

and affections of those kind parents, who have made it to me a paradise of love."

"Ah! it would be happiness to share that home, so quiet and so calm, with them—with thee," she murmured, blushing as she spoke, at the full confession which her words involved. "I love not pomp," she added, "and shrink from the display, the clat, and the splendour of the life to which my uncle would condemn me; but yet, to sever thus the tie that holds me to his heart, I cannot—dare not so repay his kindness. I were an ingrate if I did, when years have shown the tender love—the fond and ceaseless care—with which, for my dear mother's sake, he nurtured me."

"For her sake, then, if not for thine, he still should seek thy happiness," replied Guiseppe; "and if he doth, there is no cause for flight—nor would I name it to thee, but for the haunting fear, that when our love is known, his anger will enforce our separation, and effect for thee without delay, the hated union which shall render it eternal!"

"Dismiss that fear," she said, "for it is groundless. My hand, no less than my heart, is at my own disposal, and neither, without my own free consent, shall become the property of another. Though in all things else my uncle may control me, in this he never shall; and if unjust power is used to constrain me, thou hast named a way by which I may preserve inviolate the freedom of my choice."

"And thou wilt avail thyself of it?" asked Guiseppe, with trembling anxiety.

"I will, indeed," she answered, firmly, but yet reluctantly, "and not until I find escape from an enforced marriage impossible."

"And to decide this, thou permittest me to name my hopes to thine uncle without delay, and to ask, even now, though faint the prospect of obtaining it, the precious boon of this dear hand," he said, as he clasped it fondly in his own.

"Alas! I know not," she replied, with a troubled air. "It were, in truth, better to learn our fate at once; but yet I dread all that may follow thy avowal, for I fear there is little hope from my uncle's clemency, his purposes are so resolute—his will so firm, and this projected alliance hath so long been viewed by him as an event, of whose ultimate fulfilment no doubt could exist."

"Thy words fill me with terror!" exclaimed Guiseppe, his passionate eyes fixed tenderly upon her, "for they threaten the extinction of that dear hope which this hour hath sprung up in my heart, to bloom there ever, as I fondly thought, in the glad sunshine of thy angel smile. Ah! I cannot see it so cruelly destroyed, and, I pray

thee, let me still cherish it in silence, and in secret, still see thee day by day, and breathe to thee, when no ear is by to listen, the deep, undying love with which thou hast inspired me. Patiently will I await the hour when I may dare to claim thee openly, and till then —"

A low rustling sound from the passage at that moment startled the lovers, and Guiseppe, leaving his sentence unfinished, both sprang in alarm to their feet, while their throbbing hearts seemed suddenly to pause, as they turned in uncertainty to listen. But all was again still without, and then once more the same sound, as of some one cautiously descending the stairs, met their ears. Pale and agitated, Ianthé, with clasped hands, sank trembling on a seat, while Guiseppe, touched by her silent agony, and unable to endure his own suspense, whispered her to await his return without fear, and rushed out to discover, if possible, the intruder.

Though the apartment which he quitted was still illuminated with the golden twilight of that delicious elime, the landing place and the narrow winding stairs, were involved in utter darkness, save where a few rays struggled in through the small loop holes, with which, at intervals, the thick walls of the tower were pierced, for the purpose, doubtless, both of defence from within, and also of lighting the ascent to its summit. But well acquainted with the localities of the place, Guiseppe found his way without difficulty down the rough stairs, descending them with celerity, in order to overtake, if possible, a figure which he was almost certain he saw flying before him as he proceeded. But it seemed to elude his pursuit and like some shadowy form to flit rapidly on as he approached, till, on reaching the bottom of the flight, it vanished altogether, he knew not how or where, from view.

Disappointed, he stood beneath the low brow of the portal, looking anxiously around him upon the glowing world without, as beautiful it lay, bathed in hues of radiance, while the young moon, with her attendant planet, the lovely star of evening, hung in mild splendour among the crimson glories of the west. How peaceful and how calm the scene—how touching and how holy the contrast which it offered to the disturbed, tumultuous world within him! And as he gazed, he felt rebuked by the bland and rosy smile of Nature's face, into quiet trust and resignation to whatever fate the great Disposer of the future might have yet in store for him.

After lingering a few minutes in the vain expectation of discovering the individual, whom he felt convinced had been both an eye and ear witness of his passionate interview with Ianthé, he turned away, and retraced his steps to the apart-