

"I agree not with thee,—for can there be aught more worthy of desire or effort than the affections of a pure and virtuous heart? What joy to see it consecrate to thee its holiest and tenderest emotions, and to find ever in the paradise of home, lighted by the smile, gladdened by the voice of love, a blessed retreat from the world's tempests,—a haven where strife, and jealousy, and ambition, and chagrin, are forbidden to intrude, and the soul, soothed into a heavenly calm, casts away, and forgets the vexing cares that have chained it to earth, and learns to think of its immortal powers and destination."

"Thou understandest well thine art, Mignard, or thou couldst never sketch with such vivid grace thine imaginary pictures," said Roussard, smiling as he gazed on the rapt and glowing face of the artist. "For me it is illusory all. I have lived long enough to know that fancy is a deceitful limner—her colours like the prismatic rays that fall through shivered chrystat—are beautiful to gaze upon, but intangible and evanescent as they are brilliant."

"Thou mayest have found them so, my friend; nay rumour says that thou hast. But I marvel how any disappointment, deep as it might have been, should have engendered in a mind kind and dispassionate as thine, such enduring bitterness."

"Didst thou know all my history, Pierre, thou wouldst cease to marvel, or rather thou wouldst marvel still more that from a heart so wronged, could still issue gay thoughts. But it matters not now; some day thou shalt learn my adventures,—they may profit thee much in thy journey through life, and thou wilt then pardon me that I distrust woman, and am oft times cynical towards my brother man."

A frown for an instant darkened the brow of Roussard; but directly the joyous light of a kind and gladsome nature triumphed over it, and again irradiated his open and benevolent features.

"Pardon me," he resumed, "that I have chafed thee and myself with that which concerns not the present moment. Let it pass from thy memory, and now tell me if this *Guido* of thine is ready for delivery?"

"It is, and thou mayest have it transported hither this night."

"Good! for a Florentine brig now lies at the pier, by which I am receiving a consignment of busts, cornices, cameos, &c. Your *Magdalen*, Mignard, must be packed to correspond with these, numbered and labelled in Italian, and, in order completely to mystify the Count, I shall have it carried to his house by the sailors who are to bring hither all that belongs to me from their vessel. So haste thee, and take a last look at thy *Magdalen*. I must have her transported hither tonight, for I am to sup with *De Clairville*, and the choicest crypt in his cellar will furnish wine for the board if I carry

him tidings that his treasure has arrived. But prithee, Mignard, one more word in thy ear. I have feared to wound thee by speaking it, but my friendship for thee will not let me keep silence," and bending towards the artist, he whispered, "I fear thou art deceiving thyself in hoping to win the fair *Rosalie* with this picture of thine, for it is currently reported that the young Baron *Desmonville* is paying suit to thy mistress, and that the light of her smiles is reflected with dazzling lustre from the diamonds that adorn his handsome person."

Mignard had heard this before, and knew it to be untrue that *Rosalie* favoured the advances of the Baron; yet at the whispered words of Roussard, he started as though stung by a serpent.

"It is false!" he said, his lips pale and trembling with emotion. "True, I see her not; but have I not frequent tokens of her faith, penned by her own hand, which forbid me to doubt her! No, I fear not *Desmonville*: his wealth is but as dust in her eyes; it is the fire of genius only, that can kindle in her soul the undying flame of an exalted and enduring passion."

And uttering these words, the agitated artist rushed from the presence of his friend, and hurried through the streets, pausing not till he reached the door of his own dwelling. His impatient knock was quickly answered by an ancient serving woman, and rapidly passing her he entered his studio, and closed and locked the door. Quickly lighting a lamp that he had left upon the porphyry stand, he approached the picture of the *Magdalen*, and gazed as earnestly as though now for the first time beholding it. As his eye lingered on the canvas, where with daring hand he had sought to imitate the exquisite touches of the immortal *Guido*, it gradually lighted up with intense joy and satisfaction, till, overcome with his emotions, he gave them audible utterance, still gazing with the rapt look of a devotee upon his picture.

"Yes," he said, "I have been successful, and I shall win thee at last!—thee, my heart's flower—light of my soul—star of my dim and solitary horizon! Ah, how I deceived myself, when I believed that one aspiration after fame mingled with the passion which consumes me for thee—thee alone, sweetest, most beautiful *Rosalie*!"

He cast himself into a chair, and bending his head upon his folded arms, fell into a long and profound reverie. The past rose before him like a dream. That summer morning, when he was first summoned to paint a likeness of the young *Rosalie De Clairville*—the moment when he entered her boudoir, and beheld her, half child, half woman, sitting on cushions at her doting father's feet, pleased, yet half ashamed to have her lovely semblance pictured by a stranger's hand. Then the long sweet sittings that succeeded, when he was left unmarked to study those angelic features, and note and trea-