sign of life, threw new vigour into their instrumentation, a copious shower of boots, boot-jacks, billets of wood, and various other missiles, untuned the performers, who, in spite of the martial spirit breathed but just before, all ran away forthwith.

Mr. Alonzo scorned to follow, particularly as he had a snug berth under one of the three altheas; but a voice crying, "Seek him—seek him, Vixen!" and the long bounds of a dog in the back yard, dislodged him, and he made an ignominious retreat.

We dare not describe the dreams of our hero that night, but we record it to his everlasting credit that he was not disheartened by this inauspicious conclusion of his daring adventure. He ascribed the rude interruption, very correctly, to one of Miss Alida's brothers; and every time he met one of them in the street he used to tell his grandmamma of it when he came home, always adding that he only wished he knew whether *that was the one!*

Music was still a good resource, and Mr. Alonzo resolved to try it in another form. He knew a young gentleman who played the guitar, and sang many a soft Spanish ditty to its seductive twanging; and, as this youth happened to be a good-natured fellow, and one who did a large amount of serenading on his own account, it was not difficult to persuade him to attempt something for a friend. So, when next the fair moon favoured the stricken-hearted, the two young men, choosing

a spot of deepest shade, beset Miss Alida with music of a far more insidious character than that first employed by the inexperienced Alonzo. Few female hearts can resist the influence of such bewitching airs as those with which good-natured Harry Blunt endeavoured to expound his friend's sweet meanings; and, after a whole round of sentiment had rung from the guitar, and the far sweeter tenor of its owner, a window opened once more, and poor Mr. Alonzo scampered off incontinent.

Harry, who had not been exposed to the storm which rewarded the previous serenade, stood his ground, and had the satisfaction of picking up a delicate bouquet which fell just before him in the moonlight. This he carried most honourably, to his friend, whom he supposed to be already in Miss Alida's good graces.

'What shall I do?' said Mr. Alonzo, who had a dim perception of the responsibility attached to this favour from a lady.

'Do!' exclaimed Harry, laughing, 'why, order a splendid one at N——s, and send a servant with it to-morrow, with your compliments.'

'So I will! See if I don't,' said Mr. Alonzo, delighted. 'I'll get one as big as a dinner-plate.'

In pursuance of this resolve, he called up an old family servant, and, locking the door, gave him ample directions, and in the most solemn manner.

'And mind, Moses,' said young master, 'get one of the very largest size, and give whatever they ask.'

Hapless Alonzo! Why not put on thy hat, and go forth to choose thy bouquet in person? Moses took the ten-dollar note which Alonzo handed him, and departed, with injunctions to utmost speed and inviolable discretion. Mr. Alonzo paced the floor, with the air of a man who, having done his best, feels that he ought to succeed, till at length the returning steps of his messenger greeted his ear.

'Well, Moses, have you carried it? Did you get a handsome one? Did you see her? What did she say?'

Poor Moses showed the entire white of his eyes.

'Why, massa,' said he, 'you ax me too many questions to onst. I got him, and I carried him to Miss Van Der Benschoten's house, but I no see the young woman; but I tell the coloured gentleman at the door who sent him.'

'That was right,' said Mr. Alonzo; 'but was it large and handsome, Moses?'

'Monstrous big, massa; big as dat stand anyhow! And here's the change; I beat him down a good deal, for he ask two shillin', and I make him take eighteenpence.'

And it was with much self-complacency that good old Moses pulled out of his pocket a handful of money.

'Change!' said Mr. Alonzo, with much misgiving, 'change—eighteenpence—two shillings—what are you talking about? What kind of flowers were they?'

'Oh! beautiful flowers, massa. There was pi'nies and keylocks, and paas-blumechies, and oberyting!'

We will only say that, if hard words could break bones, poor old Moses would not have had a whole one left in his body—but of what avail?