

"Yes," said Benedict. "She had no right to drive me from her in her grief."

"She did not want to bring dishonor upon you," said Xavier.

"She has brought worse—ruin," said Benedict gloomily.

"Ruin, when to-morrow you will be famous?"

"Famous! Ah, you, too, with that word on your lips! What is this fame to me? To whom can I offer it? Will any face grow joyful because of my triumph? No; I have toiled, and they tell me I have succeeded; but I worked with pain and a sort of rage. I wanted fame to avenge me, and I sought it no matter where. Do you think I absolve myself, Xavier? No. To-morrow this statue will pass out of my keeping; in six months' time it will stand in open daylight, attracting crowds of sight-seers; this evil work will make me rich, but it cannot make me happy. Oh for the pure fame that I once sought for Sabine's sake! Oh for the crowns I once offered, not to pagan deities, but to the Madonna! All is over. I chose this, and I cannot now draw back."

Benedict rose and unveiled the rough cast of his St. Cecilia.

"Look at that clay figure," he said; "it would have been worthy of Sabine and of myself. I saw Sabine as beautiful as that the evening she sang the *O Jesu* of Haydn, which she will never, never sing again for me."

Emotion choked his voice. He made a desperate struggle for composure, failed, sobbed aloud, and threw himself into Xavier's arms, saying,

"Oh my brother, my brother!"

Tears came into Xavier's eyes.

"I can understand," said he. "I have been too weak myself to blame you. On the one hand the saint, on the other the idol, and you prostrated yourself before the latter."