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THE MAID OF PADUA.

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It was on the occasion of the heir of Visconti attaining his majority, that the splendid palace of the count, his father, was the scene of feasting and rejoicing. All the world, that is to say the world of Padua, was there; and every thing which could please the eye or the ear of the man of taste, or administer to the less refined appetites of the lovers of good living, was provided with a liberality commensurate with the princely revenues of the hospitable entertainer.

The host, not confining his invitations to the rich and the high-born, had gathered round him those whose only wealth was their talents, and, among others, was a young student of the university, whose name was Leonardo; and who, by the liveliness of his conversation, and the brilliancy of his wit, contributed largely to the amusement of the evening. Wherever he moved, a circle gathered around him, and even a blind man might have traced his progress, through the crowded saloons, by the laughter which proclaimed his presence.

He was standing by an open window, when some quick reply, which he made to a rallying remark that was addressed to him, attracted the attention of a female who was sitting with her back to the company, and caused her to turn her face full upon the speaker. Leonardo paused, and the merry expression of his features changed, for a moment, to that of admiration, as the beautiful vision of that fair girl's face met his gaze. It will not be difficult to find excuses for the vanity which stimulated the young student to put forth all his powers of conversation, while he felt that the attention of so lovely an auditor was riveted upon him, nor did he tax his genius in vain; a smile from the sweetest lips in all Padua was the rich guerdon of his exertions, as with a sparkling yet good-natured repartee, he turned the jest of some assailant upon himself.

"Did Leonardo fall in love with the damsel?" it will be asked. He was infinitely too discreet a person to think seriously of the heiress of the wealthiest house in Italy. It is true, he thought her the fairest creature he had ever seen; and had he been the heir of Visconti, he would have been but too happy to share his honours and possessions with such a wife. But the case was far otherwise. Leonardo, though of respectable family, was dependent upon his talents for making his way in the world; and the path he had chosen to fame and fortune was that of medicine, in the science of which, he had young as he was, attained a degree of proficiency that had attracted the notice, and gained the applause of the heads of the college.

His means were limited, but, happily for him, his wants were more so, and thus, by abstinence from the gaieties, to use no harsher term, which characterized the generality of the young men of the university, he reaped the advantages of unimpaired health and freedom from the anxiety consequent on pecuniary embarrassments, as well as from the inroads which the pursuit of pleasure ever makes upon the time of the student.

Young ladies of eighteen are not remarkable—to their honour be it mentioned—for pecuniary calculations in affairs of the heart; and we will not disguise from the reader, who has a right to our confidence, that something like admiration of the student found its way into the bosom of Giulietta Montalto, as she listened to the conversation of Leonardo. That his face had anything to do with her admiration we cannot believe, for he was not one of these Werter-visaged men, with an expression which has been described as "half savage half sad," with whom young maidens are wont to fall in love at first sight, and take their morals upon trust.

Leonardo, on the contrary, was the merriest fellow alive; and his countenance said as much; and if a light conscience, and unvarying health, could make a man merry, he had good right to be so. It may be, however, that this was the very quality which had taken Giulietta's fancy. She had known, even in her short life, many very miserable wives, who she was informed had very "sad husbands," and therefore it is possible that she might prefer a merry one. This, however, is mere conjecture—we wish not to dive into the depths of a young lady's heart; though, perhaps, if we did, we should find some very sunny thoughts there. This, however, we do know; that on her arrival at home, she remarked to the Abigail who assisted her to unrobe, that she thought Leonardo worth all the tagged, tasselled, and tinsel-coxcombs at the entertainment.

Well; time passed on, as pass it will—whether we waste or value it; and our young collegian studied, and danced, and fiddled, and joked as usual, with but one apprehension in his mind, namely, that he was too merry for a doctor of physic, and that he should

assuredly laugh in the face of the most profitable half of his patients, that is, those whose diseases existed only in their own imaginations.

"But," says the word of inspiration, "there is a time to laugh and a time to weep;" and Leonardo could be sad, as all who have kind and generous hearts must often be, in this world of misery and tears. He was sad when, at the bedside of some humble patient, who could not bribe the attendance of the distinguished men of the profession, he saw that medicine could do no more, and he could no longer bid the weeping wife or the distracted parent be of good cheer. He was sad too—very sad—when he contemplated the ravages of the disease which kills the soul, and witnessed the agony of the heart which could not pray, save that the mountains and the rocks should fall and "hide him from the wrath of the Lamb."

Leonardo occasionally met Giulietta at public places and private entertainments; and as neither of them had the fashionable accomplishment of keeping the smile of the heart from mounting to the lips, it was discernible enough to a witness of their meeting that the pleasure of it was mutually felt. Doubtless our readers will take for granted that, on all practicable occasions, they squeezed themselves into the recesses of bay windows,—licensed to carry two only—and looked at the moon, and talked in whispers, with innumerable parentheses of sighs, and an occasional application of the gloved finger to the corner of the eye, and other fooleries which the sentimental are wont to enact, to the inconceivable diversion of the bystanders. No such thing: Leonardo never looked sentimental, for he felt that it did not fit his cast of countenance; and he never talked sentiment, because he knew it to be the most unendurable of all twaddle, except to milk-maids and milliners' misses.

But surely, it will be said, he must have been in love with her by this time. I do not think he was. It is true her bright eyes, and her clustering locks, and her fair brow, and her sweet smile, would sometimes float between his eye and the pages of Paracelsus, and he could not help thinking that the husband of such a girl would be a very lucky fellow; and that if the prize fell to himself he should certainly go mad with delight; but when he reflected that all his wealth lay in a futurity of phials and gallipots he would laugh aloud at the absurdity of the thought of such a union.

For several days Leonardo missed "his fair friend," as he sometimes ventured to style her, at "the accustomed place," where the fashion of Padua "most did congregate;" which at first did not particularly excite his surprise, until, not having seen her for a fortnight, he made some inquiries, and heard, with more anxiety than he thought the intelligence would have occasioned him, that she was confined to her room.

It happened one morning, as he was passing through an obscure street in Padua, he felt his garment plucked, and on turning round beheld a stripling, Vincentio by name, whom he recognised as the page of Giulietta. The youth cast a hasty glance around him to satisfy himself that no other eye than Leonardo's was upon him. "Your pardon, signor," he said in a subdued tone, "but I have that to say, which may not be breathed here, lest a bird should carry the matter; but where may I safely communicate with you at nightfall?"

"In no safer place," was the reply; "than my own room, where you will find me from eight until midnight. Know you the house?"

"Yes, signor, and will wait on you at nine."

"Be it so," said Leonardo; and ere the words died upon his lips, the page darted down a narrow avenue, leaving our student lost in a wilderness of conjecture as to the occasion of the promised visit.

The last stroke of the hour of nine was yet vibrating, when a gentle tap was given at the door of Leonardo's humble chamber, and the next moment, the page advanced with noiseless step into the room and stood before the student.

The boy's story was briefly to the effect, that, about three weeks previous, Giulietta had been persuaded to remain in the damp air of the evening longer than was warranted by prudence, and the consequence was a somewhat severe cold: that the sister of the marchese her father, who was frequently on a visit to his house, had professed the greatest alarm on the occasion, and insisted upon calling in medical aid, pointing out one Vivaldi, a physician who had settled in Padua some year or two before, and, by the almost miraculous cures he performed, had acquired a reputation which eclipsed that of every practitioner in the city. The page went on to state that this measure was adopted, if not against

the remonstrance of the marchese, certainly in opposition to his opinion, inasmuch as he was disposed to regard the indisposition of his daughter as a mere cold which the ordinary remedies, and a few hours' confinement to her chamber would remove,

Accordingly the physician came; looked remarkably grave upon the case, hinted at pulmonary disease, and concluded by stating that if prompt measures were not resorted to, he would not answer for the consequences. Of course he had *carte blanche*;—prescribed, and recommended that a nurse should forthwith be provided—some discreet person whom the young lady's family would doubtless be able to select. Her aunt, the marchese's sister, named one on the instant, and Giulietta, *volens volens*, was placed on the permanent sick list. The remedies, however, which were applied by the physician, appeared, in the judgment of the page, to be worse than the disease; for the effects of the first dose were giddiness and loss of sight, and a train of feelings altogether so unusual that if they did not create apprehensions in the breast of the young lady, thoroughly alarmed her faithful servant.

The page paused for a moment at this part of his narrative, when his auditor remarked, "Well, my young friend, in taking for granted that I feel an interest in a lady whose virtues must recommend her to all who have the honour of her acquaintance, you do me but justice; but to confess the truth, I am at a loss to guess to what your story tends. Vivaldi is a man of unquestionable ability—without a rival in Padua, and your mistress is in good hands."

"I doubt it," responded Vincentio.

"Indeed!" exclaimed the student with a smile; "then you differ from all the world in your estimate of his talents."

"Nay," rejoined the stripling, "I doubt not his talents, but I fear that they are sometimes applied to kill as well as to cure."

"In the name of all that is horrible," cried Leonardo, "what do you mean?"

"I will tell you," said the page, "because I can trust you with my secret."

"Your confidence is of rapid growth then," was the rejoinder, "for if I mistake not, we have never exchanged so many words before."

"Have you so soon forgotten," asked the other, "the widow's son whom you visited in his sickness and poverty, and rescued him from an early grave, to be the stay of his mother in her distress, which, thanks to my lord the marchese! it has been his good fortune to alleviate."

"And are you," exclaimed the student in surprise, "the little fellow whom I visited in the dark street by the convent?"

"The same," was the answer, "and he lives to thank you as his preserver."

"Nay," responded Leonardo, "thank God, whose humble instrument He was pleased to make me in your restoration. But to your story. Whence arise your horrible suspicions?"

"I will tell you," said the youth. "Giulietta is the marchese's only child, in the event of whose death the vast estates of the family will, at her father's decease, go to the Count Rinaldi his sister's husband, in the right of his wife. Now all the world knows that the count is in such pecuniary embarrassments that he has been driven to exile himself. His wife is an ambitious woman and I know her to be an unprincipled one, though she bears a fair name in the world, and is an especial favourite of her generous and too confiding brother."

"Well," rejoined Leonardo, "you have assigned a motive to the aunt of the young lady; whether she be actuated by it, 'tis not for me or you to determine; but whence arise your suspicions of Vivaldi?"

"I like not that same Vivaldi," exclaimed the page.

"Nor I either," was the reply, "because he never laughs, and that is a bad sign; but a man may be very disagreeable, and yet not harbour thoughts of murder."

"My mistrust of him," resumed the youth, "arises not so much from one or two somewhat singular deaths which have occurred in families where he has attended,—although they struck me forcibly at the time—as from a look which was exchanged between him and my lady's nurse, and which was not likely to have passed between two persons who professed to meet as entire strangers. They were evidently betrayed into the signal by a forgetfulness of my presence, of which they were no sooner conscious, than Vivaldi turned an eye of scrutinizing inquiry upon my countenance."

"And what read he there?" asked Leonardo.

"As much as he would have gathered from a deal plank or a