

THE VIOLINIST.*

BY E. L. C.

GIUSEPPE lost no time in pursuing the path which Fabian, the page, had pointed out to him, and as he penetrated deeper and deeper into its labyrinthine turnings, at every onward step a new world of beauty was opened to his admiring gaze. To him the fair face of nature was always lovely, and every changeful aspect of her glorious features, awakened rapture in his soul. And so he loitered on, his pleasant path, chequered with glancing light and shade, pausing often to admire the view, as through some green vista he beheld the marble walls of the palace gleaming among the dark groves of orange and of flax in which it was embosomed, or caught a glimpse of the blue Brenta; "winding at its own sweet will," between its shady banks, till the ruins of the old abbey appeared suddenly in view, reminding him that he was approaching the termination of his walk.

A single turret rose erect before him, moss-grown and crowned with mantling vines, and around its base, covering the broad slope of a green declivity, there stood many a crumbling arch and broken pillar, beautiful in their decay, and indicating, by the wide surface over which they were scattered, the extent and importance of the original building, of which they once formed a part. A dilapidated wall defined the limits of the former courtyard, in the centre of which a bright fountain still threw up its ceaseless jet of water, and again, in a diamond shower fell into a granite basin, over whose scalloped edge it trickled with a pleasant sound upon the green herbage below. It was a sweet spot, peeping forth from a grove of ancient chestnuts that nearly encircled it, and filled with breezy sounds, and fragment odours exhaled from innumerable flowers, fair tenants once of the Brotherhood's well-kept garden, but which now, nurtured by holy hands, sprang up in wild profusion wherever the idle winds wafted their seeds, wreathing with gay chaplets, the old gray columns, and crowning the broken archways with forms and hues of beauty.

Giuseppe's eye drank in with delight the rare loveliness of the scene, spread out like a living panorama before him,—glancing joyously on verdant hill and dale, and misty moor, and following the course of the sparkling Brenta as it wound onward through a paradise of beauty, circling in its arms the distant city, that, crowned

with dome and turret, rose silent and beautiful, like some rich painting against the glowing background of a lovely sapphire sky. 'Twas distance lent enchantment to the view,—at least so thought Giuseppe, though not in the exact words of the poet, as he remembered the populous and busy life that was ever astir within those walls whose softened outlines, bathed in the glory of that rich Italian sunlight, formed so quiet and beautiful an object in the landscape. He sighed at the thought that his home lay in the midst of those crowded thoroughfares, yet rejoiced still to feel himself alone with nature, whose sweet influences breathed a delicious freshness over his wearied spirit—wearied with its struggle between filial love and duty, and the strength of that absorbing passion which maintained over him such resistless sway.

Leaning against the pedestal of an old sundial, which, although half buried in flowers, still told upon its disk the rapid flight of time, Giuseppe stood lost in reverie, with his eyes fixed sometimes upon the far-off vein, and then upon the moss-grown tower, that alone of the ruined pile remained entire, when he fancied he saw a shadow pass before one of the narrow windows that appeared here and there, deep set in the rough massive masonry.

"Can that lonely chamber contain an inhabitant?" he murmured to himself, and with the rapidity of thought his fancy pictured the worn form and venerable features of the anchorite who might there have fixed his abode, when suddenly a white hand parted the ivy that screened the window, and then a face like one of Guido's angels, was thrust momentarily forth, a quick glance cast abroad, and the fair head was withdrawn, the thick vines fell heavily down, and immediately the tones of a silver voice were heard carolling, as the songstress descended the winding stairs, some stanzas of an old ballad that told the legend of the tower.

The melody itself, so rich and plaintive, would have held the music-loving Giuseppe a spell-bound listener, even had not a natural curiosity to behold the invisible singer prompted him, as the voice every instant came nearer, silently to await her appearance. The old sun-dial stood right facing, and at no great distance from the low postern, through which she must emerge

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