

said the lady laughing; "but all this time thou forgettest, willfully I doubt not, the penance we ordained thee, and I so long to hear again thy music! Have I not raved of his sonatas, sweet Janthé, till thou too art all but dying with impatience to hear them?"

"In truth thou hast, dear aunt," said the beautiful girl whom she addressed, and as she spoke a smile like the first ray of sunrise on a vernal landscape shed its light over her lovely face, giving an irresistible charm to its expression, and heightened brilliancy to the exquisite lines of her complexion. Her voice was low and of a reed-like sweetness, and as Guiseppé's eye lingered admiringly upon the youthful beauty, the elder lady seemed uneasy, and annoyed that another should divide with her, even the passing homage of the young and graceful student. But before she could entirely regain the attention which her vanity coveted, they were interrupted by the appearance of the page, Fabian, who was seen advancing towards them.

"He brings some message from my uncle," said Janthé, and she went forward quickly to meet him, but returned almost instantly, followed by the page—

"My lord," he said, "desires the immediate presence of the Countess Bertha, and the Lady Janthé, as some strangers of distinction have arrived at the palace, to whom he wishes to present them. Moreover, Signor," he said, addressing Guiseppé, "I am commanded by his reverence to seek thee out, which I was now on my way to do; but having found thee here, I need but deliver his message, which is, that thou present thyself at the palace to-morrow evening, where thou wilt meet many rare performers, among whom, as my lord bishop was pleased to say, the student of Padua would not rank the lowest."

"I am beholden to thy master for his courtesy, sir page," said Guiseppé. "yet marvel on what he grounds his golden opinion of my poor skill, inasmuch as it hath never been tested in his presence."

"But it hath, Signor," returned the page—"once at the villa of a noble lady, near Padua, and again this morning when he heard thy music and questioned me as to whence it came; so I told him of our rencontre, describing thee and thy mode of playing, and he recognized at once the student minstrel whom he hath long wished to meet, and sent me forth to find thee, with the message which I have but now delivered to thee."

"Truly, I owe thy lord heavily thanks for his good will and kindness," said Guiseppé, "but—"

"Nay we will have no buts, in the way of thy obedience to the lord bishop's commands," said the Countess Bertha, breaking gaily in upon the

young man's meditated apology. "He loves not opposition to his will, and ill brooks a slight in return for offered kindness. What say'st thou, Janthé, do I not counsel him wisely?"

"Ay, dost thou sweet aunt," said the fair girl whom she addressed, and her voice sounded to Guiseppé like the low aerial tones of the wind-harp, when the light-breeze gently touches its strings. "And yet," she added, "with a lovely blush, 'I would not that thou constrain the young stranger over much, since he doubtless hath reasons of weight for declining the request; and if so, sure am I, my kind uncle will not regard his refusal as a slight.'"

"And I said this but to force him to our wishes," returned the Countess, "and now with thy straitforwardness, thou silly child, thou hast quite marred my purpose."

"I meant not so, dear aunt," said Janthé, "and perhaps—that is, if he love music as thou sayest he doth,—he will not say us nay, when we tell him that the great violinist Veracini, is to be chief among the performers on the evening of the concert."

"Veracini!" exclaimed Guiseppé with enthusiasm—"Francesco Veracini!" he reiterated, for the name fell like a spell of magic upon his ear and transported him in a moment to the church at Venice, and again filled it with the rich and thrilling melodies of that marvellous performer.

"Thou wilt come to us, then," asked Janthé with artless earnestness.

"Ay, Veracini will win thee, though our eloquence hath failed to do so," added the Countess Bertha, pleased, yet half piqued that any allurement should carry with it more weight than her wishes.

"I should resist both," said Guiseppé, "but that I have not strength to withstand the double temptation; and so I yield me to its power, turning a deaf ear to the voice of duty which pleads so earnestly within me."

"Duty, Signor?" exclaimed the countess; "I prithee, tell me what duty thou wilt violate by accepting the hospitality of the Bishop of Padua?"

"None, fair lady, by that simple act," returned Guiseppé. "But they who by nature have a right to command my entire obedience look not with approving eyes on my intense love of music; and therefore I should avoid all places, where the passion which I have never yet been able to subdue, may find food for its cravings, and so grow into giant strength and power. My own wishes would lead me to dwell ever in an atmosphere of melody, and of late I have done so, but too much—turning with disgust from my