

interest, not only in the paintings, but in the stripling youth, who lingered, unheeding the bustle of the changeful crowd. The day passed on—morning deepened into noon—the broad day faded into twilight—still he was there, apparently feeling no earthly want; he had not tasted food since morning; but his eyes burned brighter—the expression of his face had become more elevated, and his step loftier, as if with conscious inspiration. As the last rays of the twilight threw their farewell gleams on the paintings, De Mayo entered the room, to see that all was safe ere it was closed for the night. He started, as he perceived the youth kneeling before the picture of the Virgin. He had entered unperceived, and as he drew close to him, he heard the half-murmured aspiration which fell from his lips. Gently laying his hand upon his shoulder, he said:

"You are a true Catholic, my lad; but now you must seek the church for your vespers; and there the Holy Mother will not refuse to listen to the prayers of so humble a worshipper."

The young man sprang from his kneeling posture. "Alas! alas!" he said, "I am a sinner; I fear it is not the Holy Virgin to whom my heart offered its devotion, but the genius which could so portray the ineffable spirit which filled the blessed Mother of our Lord. He must have been indeed inspired!"

"Well may you say so, and a good judge must I acknowledge you. This is one of the Madonnas of Coreggio, the early lost and long deplored. He was summoned from his earthly task, but perhaps only to exchange the implements of his studio here, for immortal canvas and a pencil of light, with which to paint the seraph throng that surround the throne of Heaven. Would that in his upward flight he had dropped his mantle upon some of his longing admirers. But he did not; none are like him; his Madonnas, are and always will be, unrivalled; this one I value as a priceless treasure, which no money could purchase of me. But you love painting, I see—are an enthusiast in it—have you ever tried it?"

"Yes, I have painted. My friends have praised my work, and I fancied I was a genius; but now, now I feel I am nothing; that the poor things I so proudly laboured on, are but mere daubs."

"This is not the right effect of viewing such a collection as this; it should rather stimulate you to exertion, and prove to you what you can do. You must not imagine these exquisite paintings to have been the first work, or even the early work of any artist; much labour, daily, yearly toil, was lavished in acquiring the skill and finish, which have rendered perfect these productions. If you

could compare the early efforts of these masters with those of their later days, you would gain hope rather than discouragement from the study. Your enthusiasm interests me; tell me your name—perhaps I can aid you—my experience at least can teach you the best mode of improving your hours."

"My name," said the youth, proudly, "shall never be known, unless it is written in undying characters—the colours of the canvas shall speak it—the conceptions of my pencil shall breathe it. Those who look upon them shall say it is *his* work, or I will go down to a nameless grave. No one shall point the finger of scorn at my name, and say, 'he aimed at that which he never could attain.' But I thank you for your interest. Farewell!"

He turned to leave the apartment. De Mayo followed him—locked the door—and, descending the stairs, they soon stood in the narrow street.

"Success to your efforts, young man," said De Mayo, kindly grasping his hand. "I will only give you one word advice. Go to Italy; there you can inhale the very spirit of painting. It is the home of the fine arts; and there are collected all the most approved models; there you can study Vandylke, and his style I would recommend before all others. Ah! he is the master genius! It has been my aim to copy him; and I am repaid for all my toil, when I hear any one say of my pictures, 'It is a Vandylke.' His glorious colouring, his graceful delineation, are unrivalled. To my taste, even the softer graces of Coreggio fade before the masterly productions of the Flemish painter. But the evening wanes. I shall hope to see you in my saloon again. Mutual enthusiasm should make us friends."

They parted; De Mayo, to join a gay throng in one of the lordly palaces, to which his talents had gained him the *entrée*; whilst the young man threaded his way through lonely streets, with feverish haste, till he came to a poor, though neat looking house on the outskirts of the town. He gently raised the latch of the door, entered, and passed up the steep staircase, without pausing to listen to the sounds of mirth, the merry laugh, the tinkling of the guitar, and the light fall of dancing feet, which came from the lower room. He paused not till he came to a door at the upper story of the house. He took a key from his bosom, unlocked it, and entered. It was dark; but he had the means of striking a light, and in a few moments the glimmering of a taper showed a small and desolate apartment, the walls of which were covered with sundry paintings of various designs, imperfect in their execution, but sketched with much truth to nature, and possessing remarkable sweetness of colouring. With