

"Dead! Dead! My soul's delight. In my heart's core all these years there has lurked the one desire to cross the river of life and be with my beloved," he said, in longing, yearning agony. How deeply the lines were writing the story of his heart in his handsome face! How weary the lithesome step of two short weeks ago had become! The voice was still as musical and gentle as ever, but the tone was sad—like the singing of the nuns in the Trinità de Monti.

The evening before the marriage Father Eugenio spent alone with Merlina. He told her the story of his life, as though it were of another. When he had finished he put out his arms to her, crying:

"Elena was your mother! I am your father! Elena! Elena! Look down from Heaven and bless your child!"

He wound his arms around her slender form, and pressed her frantically to his breast. Her arms were tightly closed about his neck as she sobbed: "Father! father! my father! my own darling father, how I love you! Sweet parent, do not weep."

Tears were fast following each other down his cheeks. Merlina, with a dainty little handkerchief, wiped first Eugenio's cheeks and then her own, which she pressed close to his, as she sobbed:

"It breaks my heart, dear father, to see you weep. Look at me—I'm not crying."