

heart, that was shaking its tranquillity to the centre. Though it was evident that she was highly favoured in the household of the princess, and that sort of indulgence accorded to her as to a younger and lovelier member—yet she appeared to be the object of a sort of deference granted her more spontaneously than studied, for which Milton could in no way account. That she was clever and accomplished, it was true; yet withal humble and affectionate; true, too, that she possessed that subduing and spiritual cast of beauty, winning all hearts, which as Milton remarked on her first appearance seemed rather to belong to the spirit world than to this, and to one early destined for some brighter sphere. Yet could that scarcely account for the tenderness, mingled with respect and admiration, untouched by envy, which appeared in the household of the princess, to be the dower of the highly-favoured girl. Yet was all this little gain to Milton, and only served to raise a fire in his heart which it seemed hopeless that he could communicate to hers. He often conversed with her—on art, on science, or philosophy; yet did it only serve to open to him the treasures of a mind which only made him feel more deeply the worth of all he failed to obtain. They were perfectly intimate—quite on an easy, friendly footing—jested together, laughed together—yet he felt that he had advanced no nearer to her than on the day of their first meeting; and when he attempted to draw the conversation to more interesting themes—on the passions and the graver mysteries of the human heart, she instantly metamorphosed them into subjects of mirth or banter, which almost maddened one of his serious and earnest temperament—or on herself, she was quite silent or turned it away on some alien subject.

His society she neither appeared to seek nor shun. She was never reserved nor ungracious when he approached; yet he felt that his advances were quite unreciprocated, and that but for strenuous efforts on his own part, their intercourse would be altogether discontinued. If she shunned him he never perceived it—she was of too gentle and gracious a nature to wound the feelings of any. "And yet, by Heaven!" thought Milton—"I have sometimes thought that when thrown off her guard or when under the excitement of conversation, I have discovered a something in her eyes not so regardless or indifferent as she would have me believe—but impossible—it is my own too easily deluded fancy, and I will approach her no more." Ah!—if he could!

One morning, on presenting himself at the boudoir, to which, in common with the other

learned men of Florence, he had easy access, he found several of the ladies grouped round the princess, and Giulia Reni, apparently, in a nearly fainting condition, supported in the arms of her mistress. They were fanning her and bathing her face with perfumes, and appeared very anxious and serious on her account. But Giulia quickly recovered, and smiling, said that it was really nothing very alarming, and that it was only their kindness that had magnified it into anything at all; only a sudden momentary oppression at the heart, of late habitual to her, but which was now quite gone, and had left no serious results more than on former occasions. Observing the entrance of Milton, she professed herself quite well, and rose and threw herself on a couch at an open window, to enjoy the fresh warm air.

"What had ailed La Signora Reni?"—said Milton to the princess.

"A few lady-like fancies—Giuletta cara—you love to be petted, is it not?"—

And then Francesca tried to laugh; but Milton saw that she watched her favourite with an unusual solicitude, and that every body that day was to her in a more deferential and indulgent mood than usual.

Milton talked with the princess and her ladies, while Giulia sat in silence by the window, apart from the group. He looked unusually well that morning, and was more than commonly animated. Not the animation of levity, but on those lofty and serious themes on which he found himself sometimes, and was most at home, and on which he talked, when he unbent, like one inspired. After one of these bursts of eloquence, when, with those hyacinthine locks and seraphic countenance with which he is described, he must have looked no unfeeling representative of his own Raphael while discoursing on paradise, his eye wandered from the group he was ostensibly addressing, in the direction of Giulia Reni. She had turned towards him, and her eyes, where her whole soul seemed for the moment to have wandered, were fixed upon him with such a gaze as he had never seen there before. She caught his eye and blushed painfully—her face, neck and forehead being covered with crimson; all the more remarkable as it was such a deviation from a manner calm and serene, even to coldness—and then, as if overcome by confusion, quickly rose and left the apartment. As he had no reason to think her embarrassment remarked by any one else, as soon as he could disengage himself from the group, he arose and followed in the direction where she disappeared—with little hope, however, of meeting her. He wandered through the gardens where