

was speaking rapidly and vehemently those half-whispered words, which are consecrated but to *one* ear. Their import, by his manner, could not be mistaken, nor did that of Angelica betray an unwilling ear. At length, rising and kneeling before her, he said:

"Young beauty! accept the fealty of a heart, as sincerely, and ten thousand times more devotedly accorded to thy worth, and for thine own sweet sake, as that my mind has been led captive at the shrine of thy genius;—and let this coronal be a token for both—that in looking on it thou mayest remember the day of glory as the day of love; and learn to associate the hour when thou didst win the homage of the world, with that in which thou didst extort another homage—poor indeed it may be—but which will remain to thee, when the world and its applauses shall have passed away!"

He drew her towards him, and kissed the coronal, and the fair forehead which it encircled.

"Dear coronal!" whispered Angelica, "henceforth thou and I shall never part; and when thou shalt see me wear it, Borello—as thou shalt do in my proudest moments—learn that I shall hereafter value my fame, only because it makes me more worthy of thee."

He held her in his arms for an instant, and there was a dead silence.

"What was that?" said Angelica, suddenly disengaging herself; "did you not hear somebody sigh?"

It was indeed a profound, half suppressed sobbing sigh. They looked enquiringly around; but the apartment was empty, and they saw nothing.

Yet there might have been discovered among the crowds of stage people, servants and others, who fitted behind the scenes, through the passages and open doors, gliding sadly away, at that moment, a pale, melancholy eyed young girl, in a faded gipsy cloak.

#### PART THIRD.

Two years had passed, and the celebrity of Angelica Romano, still on the increase, had at length brought an invitation from the Emperor Paul, to sing at the Grand Opera in his new theatre in Moscow. Paul and his consort had come from St. Petersburg expressly to enjoy the vocalization of the new cantatrice; and had already listened to her for several nights when she was *commanded* to appear in Mozart's "*Sardanapalo*," one of the most famous operas of the time, and acknowledged as Catalani's master-piece. But catarrhs and colds,—the evil angels of the opera-going world,

and of Prima Donnas in particular,—have little respect to exigencies; indeed, from the universal contrariety prevailing in the nature of things, they are certain to make their appearance when most inconvenient;—and it was with no small dismay that the manager of the Grand Opera at Moscow, when marshalling his forces for a final rehearsal, on the morning of the day intended for the performance of "*Sardanapalo*," found the voice of his Prima Donna, manifestly, though in a slight degree, affected by hoarseness, and she herself, by no means in such a vigorous state of health and animation as the exigency for her exertions on this particular occasion demanded. But postponement was not to be thought of—the Autocrat of all the Russias baulked of his evenings amusement by a cold! The poor manager trembled, and fumbled nervously among the muscles that connected his head with his shoulders.

Angelica had not yet talked of refusing to perform. No—it was not yet quite so bad as this. But who could tell what an evening would bring forth? Hoarseness is apt to increase, and the poor manager knew, to his cost, that Prima Donnas are sometimes glad of an excuse to become petulant—and he said:

*Signorina Bellissima!* take care of thyself—nurse thyself well against to-night; sing thy best—do thy best—only appear—and thy thousand roubles for this shall be two. His Majesty's mind is wound up to the highest point of expectation, and if he should be disappointed—holy St. Nicholas guard us all!

Angelica, who was really good natured, and entertained no very high ideas of the critical ability of the Emperor Paul and his Muscovite subjects, did not conceive that it would be much to the peril of her reputation among them, even if she did sing under the united disadvantage of a little hoarseness and spirits more languid than ordinary, and pledged herself to appear, as well as use all practicable means to appear with success.

The lazy rolling hours—inexpressibly so to the opera-going world, who, on this occasion only lived to see and hear Angelica Romano—at length merged in that appointed for the opening of the theatre doors, and Angelica appeared in the green room, apparently as radiant and in as complete a state of efficiency as ever. She was attended by Borello, who often accompanied her in her travels. It was suspected they were privately married, but whether so or not, or that he only attended her in the capacity of a friend, scandal itself, although not usually in the most indulgent of its moods, when dealing with this too often most unjustly slandered class, had never dared to breathe a stain on the fair fame of Angelica Romano, or direct