

double locked, and withdrawing the key, rose and drew forward a seat for his visitor.

"Let it bring me fame and the hand of Rosalie, and I care not for gold," said the artist fervently.

"Pshaw! the boy's head is full of romance," returned the broker, half impatiently. "Fame is a good thing, Mignard; but if it bring not something more solid with it, will it feed thee, or furnish one substantial comfort for thy pretty wife, when thou shalt win her? Earn fame if thou canst, and none shall blame thee; but be not content with that, unless it yield thee wherewithal to buy bread. Want ever lacks friends, and even genius, if clothed in rags, may lie in the ditch for rich souls to trample on."

"True, true, good master Paul! I know well that a silken doublet wins more regard than an eloquent lip,—yet, as I think gold must needs be the consequence of a fair and honourable fame, I will first strive for that which I covet most, and doubt not the other will speedily follow. And now tell me, hast thou seen the Count to-day?"

"Aye have I, and fulfilled my task to a nicety; so if thou fail not in thine, thou shalt shortly reap love and glory to thy heart's content."

"And thou hast taught him to expect a veritable Guido?"

"Nothing less, I warrant thee, than a chef d'œuvre of that great master, which I told him I daily expected from Italy. He was in transports of delight, begged me to speak of it to no other person, but send it, immediately on its arrival, to him, and he would give me any price I might demand for it. In truth, he is picture mad, and easily deceived, though he thinks himself qualified to decide at first sight on the merits and authenticity of the veriest old painting that might chance to be disembowelled from Herculaneum. Therefore, if thou hast made good thy boast, and approached in any degree to the style and manner of Guido, thou mayest easily deceive this vaunted connoisseur."

"Ay, not only him, but any amateur, however skilled, who may sit in judgment upon my piece; nay, I fear not even the acumen of Lebrun, whose life has been spent in the study of works of art, till the peculiarity of every style is as familiar to him as the alphabet of his mother tongue; for I have given to the Magdalen the highest finish of my pencil, and Guido himself would not scorn to own it."

"Thou art over confident, boy, and it is so unlike thee, that I tremble for the issue of thy experiment. God grant that disappointment may not be thy lot; but in truth, I scarcely know how thou couldst so far have surpassed all thy former attempts as to have achieved, so much to thine own satisfaction, this difficult task."

"Dost thou remember, friend Roussard, the Ita-

lian proverb, which says, '*Chi ha l'amor nel petto, ha lo sprone a i fianchi?*'" If thou dost, thou may'st know by what magic I have accomplished this seemingly impossible work. So I once should have deemed it, but since the day when I declared my love for Rosalie, and her proud father spurned me with the words, 'When thou canst paint like Guido, thou mayest ask and obtain the hand of my daughter,' have I resolved to win on his own terms the prize I coveted. He dreamed not of my essaying such a task; but thought his taunt, for so he intended it, equivalent to a final rejection. He knew not the force of love, the resolution of a determined will. From that hour the works of Guido have been my thought by day, my dream by night. Every shade and line of that unrivalled master,—the grace, expression, colouring, harmony, of his paintings have been my ceaseless study, till I seemed to catch his very spirit and my own canvas glowed with a near semblance to his perfection. But as the work grew into breathing beauty beneath my pencil, another, and scarcely less powerful passion, mingled with that, which first roused me to the full exertion of my powers. And now a burning thirst for fame possesses me, and the glory of being called a successful imitator, even, of Guido, would almost—yes I may say it, almost recompense me for the loss of Rosalie."

"I would fain believe thee, Pierre; for what to thee should love be in comparison with that goodly heritage of fame, which, as thou sayest, is the precursor of wealth—wealth that will place thee above princes; for thou hast the gift of genius, which God has not liberally bestowed upon them, and which neither their sordid gold can purchase, nor their arbitrary power command; and yet thou art so desperately enamoured, that, notwithstanding this sudden breaking forth of a noble ambition, I warrant me, wert thou left to choose between the praise of men and the love of thy fair mistress, thou wouldst weakly prefer the latter."

"On what ground dost thou build that opinion, after the avowal which I just now made to thee?"

"On very fair ground, namely, that to win thy mistress thou hast achieved what else would have been to thee an impossible task."

"Ay, that was my first incentive; but said I not, that what thou callest a nobler passion, mingled with my love, and urged me on to the completion of my work?"

"Thou didst so, I acknowledge, and I rejoice at it, for though I grant thy sweet Rosalie is a fair guerdon enough to struggle for, yet, methinks, one gifted as thou art, should find nobler incentives to exertion than the fleeting love of a frail and fickle woman."

* "Who feels love in the breast, feels a spur in the limbs."