

how much she loves you. She likes other people to admire her and think her beautiful, it is true, but she loves only you." And leaning over him, as he sat gazing moodily out of the window, she kissed his forehead, and put aside his hair with her cool white fingers.

Her look, her manner, her touch, had an almost irresistible charm, and Paolo was not unmoved by her caresses. Half unconsciously he turned towards her, and the frown left his brow. He had once loved her with an imaginative boy's first love, and now, as he looked at her exquisite beauty, he wished that he could love her again. At this moment he was willing to believe that she was only weak not wicked, and putting his arm round her waist, he tried to draw her towards him.

At another time she would have yielded to his embrace, and won him to concession and indulgence by sweet words and caresses, but just now her toilette was to be considered. The dress she had on was the one she had decided on wearing to the ball, and it must not be crumpled or disarranged. She, therefore, avoided his clasp, coquettishly.

"Wait a moment, Paolo *mio*," she said. "You must promise to let me go to the ball before I will kiss you. If I stay away we shall be laughed at by every one, and my position in society will be irretrievably compromised. Come now, consent, *caro mio*, and I will be like an icicle to that poor Raffaello, and to every other man in the room."

"Pray, have the goodness not to call that man by his Christian name," said Paolo.

"Oh, pardon me, I forgot you objected to it, and I have known him so long. But I am quite willing to give him up, only believe me, that it is necessary that I should go to this ball. People will talk so if I don't. Come with me, and watch me, since you are so jealous," she added with a pretty air of mockery.

Paolo hesitated. Perhaps there was some truth in her assertion that her absence from

this ball would give room for malicious comments, but, if he suffered her to go, could he trust her? He knew that she was light, vain, selfish and false, but he believed that she loved him, forgetting that to such natures no love is possible, except that counterfeit love which is fed on vanity, the desire of power, self-worship, and other kindred feelings.

"I believe you are a little goose, Giulia," he said, "but for this once you shall have your way. Go to this ball, but remember I will not be trifled with. You must drop all intimacy with this man, and submit to be so unfashionable as to have no other lover than your husband. You see I trust you, but if I once find that you deceive me, we part forever. Now, come and kiss me and tell me you are content."

She came near enough to stoop down and kiss his lips, but she again drew back from his proffered embrace.

"What is the matter, *bellissima*?" he said, "are you afraid to come any closer? Oh, I see. Your toilette must not be discomposed. It is very pretty, certainly, and you look very lovely. And what glorious hair you have, Giulia; like

'Lilith, who excels

All women in the magic of her locks!"

"Who is Lilith?" asked Giulia. "Some one you were in love with in Messina?"

"Lilith was Adam's first wife, the legend says: and I never was in love with any one in Messina."

"Ah! well! Where was it you saw Carmina?"

"Nonsense, Giulia, how can you be so absurd?" said Paolo.

"Absurd, is it? Why should not I be jealous as well as you?" and she laid her hand on his arm caressingly. "There, there," she added, coaxingly, as she saw his face growing dark, "forgive my folly, and kiss your poor little bird, whose wings you want to clip so cruelly."