

it, except in favour of the despised artist. The Baron at last piqued by her indifference, left Paris, resolved not to return till the authenticity of the Magdalen should be decided,—assured his hopes were forever at an end if Mignard succeeded in establishing his claim; and if not, why he would then renew his suit with fresh zeal, and he hoped, then, a better prospect of success. The Count, too, foiled in his purpose, and harrassed by doubt and anxiety, determined at once to terminate his suspense by visiting the studio of the young artist, under pretence of examining a St. Cecilia, which was said to be in the style of the Magdalen. During the interview, he intended to hazard some remarks respecting the rumours in circulation, and would be guided by circumstances whether or not to demand a direct denial, or avowal of the truth, from Mignard.

And so, one morning when Pierre, aware through his friend Roussard of all that was going on, but waiting his own time for the development he had to make, had just been rendered happy by a note from Rosalie, and was still poring over the delicate characters that revealed to him so many sweet and tender thoughts, he was suddenly startled by the abrupt and unannounced entrance of the Count De Clairville. Hastily thrusting the note into his bosom, he arose and with perfect self-possession, greeted his unaccustomed visitor, whom he had not before met since the day when he had left his presence hopeless and despairing, with those memorable words sinking like lead into the very depths of his heart. But had they not proved, instead of a blighting curse, a talisman of power, through whose influence his genius had aroused itself to the achievement of a task, for which he was about to win the proudest of earthly guerdons—woman's love, and that triumph which yields the purest and most enduring fame,—the triumph of intellect.

The Count returned the graceful salutation of the artist with an air of the most pitiable embarrassment,—hardened as he was by constant contact with the world, he could not, on the instant, divest himself of it, nor, impressed by the dignified yet gentle courtesy of Mignard, fail to feel his own inferiority; though with his arrogant boast of rank and intellect, he would have scorned to avow the mortifying conviction, even to himself. Pierre seemed not to note his confusion, though it was too palpable to pass unobserved, but framing some slight apology for the disorder that reigned in his studio, he busied himself for a moment, in carelessly setting aside several cumbrous pictures that occupied too much space in the apartment.

The Count thus gained time, to recover himself, and casting a round a glance of inquiry:

"I am attracted hither, M. Mignard," he said in his accustomed cold and passionless accent, "by the fame of a St. Cecilia, which I am told reflects

great honour upon your pencil. May I be permitted to see it?"

The artist bowed, and drawing it forth from behind several unfinished pictures, exposed it in a favourable light to the view of the Count. He gazed upon it long and earnestly. "This is fine," he said, "I have not heard its beauty too highly praised. Really, you are making rapid strides towards perfection; I have seen no painting of the day, that surpassed this. That head reminds me of some of Correggio's.—Do you prefer his style to that of any other artist?"

A covert smile lurked upon Mignard's lip as he replied,

"No, sir; Guido is my model, and the dearest wish of my heart is to attain as near as my humbler genius may to his perfection."

There was a depth and feeling in the earnest tones of the young artist, as he uttered these words, which independently of their significant import, brought momentary conviction to the mind of the Count. The Magdalen he had extolled as a Guido, was doubtless the work of Mignard, and he was himself ensnared by the words which he had uttered to crush the artist's hopes. And yet, if the piece were his, why did he not avow it, and claim the reward promised to his success. Not willing to be convinced of an unwelcome fact, the Count yielded to this sophistry, and again became sceptical on the subject of his fears. Desirous, however, to have them entirely removed, he still lingered before the St. Cecilia, alternately criticising and admiring, and at length proposing to become its purchaser. It was already disposed of to the Italian Count Idriani for five hundred crowns. De Clairville expressed his regret, and turning, paused before an unfinished painting still extended on the easel.

"And this," he said, "gives early promise of excellence. May I enquire what subject you have chosen to illustrate?"

"Certainly, Sir—it is a scene from Tasso; the Arming of Clorinda."

"And for whom designed?"

"For the Prince De Ligne,—to complete a series he obtained from Italy, illustrating scenes in the 'Jerusalem Delivered,' and intended to adorn a particular saloon in his palace."

"Really!" exclaimed the Count in an accent of surprise, "the Prince boasts a rare collection, and he pays you no slight compliment, M. Mignard, in placing your works beside those of the great masters that enrich his magnificent galleries."

"The Prince De Ligne is a munificent patron of the arts," said Pierre, with a haughty smile, "and doubtless wishes to encourage the efforts of so humble an artist as myself, and therefore I am bound to be grateful, and not vainly elated by his patronage."

"Nay, without doubt he thought highly of your