

with him. Real emotions at once set aside the semi-credence they had given to their own suggestions.

"Hush! she will sing again," whispered Adela. "It is the most delicious contralto." Murmurs of objection to the voice being characterized at all by any technical word, or even for a human quality, were heard.

"Let me find *zis* woman!" cried the prose enthusiast Mr. Pericles, imperiously, with his bearskin thrown back on his shoulders, and forth they stepped, following him.

In the middle of the wood there was a sandy mound, rising half the height of the lesser firs, bounded by a green-grown vallum, where once an old woman, hopelessly a witch, had squatted, and defied the authorities to make her budge: nor could they accomplish the task before her witch-soul had taken wing in the form of a black night-bird, often to be heard jarring above the spot. Lank dry weeds and nettles, and great lumps of green and grey moss, now stood on the poor old creature's place of habitation, and the moon, slanting through the fir-clumps, was scattered on the blossoms of twisted orchard-trees, gone wild again. Amid this desolation, a dwarfed pine, whose roots were partially bared as they grasped the broken bank that was its perch, threw far out a cedar-like hand. In the shadow of it sat the fair singer. A musing touch of her harp-strings drew the intruders to the charmed circle, though they could discern nothing save the glimmer of the instrument and one set of fingers caressing it. How she viewed their rather impertinent advance toward her, till they had ranged in a half-circle nearer and nearer, could not be guessed. She did not seem abashed in any way, for, having preluded, she threw herself into another song.

The charm was now more human, though scarcely less powerful. This was a different song from the last: it was not the sculptured music of the old school, but had the richness and fulness of passionate blood that marks the modern Italian, where there is much dallying with beauty in the thick of sweet anguish. Here, at a certain passage of the song, she gathered herself up and pitched a nervous note, so shrewdly triumphing, that, as her voice sank to rest, her hearers could not restrain a deep murmur of admiration.

Then came an awkward moment. The ladies did not