

far, than to abide here and brave the fearful anger of my uncle. Should he but learn what are thy thoughts towards me, and that I——"she hesitated, blushing and embarrassed—"that I have listened to thy words, ill would it fare with thee, and ill with me, for then thy only safety would be in flight, while my punishment would be, an enforced marriage with one I love not, or refuge for life within the dark walls of a convent."

"Thou wilt not—must not submit to tyranny like this, sweet Ianthé," said Guiseppe, eagerly. "Art thou dear to this proud uncle of thine, and wilt he sacrifice thee to his vain ambition? Permit it not, I pray thee, but remember, if indeed thou dost bestow on me the blessing of thy love, remember that we stand as yet on life's first threshold, with golden promises and glad hopes beckoning us gaily onward, and shall we then—it is for thee to say—shall we turn from the sunny path stretching bright and far before us, because a shadowy form, which we, with love's courage may subdue, sits frowning at its entrance? Forbid it, heaven! that such should be our cowardice; be thou but firm, and nought on earth shall daunt my purpose or destroy my hope; I will wait and watch, and labour and achieve, till I have earned a right, which if thou sanction it, none may gainsay, to demand thee of thy guardian for my own."

"Vain and plausible reasoning of love," said Ianthé, with a sad smile; "but if thou deemest it will weigh aught with my aspiring uncle, thy true knowledge of him is, as yet, but limited indeed. Already he hath promised my hand, and looks upon my future fate as sealed. While yet a mere child, he contracted for me an alliance with the son of an early friend, a powerful noble of Venice, and but a few months are now to elapse before the period named for this hated marriage will arrive."

A cold dew stood upon Guiseppe's brow as he heard this horrible announcement, while his blood rushed like a tide of burning lava through his veins, and unable to control his emotion, he almost fiercely exclaimed:

"And thou hast consented to this union! and now thou wilt submit to it, renouncing every dearer hope, rather than provoke the anger, or resist the will of thy unjust and arbitrary relative!"

"The time is not long past when I would have done so," she said, with a flitting blush; "when I heard it spoken of unmoved, and looked forward to its consummation with calm indifference—when in the hidden chambers of my heart the deep fountains of feeling and affection slept as yet undisturbed, and all within was peace, the tranquil

peace of childhood, content with present bliss—fearless of coming ill. But now, oh now! that life hath so changed to me its aspect, think you I would not sooner welcome death, and gladly too, than yield assent to this abhorred and dreaded union!"

Her lovely eyes bathed in tears, and the tender earnestness of her impassioned accents, dispelled the last scruple of prudence that lingered in the mind of the youthful lover, and subdued by her grief, and terrified at the thought of her becoming another's, he exclaimed, with all the impetuosity of anxious and excited feeling:

"Confide in my love, and I will save thee from this threatened fate; for, if thy uncle, deaf to thy entreaties, persist in sacrificing thee to his ambitious schemes, I will, if thou permit, bear thee hence, secretly, if it must be so, rather than leave thee with one, to whom thy true happiness is as nought, when put in competition with the worldly aggrandisement, which his aspiring wishes covet for thee."

"What sayest thou?" exclaimed the startled girl, pale and gasping with emotion. "Dost thou ask me to fly with thee! clandestinely too? And whither, whither could we go, if indeed it comes to this, to find a shelter in our wanderings?"

"To a peaceful and a happy, though a humble home," he answered, soothingly; "to the arms of a tender mother, who will bless me that I bring to her a daughter, for which dear gift her heart hath ever yearned."

"Ah! it would be sweet to know a mother's love!" said Ianthé, tenderly. "But that fair dwelling of thine early days," she asked, with thoughtful look, "is it not far away? Thou hast described it to me so often that it seems familiar to my mind, and sometimes, too, I have visited it in sleep; aye, but the past night only, I dreamed that I sat with thee in that small garden chamber which overlooks the blue Adriatic, and heard the song of the boatman mingle with the sweeter melody of thy instrument, while we looked forth and numbered the golden stars as they came out one by one from the dark depths of the sky."

"It was an omen, sweet, that dream of thine, of what shall ere long be to us a reality," said the delighted Guiseppe. "Ah! for thy sake, I would I could bear thee thee to a palace, and shrine thee amidst such objects of beauty and of luxury as now surround thee, and which only the omnipotence of wealth can purchase. But, alas! I can offer thee only an adoring heart, filled with thy image, and consecrated to thy dear service, and a home of simplest comfort, brightened by content and peace, and hallowed by the virtues