



The Love That Came to Michael Angelo.

(By Thornton Hall, in John O'Leary's Weekly.)

In the early years of our eighth Henry there was no more enviable woman in all Italy than Vittoria, Marchesa di Pescara. From her cradle Fortune smiled her sweetest on this daughter of the great princely house of Colonna; for, in addition to her heritage of birth and splendour, she was dowered with a rare loveliness and with no less rare gifts of mind and graces of character.

The little Princess "with the dazzling sun-crowned head and heart of pure gold," had barely seen her fourth birthday when she was affianced to Francesco d'Avalos, son of the great Neapolitan noble, Alphonso, Marchese di Pescara; and the next twelve years the child-lovers spent together in the Pescara Palace, on the island of Ischia—running wild and free on the shore or in the woods of their beautiful island, studying together, and ideally happy in their mutual companionship and devotion. And Vittoria's happiness was crowned when, one day in 1509, they were married, and they made their home together on their beloved island.

The Knight Who Did Not Return. Then followed three golden years of love and splendour and gaiety before her husband was called away to fight against France. And that day the gate of her earthly paradise closed on her; for the years that followed were long years of lonely and anxious waiting. Once he returned to her arms, a sorely-stricken man, but after a few weeks of perilous happiness he was called back again to war, and she never saw him again. He fell, fighting valiantly, on the field of Pavia, and her life was left desolate.

For long years Vittoria mourned her dead knight, shutting herself away from the world in Ischia, alone with her grief, and finding solace in writing those exquisite sonnets

which raised to his memory an undying monument of fame. And it was not until middle-age was creeping over her that she at last emerged from her seclusion, to devote herself to good works. But time and sorrow had only served to ripen her beauty.

A Sad Old Man.

It was at this time—in 1538—that Vittoria went to Rome, and in the Sistine Chapel—where he was painting his immortal fresco, "The Last Judgment"—first set eyes on Michael Angelo, of whose fame as the supreme sculptor of his day, as well as artist and poet, she had long heard. A sad old man of sixty-three Michael Angelo is described at this time, the loneliest. "Alone before Heaven," he laments in one of his poems, "I have no friends; I need none; I wish for none." His fame, great as it was, had brought him no happiness.

And it was just when the gaunt, grizzled artist, with the awful majesty of soul and brain, had abandoned all hope of love, that it came to him, looking down from his lofty perch in the Sistine Chapel his eyes fell on the sweet upturned face of the golden-haired Vittoria, who had at last come out of her great tribulation into a great peace.

Nine Years of Worship.

"What a man Michael Angelo would have become," says Grimm, "had fate led him to know Vittoria in his younger years; and had she met him then, when she was herself less wearied by years and experience!" Now she had nothing to give him but kindly gentleness sympathy, and friendship, while he gave to her the whole long-garnered and restrained love of a lifetime. He was a boy again, with all a boy's passionate ardour, and his idolatry of the loved one. He was transported to heaven when he went to see her in her villa on the outskirts of Rome; in their long and intimate conversations every moment was for him "a delight beyond all imaginings." She was the inspiration of his most exquisite sonnets. And though he

knew that she had no love to give him, that her heart was buried with her dead hero, he was grateful for every smile and gracious word that expressed her sympathy and her friendship. For the rest, he cherished an unshakable hope that her love would be his "beyond the veil."

For nine years Michael Angelo worshipped at her shrine. And then came that tragic day of agony when he watched the life that was so unshakably dear to him ebb away.

The Parting.

He hung over that death-couch, we are told, in such an agony of grief that he almost lost his senses. Only the majesty of the dying lady kept him calm, for her sake; so that when the last hour was come and Vittoria whispered to him, "I am dying. Help me to repeat my last prayer; I cannot now remember the words," he was able to command himself and to murmur with her that beautiful supplication, closing: "I entreat, O most Holy Father, that Thy most living flame may so urge me forward that, not being hindered by any mortal imperfections, I may happily and safely again return to Thee."

Before the prayer ended, Vittoria's voice had sunk into silence, and Michael Angelo was left to finish it alone. Then, as he knelt by her bedside, his lips pressed to her cold hand, she turned to him, and a smile trembled on her lips while she murmured some words he could not hear. So passed from earth the spirit of Vittoria Colonna.

For seventeen years Michael Angelo survived the woman he had loved so well, during which her spirit was always with him, moving him "to gain a fourth crown by the verses he wrote to her." And to his last day it was his great lament that he had "never kissed her, save on the hand."

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Home of Earthquakes.

Italy's latest disastrous earthquake has visited a district that usually suffers only minor tremors put into motion by the volcanic disturbances of Mount Vesuvius and Etna. That these exceedingly active volcanoes are extending fields of violence seems assured from the fact that Vesuvius is located well down within the instep of the Italian "boot," while Etna is still further south on the island of Sicily, just across the narrow straits of Messina from the extreme end of the toe.

These last shocks confined themselves almost entirely to Northern Italy, extending from Florence, the southernmost victim of the quakes, to Milan on the north. But the disturbances at Milan were more or less mild, the great undulations being between Florence and Modena, which is about half way between Florence and Milan.

Southern Italy has been visited by numerous disastrous earthquakes, the first of which there is any reliable record occurring at Catania, Sicily, in the year 1157, when 15,000 people lost their lives. In 1456 there were severe shocks in the vicinity of Naples, statistics of that day allotting a total of 40,000 persons to its toll of human life, while Sicily was again the victim of nature's wrath in the year 1693, when the huge total of 100,000 inhabitants paid the penalty for living so close to Mount Vesuvius and Etna. Great tidal waves washed in over the low shores of the island and added materially to both life and property loss on this occasion. Aquila furnished the ground for the next momentous quake, with a loss of 5,000, which seems small when compared with previously recorded catastrophes.

We now come to the first record of an earthquake in the northern districts of Italy, severe disturbances occurring in the Abruzzi section during 1706, exacting a toll of 15,000 lives and much property damage. As most of this northern part is mountainous it is probable that the property damage was not in as great a proportion as the loss of life.

No quake of any consequence has since visited Northern Italy until the recent one, but it may presage disturbances of a similar nature telegraphed up to that sector through the successive stratas of the Apennines, influenced by the powerful volcanic forces generated by Mount Vesuvius and Etna.

In 1726 the scene of earthquake operations again makes its appearance in Sicily. The brunt of these shocks is borne by the city of Palermo and vicinity, which is on the opposite side of the island from Mount Etna. The loss of 6,000 lives resulted, while many other thousands were rendered homeless. Just six years later Naples had a succession of tremors that reduced its population by 1,900, which is indeed a comparatively small loss for the usual earthquake of Southern Italy. Things then went along quietly enough in an earthquake way, with the exception of the many slight tremors coming yearly, to which the average inhabitant pays little attention, until the year 1783, when the Calabria district experienced one of the worst quakes since becoming the toe of Italy's "boot." This disturbance was possibly caused by the nearness of the volcano to Mount Etna, which is just across the narrow straits of Messina. It is recorded that 25,000 people lost their lives in this catastrophe.

Twenty-two years later Mount Vesuvius evidently got in another one of its telling blows by causing a severe series of quakes in the Naples district, the loss of life being placed at 6,000 and the property damage correspondingly high. In 1835 Calabria again suffered a loss of 1,000 inhabitants from what they considered a minor shake, but the more disastrous one following it in 1857 increased its human toll to 10,000.—New York Tribune.

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When, during the early days of the war, the Seventh Division were very

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