

and to enhance his anxiety, for several days her situation continued extremely critical; and even when her physicians pronounced the dangerous crisis to be past, her health remained so extremely delicate, that for several weeks she was not permitted to leave her apartments. During this weary interval, Angelo fed his fancy with sweet thoughts of her image, till his love became an absorbing and all-engrossing sentiment, and when she began to recover, he lingered night after night beneath her balcony, gazing intently upward, or softly touching his guitar to the love-breathing strains of his enamoured heart.

Only once,—and ill could he endure the cruel banishment,—but only once, was he permitted to see her before the birth-night fête, and that was on the evening which immediately preceded it; and then, he thought her changed—as beautiful as ever, though her lovely cheek was pale from recent illness,—but there was a nameless something wanting, that he had found in her before. The charm, the glow, that like the soft flush of a summer sunset, had lent character, and tenderness to her beauty, was gone—she seemed cold, and passionless, and exquisite, as the statue which the tears and prayers of Pygmalion warmed into life—but less sensitive than that; for still and silent she sat, while the ardent Angelo poured his words of passion on her ear,—they called no blush of rapture to her cheek, nor won an answering glance of tenderness from her sad and downcast eyes. But when he spoke of his brother,—when he said that on the coming eve he would bring one to plead for him so like himself, that she could scarcely choose between the two, a torrent of vivid crimson dyed her cheek, and brow, and neck, and raising her startled eyes, she turned and scanned his person with a perplexed and troubled gaze, that he knew not how to interpret, though succeeding circumstances too soon and faithfully, revealed to him its meaning.

Ziani Justiniani, was in character almost the total reverse of his impetuous brother—some traits, indeed, they possessed in common, for both were high-souled and generous; but in Ziani, these qualities were the fruit of lofty principle, early instilled into a well-regulated, sensitive and discerning mind; in Angelo, they too often sprang from a reckless and confiding nature. Gentle and retiring, Ziani loved to live apart from the world,—to dwell amid the calm ministries of nature, to feed his love of the beautiful and the grand, by the contemplation of her ever varying charms; or to mature and refine his taste for the fine arts, by the study of those inspirations of genius, which the hand of the gifted had portrayed on the breathing canvas, or stamped with power and beauty on the shapeless marble. Every living thing loved him, for his eye beamed love on all. But it was reserved for one alone, and she the betrothed of Angelo, to waken the music of

these secret and mysterious chords, which if rightly touched, and with a cunning hand, respond divinest harmony.

One day, in a listless search for works of art, Ziani strolled into the small church of Santa Maria, annexed to the convent of that name, and there his foot-steps were enchain'd by a painting of the Adoration, which had been recently placed above the altar. The grouping, the colouring, but above all the inspired and elevated expression which the genius of the artist had thrown into the whole piece, transfixed and enraptured him. Day after day he returned to the delightful study of this picture; but shortly it was superseded by an object of even deeper interest, that as constantly drew thither, and absorbed his gaze. He had on two occasions, when the church was nearly vacant, surprised a young girl at her devotions before the altar, whom he knew from her dress, to be a boarder in the convent. The first time, he had scarcely observed her, till, as he brushed past her to attain the point whence his pious gaze could be seen in the most favourable light, she rose, and abruptly retreated through a private door into the interior of the building; but even then, the graceful shape, the airy step, the lovely face, beautiful as an unfolding flower, though seen imperfectly through the envious veil, did not escape the eye of Ziani.

A new attraction, an undefined hope, now brought him, daily as the morning and evening came, to the church of Santa Maria, and within a day or two, he again beheld the fair unknown, kneeling on the steps of the altar. He did not approach to disturb her, but he assumed a position at no great distance from her, and when at length she rose, their eyes met. Deep blushes overspread her face, and she moved hastily away, but as she passed a projecting pillar, some object on its surface caught her veil, and that lovely head was bared to his enraptured gaze. For an instant emotion rendered him powerless to move, then roused by her ineffectual efforts to disengage the veil, he sprang forward, caught it from whence it hung, and by an involuntary impulse pressing it to his lips, knelt and returned it to her. Her hand trembled as she received it from his, and her lips moved as though she would express her thanks for his courtesy; but no sound issued from them, yet her eyes, which for an instant encountered his, beamed with an eloquence not to be misunderstood,—and that glance, those beautiful blushes, were for long weeks after, his dream by night, his thought by day, nurturing and strengthening the passion which was enkindled, to expire only with his life.

It was many days before Ziani again beheld that lovely vision, though he ceased not to haunt the consecrated place where it had dawned upon him—night after night returned and brought him disappointment, yet still he hoped on, but never spoke