

It was night, and a very bright moon slowly ascending in the heaven, rendered everything as visible, only in more softened outlines, as in the day. The young lover had wandered forth in a secluded path by the river, which wound for nearly its whole course through thick groves. He was not, however, long allowed to be alone. Castagna, the friend and guide of his infant years, joined him, and they walked together a long time, and conversed earnestly. At length Castagna said—

"Dominica, you know I have ever cherished for you an affection all paternal. I have watched over your interests with fidelity and vigilance. I have been your best friend."

"And so I esteem you, dear Castagna."

"But what is friendship, Dominica? It is mutual confidence. It is an interchange of each other's thoughts and sympathies. If you have troubles, you communicate them. If you have pleasures, you divide them. Ah! I have a soul for friendship.—Too well I know what it is! Too long I have sighed for a true and real return!"

"Am I not your friend, Castagna?"

"No!—oh, no!"

"No—how—you jest!"

"You hold a secret from me, Dominica. Between friends there are no secrets."

"But Castagna, this is a part of my profession. To ask it of me is to ask my fame. You are yourself so good an artist, that you stand at the head of the art in Florence."

"Not now—not since you have returned."

"But I freely confess to all that, not skill alone, but a remarkable mechanical discovery only, places me in the eminence which—how—you weep, Castagna—"

"Did I?—why I believe there was a drop—I felt it rise to my lids. I did not know that it had left my lashes. I am old, and tenderhearted—and sometimes I think that I am almost falling into my dotage. Yes, Dominica, I did shed a tear—not from disappointment at losing the secret—oh, no!—but at the fading away of a vision—a rainbow of the heart—a bright, deceitful, false—"

"My dear and good Castagna, what is it you would say?"

"Your freindship, my beloved and once-trusted Dominica, I thought it mine. I pleased myself with the idea that you loved me. Except yourself, there was no one on earth to whom my heart clung secretly. I have seen you a boy at my feet. I have watched your course to manhood with a father's solicitude and delight. I have not always, perhaps, sufficiently discovered my feelings—but—"

"Yes, my dear Castagna, I know you have always loved me. You once saved my life at the risk of your own—"

"I did. I was determined not to remember that incident first."

"Moreover, when I was in want, you furnished me with gold."

"That, too, I feared you had forgotten."

"And, Castagna—perhaps—indeed, I feel convinced that I have not been right in concealing from you my inmost thought and knowledge. Yet, in relating to you the secret which you desire, I am about to make a great sacrifice. You are now the first Florentine artist, after myself. Possessed of this secret, you will be the first! Yet, on condition that you never reveal it, it shall be disclosed to you."

"I solemnly swear it, dearest Dominica."

"Know, then, that at Burges I met a learned man, who taught me to despise water-colours, and to paint—"

"Well?"

"In oil!"

"In oil?—I see. And you have told this to no one?"

"Not one human being this side the Alps has the slightest conception of it but we two. This paper contains the details. It will teach you all you desire. Now, have I not tested my friendship, Castagna? Have I not earned your confidence?"

"Nobly, Dominica—most nobly—embrace me—and my thanks be—*this—and this—and this!*"

The moonbeams glanced from a glittering blade; its keen point, at each thrust, pierced deep to the heart.

There was a heavy splash in the river—the cloud sailed silently from before the moon—the breeze gently waved the tree-tops—Castagna stood alone.

"At length!" cried he—"at length, then, I am the first in Florence. I am *without a rival!*"

This incident, which marked the introduction of oil-painting into Italy, is related on the authority of Lanzi.—*New York Mirror*.

AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES.

THE historian and the antiquary are alike interested by recent communications from Mexico, which state that the owner of some farm-lands in the Bolson of Messini, to the north of Durango, has discovered a grotto, in which a thousand dead bodies are deposited. They appear to have been grouped in distinct families, and buried at different periods and ages, as the groups are composed of both young and old, all being enveloped in clothes which resemble, though imperfectly, the mode of treatment peculiar to Egyptian mummies. The clothes are fine in texture, of various colours, and remarkable for a high state of preservation.