

tiful, so elegant, so graceful, and I know now that you could never have married poor Carmina."

"You are the wife I ought to have married, Carmina," said Paolo passionately, "only you! Believe me, I never meant to be false to you, false to my own heart. I was weak and wicked, but I have bitterly repented ever since, and if you could know how great my punishment has been, I think you would forgive me."

"Signor Paolo," said Carmina, "I have nothing to forgive. I had the misfortune of placing my love too high. How could you stoop to me? I was only a simple girl when I saw you first, and did not know that it would degrade you in the eyes of the world to make me your wife. I did not know then that in the world where men strive for rank and riches, they cannot always marry the one that is the best loved."

"Carmina, do not speak so. It maddens me!"

"It is true, Signor. I knew that you were great, noble, a hero, immeasurably above me, but it seemed to me, you must be as much above every other woman, and that no one could love you as I would, or make you so happy. I was a foolish girl, Signor, and knew no better."

"You were right, my Carmina; no one ever loved me, or will love me as you did, and no one but you could ever have made me happy. My heart told me from the moment I saw you, that in you I had found the one out of all the world best suited to be my wife. And I meant to be true to you. I meant to return."

"Yes, Signor, but when you got back to Naples, you knew that it could not be. Now I understand this, but then I did not, and day after day I watched for your coming. But months passed and you did not come. Then the poor madre got worse and worse, and died and my heart grew sick with sorrow and longing, and it seemed to me if I did not soon see you, I should die."

She paused, overcome by the memory of that time of anguish, and Paolo could see that it had not passed over her without leaving some trace behind. There was a tender sadness, a pathetic sweetness in her whole aspect, appealing to the heart like a strain of mournful music; as if into that form once an image of perfect joy, the shadow of sorrow had in some mysterious manner been infused.

"Oh, my Carmina," Paolo exclaimed, "what a wretched guilty fool I have been. I loved you all the time and my heart ached for you day and night, and your sweet face was forever before my eyes. But I was mad and blind as the gods of old made those whom they wished to destroy. Mad and blind for one day, and then my senses and my sight came back, and I saw and knew that I had made myself miserable for ever. But go on. Tell me everything. Tell me how you came to Naples."

"Signor, I thought you must be either dead or in prison, when you did not come, and at last I told Jacopo I must go and find out; and he tried to persuade me not to go, and said perhaps you had forgotten me, and married some one else. But I did not believe it. If the wise Olympia had been near, perhaps she could have told me where you were, but she had gone far away. So at last Jacopo brought me and Ninetta here in his boat, and took us to the house of some friends of his, who were kind to us for his sake. Then he heard that you were married, and at first he was afraid to tell me, but he could not hide it from me long. It was hard to bear, Signor, and the kind people of the house thought I should have died, but something seemed to tell me that I must live to see you again."

"Oh, my poor Carmina! But did you not hate me for my falseness?—hate me? despise me?"

"Al! no, Signor; where love is true, hate can never come. When I got better, I made Jacopo take me to San Carlo, that