

As the last melancholy cadence of her song died on the soft evening air, the Indian girl said abruptly,—“I love to read Keats’ poetry, and I love to think about him. He had one master ambition, that of soaring to the lofty height to which the great poets of earth have attained—when denied a title to kindred genius by the world, his dream of life was over,—he died! Happier than those, who live, and live to suffer, their bright visions for ever fled!”

“And yet, Fauna, do not you think there is something on earth worth living for, as long as we can give pleasure or benefit to those we love?” asked Helen.

“Ah! yes!” exclaimed the Indian girl, her dark eyes lightening at the thought—“you say well!”

“Poor Keats!” said Max, “he was the victim of that divine poesy in which he lived and had his being. Like the nightingale so sweetly sang by Ford

“Ordauld to be  
Music’s first martyr.”

struggling vainly to utter the flash of high born fancies which dwelt in his entranced soul.

“He failed, and failing grieved, and grieving died!” or like the tongueless nightingale of his exquisite St. Agnes’ Eve, “heart stifled”—full of ethereal imaginings to which he could give no adequate voice!”

“When I first knew you,” said Helen, “your intimate acquaintance with English literature surprised me.”

“My mother early taught me to understand and love it. Never shall I forget the delight I experienced when I first read Shakspeare. I can only compare it to that which the discoverer of a new world might feel.”

“How beautiful,” exclaimed Helen, earnestly, “is your painting of Prospero releasing Ariel! The work of the artist is worthy of the poet—what more could I say?”

“To hear you speak thus,” said Max, “more than repays me for all of doubt and disappointment I have endured, in my search after the true inspiration which can alone render the painter worthy of living in the hearts of those yet to be born. Yet if you knew the anguish I felt when I first beheld the divine works of Raffaele. Unlike Correggio, I bowed my head, and exclaimed, “I am not a painter!” Still I persevered. Always doubting, sometimes despairing, yet still hoping it was not a lying spirit which whispered to me that I had at least some portion of that divine gift which men call Genius!”

“He who has so passionate a love for his art, so true and pure an admiration for the aesthetic

beauty and sublimity attained by the great masters, and who, while he distrusts every effort he makes, still feels the creative voice strong within urging him onward, and knows that at each attempt he approaches somewhat nearer to the lofty ideal stamped upon his soul, must possess indeed the truest genius!”

Max raised his soul-inspired eyes to the face of Helen, as she ceased speaking. Her glance swimming in the lustre which, though the sun had set, yet lingered in the air, met his, and in that moment the electric chain of sympathy vibrated in the hearts of both and mingled them together.

A deep sigh close at hand roused them from that moment’s blissful forgetfulness, and looking round, they beheld Fauna gazing on them with looks of passionate sorrow which Max understood too well. When she saw that she was observed, she sprang from her seat, and fled down the bank. Helen rose to follow, when a scene burst upon her sight which she now witnessed for the first time. Through the fading day light, fires had sprung up on the edge of the clearings, brightening into more vivid flames each instant, and throwing long lines of light over the dark surfaces of the lake. Now it would not have been difficult to imagine them the gas lamps of some city whose buildings distance concealed; anon the blaze shot higher and higher, climbing the tall branches of the trees and wreathing them with crowns of flame, or casting out serpent-like tongues of fire, ran along the ground. Sometimes the smoke mounting upwards in a cloud of light vapour, hung around the wood like a veil of transparent gauze, the stems of the trees appearing through its shroud like spectres wearing coronets of flame. At intervals, the fire would run along a tall column of smoke, and catching the top of some blasted pine while the lower part remained untouched, blaze like some tall pharos, holding its crescent on high. Moving about and among the burning piles were the men who had kindled the fires, and as their rude figures, blackened by the pine smoke, flitted to and fro now in the broad light of the flames, “now is glimmer, and now in gloom,” stirring with long poles the log-heaps piled high like funeral pyres and throwing, at intervals, fresh bundles of brushwood into the grottos and caverns of fire which seemed greedily opening to receive them, they vividly brought to the memory of the young artist and Helen the black cherubim whom Dante saw torturing the condemned souls in the burning lake. The whole scene thrown into powerful contrast by the encircling darkness, the shadow forest and quiet lake, stirred innumerable romantic and