

emissaries, to reach their startled ears. We have numerous strong-holds among the mountains; this, called the Wolf's Keep, is only one of them, and our band is divided into many branches, each formidable in its single strength, but united, terrible beyond belief: and as well might the Pope essay to rout yon glittering host from the heavens, as to exterminate by his arms, or awe into submission by his thunders, the fierce brigands of the Apennines, with Gulio Lorenzani at their head.

"Think'st thou, that in my desperate career, love has ceased to live within my breast? I tell thee, no!—but it is so blended with revenge and hate, that each is by turns, a triumphant and absorbing passion. I long to call the proud Viola mine; but I burn as ardently, to avenge the scorn, the hatred, which, when she fled from my impassioned suit, were written on every lineament of her angelic face. Ay, I could sigh away my life upon her lips, could stoop to kiss the dust that bore the impress of her foot, and yet—yet"—and terribly his form dilated as he muttered between his closed teeth; "yet, even while she smiled upon my breast, I could strike this blade into her heart, and die content!

"Still, as I have told thee, there are moments, nay, hours, when the remembrance of all I have lost, the purity of soul which I have sullied, the high resolves which I have suffered the whirlwind of fiery passion to destroy, come over me like the desolating blast of the simoon, and bend me in weakness to the earth. It was in one of these moods, caused by long physical derangement, that the wish sprung up within me, to behold again the Lady Viola. It was like a haunting spell, and each hour more strongly possessed me, till one day, under the disguise of a lowly pilgrim, I obtained an entrance to the lordly palace of the Du Conti, and was welcomed by the Duke with kind and reverential courtesy.

"He dreamed not that, beneath the calm sanctity of my exterior, throbbed that fiery heart, upon which he had cast so many words of scorn; nor did'st thou, young man, as I sat with thee that night at the festive board, deem me other than I seemed; but I scanned thee closely, and I saw through thy disguise, although thou could'st not penetrate mine—I read, too, its motive; for when a messenger came from the Lady Viola, praying her father to forgive her absence, thy face was like an unclosed book, revealing to the gazer's eye, the secret thought which, but now, was shut closely up within its folds.

"I, too, was vexed that she appeared not, but I had learned better than thou, the art of self-disguise, and resolving not, when I had so far ventured, to be baffled in my purpose, I had recourse to another artifice, in order to accomplish it. I pretended that I was bound by a vow which obliged me to pass the hours from midnight till dawn, in fervent devotion, beneath the open vault of heaven; and I

begged permission to remain on the balcony which looked toward the east, from whence my weary eyes might catch the first beam of the rising day. It was a simple boon to crave, and freely granted; and thither, when the evening meal was ended, I repaired.

"I knew that the apartments of the Lady Viola, opened from thence, and that it was her wont, in former days, to come forth in the still hush of night, and gaze from it upon the glories of the outspread heavens. And so I watched and waited, in the painful and unaccustomed posture of lowly prayer, for her coming, and I waited not long in vain. I heard her light step approaching—her sigh floated past me on the soft breeze; the flutter of her robe stirred the air around me, and yet I moved not—my very heart seemed pulseless in that moment of deep emotion, and the low music of her voice thrilled through it, before it again bounded with life and passion in my breast.

"She cast herself on her knees near me, and her lips uttered a low and touching prayer, before I ventured to raise my eyes, although conscious of her presence. She ended her petition, and seeing my attention turned towards her,

"'Pardon,' she said, in gentle and entreating accents; 'pardon me, that with earthly thoughts I come to break in upon thy holy communion with heaven. But I heard of thy presence this night, and that thou had'st journeyed from afar, bound on a distant pilgrimage to the tomb of our Redeemer, and I would pray thee to remember in thy orisons before that sacred shrine, one, who died by the hand of violence—and me, the unhappy cause of his untimely fate.'

"Sobs choked her utterance, and, jealous even of the tears that flowed for the dead, I could scarcely restrain my speech to a calmness, that I felt not—and yet I coolly said:

"Be comforted, lady; if thou wert innocent of the sin in 'thought, as well as in deed, thou art already forgiven. But, for the wretched murderer,—hast thou no mercy to ask of heaven, for him?"

"'Ah, yes, and for that too, I seek thee,' she replied, placing in my hand a purse heavy with gold; 'take this, and let its contents purchase masses in the holy city, for the penitence and salvation of the miserable being, whose crime has exiled him from the fellowship of men, and provoked the dreadful anathema of the church upon his head.'

"'Lady, thy wish shall be obeyed,' I said. 'But keep thy gold—it would but burden me in my pilgrimage; and grant me, I pray thee, the name of the unhappy outcast, for whom thy compassion is awakened.'

"She drew nearer to me, and how passionately I struggled to forbear clasping her to my breast, and how wildly throbbed my heart, as, turning her lustrous eyes on mine, she softly said: