

Two Loves.

Deep within my heart of hearts, dear, bound with all its strings, Two Loves are together reigning...

ASTORGA'S "STABAT MATER."

A Wonderful Tone Picture of Sorrow and Its History.

CHAPTER I.

There is a sweet and mysterious legend, now half forgotten, of the existence of wonderfully beautiful flowers...

This little sketch shall treat of a royal bloom which in the eighteenth century burst forth from a soil of sorrow...

His magnificent Stabat Mater has been but recently rescued from the dust of oblivion, by a few warm-hearted musicians.

The wild convulsions of the Revolution of 1701 in Sicily had ended. The heads of the noblest of the Sicilians had fallen under the axe of the executioner...

The last of the executions took place in the neighborhood of Palermo. The last of the rebellious barons ended there his life.

No, a child he was hardly to be called, the slight fifteen year old lad who sat clasping the stake in his arms.

Passers-by might have mistaken him, in his black satin dress—last and only remnant of former wealth—for one of those black marble statues which are sometimes erected upon graves.

It was not long before the citizens of Palermo streamed forth to the place of execution. The tale of the struggling being conched on the grave stirred the sympathies of all.

the young martyr; they knelt by his side, and begged the all-compassionate Mother to send an angel to remove from his soul the terrible curse of insanity...

But, in the night that melted into the morning of that day, as passers-by relate, a carriage drawn by four white horses drove near the grave.

When the boy awoke from his stupor his head was pillowed on the breast of the veiled lady, gentle arms were about him and he felt his forehead and lips bathed with strengthening cordials.

Next morning the people found the grave-mound level with the earth. In place of the stake a golden cross arose, and a green wreath hung thereon.

And where did the Princess take Emanuel? Far, far from his native land to the cool halls of a Spanish cloister in the Province of Leon.

There they tended him as one tends a delicate flower, and the gentle hands and soft voices of the pious brethren were to his wounded soul as spring air to the young seed.

Thus sat he one August night at his beloved organ, playing as raptly as was his wont. He was so raised above all thoughts of earth, so exalted in mood...

"Oh hear—hear! that is the death cry of my mother! hide me, hide me, that I may not hear!" and falling on his pallet he buried his face in the pillows.

He thought of him as he sat down at the organ, and his thoughts became prayers, and his prayers presently were transformed into melody.

Angelical indeed was the form of the face into which he gazed, but its expression reminded one of those figures which old painters liked so well to paint, which they called fallen angels.

"Play on," he said, laying his thin hands on the keys. "Oh, that could—that deafens. I hear my mother's cry far, far more in the distance while you play!"

And the abbot played and played until the gray eye of the morning dawn looked in at the church windows. The boy seized his hand and kissed it gratefully.

More than ten years passed, and there emerged from the still cloister of Astorga a singer and musician whose fame soon spread over Europe.

His name was simply Emanuel d'Astorga. He first appeared at the Court of Parma, bearing most flattering credentials from the Spanish Court.

But nothing appeared to move him; no expression of joy appeared in his countenance, no light of happiness in his eyes.

When d'Astorga sang the cantata before the loveliest of women, in the magnificent salon of the art-loving Prince, which was filled with the rank and fashion of the Court...

And now? He could no longer bear this laughing sky; he hated this blooming earth; it covered only a grave—the terrible grave of the murdered.

At the death of the King, Astorga left gay Vienna, and finally, after many delays, he arrived one autumn evening in Prague.

Noble Prague, that queen of cities, lay wrapped in a veil of evening mist; a thousand bright reflections glittered from the cross-crowded towers of the innumerable churches...

He pushed forward aimlessly. The streets gradually became narrower and darker, more lonely and quiet.

"Have I played so very ill, then, that you are so serious?" "No, but I have heard you for the last time."

"You are going away from Court?" "From Parma?" "She had risen. Where now was the flush of spring gone from her face?"

She motioned toward the steps which led into the garden, and went slowly forward; he followed. She penetrated deeper and deeper in the blossoming green; neither heeded; winter had fallen in both hearts.

his life and laid it before the guileless soul of Beatrice.

He spoke of the nameless martyrs of his poisoned life, of his mother's death-cry which followed him everywhere, everywhere, which nothing could deafen...

They had said good-bye to one another; the green bushes and the tall trees looked on their farewell; master and scholar never met again.

In Vienna, Astorga finished his Stabat Mater, that wonderful tone-picture of sorrow, into which he threw the suffering of his own martyred soul—the passage of the sword into the heart of the divine Mother.

"Pertransit gladius," thrilled the hearers with a fearful intensity. The son thought verily of that sword of sorrow which had pierced the breast of his own dearly beloved mother; and how deep, how immeasurable, was the agony of such remembrance...

At the death of the King, Astorga left gay Vienna, and finally, after many delays, he arrived one autumn evening in Prague.

Noble Prague, that queen of cities, lay wrapped in a veil of evening mist; a thousand bright reflections glittered from the cross-crowded towers of the innumerable churches...

He pushed forward aimlessly. The streets gradually became narrower and darker, more lonely and quiet.

"Have I played so very ill, then, that you are so serious?" "No, but I have heard you for the last time."

"You are going away from Court?" "From Parma?" "She had risen. Where now was the flush of spring gone from her face?"

She motioned toward the steps which led into the garden, and went slowly forward; he followed. She penetrated deeper and deeper in the blossoming green; neither heeded; winter had fallen in both hearts.

and the great musician, sobbed like a child. The trembling voice of the singer had long been silenced, ere he rose again to his feet, and knocked on the door.

"Who was it that sang?" Astorga said, gently. But before the maiden could answer, a shrill cry came from the corner of the room, and the bent form of an old woman struggled forward.

"Lead me to him who spoke just now," she said in feverish haste. "I tell thee the Blessed Virgin still works miracles! The child of my heart's child is there! Her child, I say. He has come here to Minka who has so often born him in her arms. It is Emanuel!"

The neighbors might have remarked in the usually quiet little house an extraordinary bustle and commotion. The next day neither of the women appeared on the bench by the door, according to their usual custom.

Astorga never again appeared to the world. Whether the remainder of his life was spent near a blind old woman whose life was in the past, and in the society of a fresh young maiden who lived perhaps henceforth for him alone, who shall say?

No one knows where Emanuel d'Astorga lies buried. No fresh wreaths ornament the grave in which his weary body was laid away to rest; but flowers, charming flowers, certainly do bloom there, for the spot where with a true artist rests is cultivated and cared for by the angels, when men neglect and forget.

A HERO'S ACT OF FAITH.

The storm of war had just abated. The peace which deprived France of her two provinces was signed, and the troops of Germany had once more turned their faces eastward, to enjoy the welcome which awaited them across the Rhine.

The town of St. Germain-en-Laye, lately the fashionable suburb where Parisians of the Second Empire found the brightness and gaiety which they loved in the capital, together with the pure air of the country, was now silent and oppressed with gloom.

The war, indeed, was over. No more was the silent darkness of the night made noisy and brilliant by the cannon of Mont Valerien. No longer did the *revolt* awaken a hostile garrison to carry on the bitter struggle.

The hospital was soon crammed with the sick and the dying. A man might be walking on the terrace healthy and strong on Monday, and the following Saturday would see him hastily consigned with maimed limbs to a leper's grave.

But now that hospital—for so many months filled with the wounded, friend or foe—was once more crowded, this time with the victims of the pestilence,

the strength of the old chaplain was inadequate for the work; and the day came when the doctors warned him that a continuance of his labors would, before long, result in his death.

"That must be as God wills," replied the old man simply. "My post is at the bedside of the sick. So long as I have strength to console them, to exhort them, to lift my hand over them in absolution, so long must I stay within call."

The Ecole Internationale had for some years been honorably known in the town. As its name implies, its pupils came from all parts of the world. Of this school there is no need to speak at length. For the purpose of this narrative it is only necessary to introduce the chaplain. He was young in years, but in sanctity he might well be called old. In a short space he had fulfilled a long time.

The characters ascribed to men usually differ according to the views and character of the speaker. In this case critics of all schools—Catholics, Protestants, Atheists, Voltairians, Freethinkers—differing in all else, agreed when they spoke of M. l'abbé Guillemont in describing him as a saint.

There was no one who, knowing this man, did not love him. His soul, pure as when it came from God, seemed to look out from his calm and steadfast eyes. "His face is like an angel's," was an expression often used about him. The poor, of course, were his warmest admirers, for it was among them that he spent the time that was not given to his duties as chaplain at the school. In the Ecole Internationale his classes were really enjoyed by the pupils. In the very rare art of catechism-giving his skill was great. He accomplished the double difficulty of chaining the attention of the boys by interesting their minds and of leading them to God by teaching their hearts.

In the midst of his labors M. Guillemont heard of the warning which the doctor had given to the hospital chaplain and the reply which the old man had made. "He must have rest," said M. Guillemont to himself, "and I must take his place."

That very afternoon he called and offered his services. But the task of inducing the old chaplain to leave his field of labor was no easy one. At first he refused to listen to the proposal. But M. Guillemont was in earnest, and with all his eloquence he pleaded with his fellow-priest to allow himself some rest, if only for the sake of being able, later on, to return to his work strengthened and refreshed. "You will not leave your patients unrequited for. I am young and strong. While you are away, I promise to do all that in me lies to supply your place. At all hours of the day and night I will be at the call of the sick and dying, and, if it depends on me, God helping me, not one soul shall pass unabsolved to its Judge."

"I do not doubt your zeal," replied the old man, "and since indeed I feel myself all but worn out, I take it to be God's will that I should leave His vineyard for a time, seeing that He has sent so excellent a priest to take up my work. After to-morrow, then," he added, when the details of the change had been settled, "consider yourself the chaplain at the hospital instead of at the school, and may our Lord-bless and prosper your work."

Then the two priests parted, never again to meet on earth. As the epidemic was of an extremely contagious nature, it was impossible for one who had to spend several hours each day within the hospital to mix with the boys at the Ecole Internationale. M. Guillemont's duties at that institution had therefore to be regretfully resigned into other hands.

From what has been said above as to the character of this priest and of his mode of life, it will be readily understood that he was no stranger among the patients in the hospital. Sickness indeed spares neither rich nor poor; but in an epidemic it almost necessarily happens that the poor are chief sufferers; and the poor were M. Guillemont's dearest friends.

At no time surely is a friend more welcome than when he stands at our sick-bed, and many a heart weighed down with the oppression and horror of this hideous disease must have beat with something like hope when Mr. Guillemont's bright and holy face appeared in the hospital ward. But there was one patient who received the chaplain's frequent visits with quite other feelings. His was one case—too common, alas!—of a pious childhood followed by a life of indifference and sin. His faith, so long unfed by the grace of the sacraments and by prayer, had grown dim, until, as the years went on, its light was almost extinct. To such a man the life of M. Guillemont was an unmeaning mockery. Soured and enraged by the hateful disease which in the prime of his manhood had laid him low, this poor wretch felt nothing but irritation and envy at the health and strength which he saw in the chaplain. The maxims of infidelity which had for years replaced in his heart the sweet teachings of the Gospel, made him anyhow regard the presence of a priest with what was little short of loathing; while his sufferings, unrelieved by any tinge of Christian resignation, caused him to regard the chaplain's visits almost in the light of insult.