

ments. We become enamoured of it under one form or other, and we seem to live in a new existence, where every object breathes of the hallowed charms of poetry. The green woods, and the murmuring stream, and the voice of birds, and the gentle rustling of the winds, as they stir the shaded foliage, or ruffle in gentleness the quiet lake, assume for us each an interest unknown, unfelt before. We no longer look upon them with the same unmoved eye. We immediately associate their charms with the aspirations of our love-imbued fancy, and all that our material vision can embrace of mild sublimity, or quiet beauty, is regarded with a soul-excited eye for admiration and enjoyment.

W. S.

WITHOUT A RIVAL.

BY THEODORE S. FAY.

"THERE was never anything so beautiful from the palette of a mere mortal!" exclaimed old Berto Linaiulo.

"The boy has signed a contract with the father of mischief, for by no other means that I know could this be effected!" added Antonello.

"What delicacy—what brilliancy—what harmony of colouring!" observed Donato.

"I really am perplexed and confounded," rejoined Berto. "I begin to believe there is magic in it."

"All the master spirits of Florence," remarked a fair lady of high rank, who, among the rest, had come to gaze upon the painting—"all the master spirits in Florence may hide their heads now."

"Your art, signors," added her companion to the surrounding artists, "can produce nothing like that."

"Did you say a boy, Giulietta!" demanded the lady.

"Ay, madam, and with a shape as seemly as my own; and that is something, I ween."

"So young and handsome?"

"His face is as fair and unsullied as any on his own canvass—as fair—I had almost said as yours, madam."

"Nay, then, if he be so, it were worth a coronet to see him."

"And have you never, is it possible, beheld him?"

"Never, how should I; he has been away—abroad; he is just returned to Italy."

"Ay, madam; but before he went, and since his return he has, I am almost afraid to say, often crossed your path."

"Mine, Giulietta! what do you mean?"

"Alas! madam, this young painter loves you—has long loved you with a kind of adoration which belongs only to enthusiasm, refinement, intellect and genius."

"How you run on! You are a child, Giulietta—you jest."

"No, madam."

"And if you do not, what care I. This young man is audacious if he presume to think of me before I have interchanged a word with him—before I know his character or listen to his voice."

"Ah! but, madam, you have listened to his voice. It was he who sung beneath your window last year, and who saved you in the path by the river from the ruffian Bandenelli. Despairing of your favour—for genius is ever modest—he withdrew from Florence and went abroad to foreign lands—beyond the Alps I scarce know where. There his genius for painting drew all eyes, and he has carried his art so far that no noble is richer and no painter more renowned. He has just returned. This is his first work here. The critics are all in raptures, and his brother artists are dying of envy."

"Well, I hope he has long ago forgotten me," said the lady, with a passing blush. "I remember the boy you speak of, a mere child; noble and princelike, certainly, but a silly boy. I never supposed he had been bold enough to think of me; travel has doubtless cured him. It was an idle dream."

"Ah! no, madam, Signor Dominica loves you yet; he sought me yesterday, and, to say the truth, induced me to persuade you here that he might learn your opinion of his production."

"It is most beautiful, it is heavenly; but where found he a face so lovely—not on earth, surely?"

"It is your portrait, madam, from memory, and he has really succeeded in—"

"Hush, Giulietta, your tongue has no bounds."

"Look, madam, he has entered the hall at this moment."

"Let us go, Giulietta, instantly."

"It is too late."

"He bows to you, Giulietta, and with the prettiest blush. Yes, it is the stranger who has so mysteriously hovered near me—gained an interest in my heart and then abandoned me."

"How, madam?"

"What have I said! Ah! Giulietta, you have betrayed me; you have made me betray myself. He is coming this way, too."

"Yes, he approaches—he retreats—he will retire—you may never see him again."

"Well, let him come, I will speak to him."

At a sign from the maiden, the young man approached, with a deep obeisance and a colour that rose perceptibly at the unwonted honour of being thus publicly presented to the haughtiest and most beautiful of the Florentine nobility.

"Young painter," said the lady, resuming her self-possession, and with a grace and sweetness that dazzled the eyes and the heart of that servid worshipper of beauty, "your production, which attracts the attention of all Florence, has not escaped mine. It has afforded me unmingled pleasure."

"I am too much honoured," replied the artist in a low voice, "when such eyes deign to dwell even