

Signora di Colonna's appearance in Count Raselli's saloon, was hailed with universal delight, for her presence had now become a rarer thing than in olden days, and she was instantly surrounded by a group of kind, joyous friends. Whilst answering their warm congratulations and enquiries, her eye fell on her host, who was standing near a distant door in earnest conversation with a stranger, a tall, elegant looking man, whom she instantly conjectured, must be the friend he was so desirous of presenting to her. In another moment, the latter turned, and the heart of Bianca di Colonna bounded wildly, and a mist swam before her eyes, as the well known, well loved features of Adrian Woodville met her gaze. But no time was given her for thought or wonderment. Raselli was already advancing towards her with his strange guest, and with a desperate effort, she mastered her overpowering agitation, at least in outward seeming.

Calmly, proudly, Woodville approached, and even in that hour of fearful emotion, Bianca could not help wondering at the stately calmness that had replaced the mirthful recklessness of his youth. The instant, however, his glance fell on herself, his whole countenance changed. Pale as marble he became, whilst his dark eyes emitted a sudden gleam, so flashing, so meteor like, that it almost startled herself. Raselli, however, quietly pronounced her name "the Marchesa di Colonna," and with a smothered sigh, Woodville bowed, and turned away. Blanche was too fearfully agitated to bear more, and hurriedly telling her friends, "that the heat of the rooms had rendered perfectly insupportable the headache which had tormented her all day;" she ordered her carriage, and drove home.

The thousand varying feelings, the wild agitation and surprise that shook her very soul, as she recalled in the solitude of her apartment, the eventful last half hour, were indescribable. Adrian Woodville her early friend and lover—Adrian Woodville she secretly mourned and loved—he in Italy, in Naples, breathing once again the same air as herself, but why should she rejoice. What was she to him now. Years had surely changed him, had obliterated her memory and the memory of his early attachment. Perhaps some closer and more irrevocable bond, separated him more hopelessly from her. Oh! 'twas madness to indulge in joy at his coming. That coming would but tear open the wounds of the past, render more insupportable the life which was already a heavy enough burden. No, she would see him no more, she would seek no scene where she might meet him, where she would even hear his name spoken

of. And he, he knew her not. She would beware of revealing the truth, but would remain to him the Italian Marchesa, the unknown daughter of another land.

Though the night was far advanced, she sought not her couch, but leaning against the casement, through which the fragrant air from the gardens beneath, stole up, cooling her throbbing temples, she stood in silent communing with her own breast and the mighty past. Now, she was a child roaming through the woods and fields of her distant English home, with her boy lover Adrian Woodville, again he stood beside her, pouring the love and vows of manhood into an ear, which listened alone to the false Fitz-Clarence's winning words, again breathed his agonized farewell, a farewell, generous, compassionate to her, even in the midst of her own utter misery, and as Bianca recalled that mournful parting scene, she covered her face with her hands and wept as if her very heart would break.

When Rosetta entered her mistress's room the following morning, she wondered strangely to find her standing beside her casement, in her festal attire, looking so wan and spirit-like. The lady however, took no note of her surprise; she only glanced towards the mirror when the girl uttered a startled exclamation concerning her deathly appearance, and murmured, low to herself:

"Yes, I now resemble more the Blanche Castleton that he once knew, and I am glad of it."

Wearily that morning passed to the beauty and idol of Naples, and the humblest *contadina* that tripped through its streets, would scarcely have exchanged places with her had they also to take her saddened brow and heavy heart. The sun had mounted high in the heavens, marking the flight of time, but the lady still sat in the same bowed position, her mournful gaze fixed on the casement, her thoughts far, far away. At length she was disturbed by the entrance of a servant, who came to announce a visitor in the salon.

The Marchesa's first impulse was to refuse seeing the guest under plea of indisposition, but a moment's thought told the necessity of endeavoring to banish the olden reminiscences, the dawning feelings which were beginning to assume so distinct a form. This was easiest achieved by seeking distraction, society, whatever might banish thought, and with a quick step she rose and passed from the room. On nearing the saloon, the first object on which her startled glance fell, was Adrian Woodville, standing before the picture, his early love token, and gazing on it with a fixed intentness, her own devoted interest had never rivalled. Oh! how familiar, how friendly