

I was sent to the college of Padua, one of the most ancient and famous in Italy.

"I had reached, at this time, my twentieth year, and with all the passions natural to that age, sought for amusement in the intervals of my studies. With money at my command, and the thousand temptations which presented themselves, I need not say that I was soon initiated into all the gaities of fashionable life. A certain number of young Patricians, at this time, were studying at the same university, and although their birth and family pride caused them to draw a line of demarcation between themselves and the sons of citizens, nevertheless they seemed to consider that I was entitled to ally myself to their party, thinking, no doubt, that my wealth counterbalanced the want of nobility, and on all occasions, I became a participator in their extravagancies and pleasures. My father, too, denied me nothing, but countenanced my most unbounded desires, and liberally provided me with money, in the supposition that I should acquire a rank in society from such associations, which my birth could not for me procure.

"Among the party, was a young Patrician, Lorenzo Morosoni, of one the most ancient families of Venice. His illustrious house having given no less than four Doges to the republic, he was one of the haughtiest of the young nobles, and had particularly distinguished himself by his studies. We were exactly of the same age, and being addicted to the same tastes and amusements, soon became inseparable. One trait in his character, and which exalted him highly in my esteem, was his inveterate hatred to the distinction of rank. He spoke with disdain of the arrogance of the Patricians. A republic without individual liberty, was, in his eye, an absurdity, and the extreme inequality of conditions, a monstrous combination. He openly declared the Venitian oligarchy a hundred times more despotic than an absolute monarchy, and at every opportunity, sought to disseminate his doctrines among the students of the university, and had he not belonged to a family of unbounded power, the poniard or the wave would certainly have silenced him.

"Our studies being completed, we hastened to Venice to once more repose in the arms of our families. In our conversation, I had frequently heard him mention the name of his sister, whose beauty and amiable qualities, he extolled with all the fervour of a fond brother, and I, naturally inheriting a romantic disposition, became inspired with the tenderest sentiments for the young Emilia.

"Lodovico Morosoni, the father of Lorenzo, received me with the greatest affability, when he learned I was the friend of his son, and although of an aristocratic nature, his manners were gentle, and his courtesy most gracious. He introduced me to his spouse, the Lady Beatrice, who was equally kind in her reception of me. There, too, for the first time, I beheld Emilia. The dream of my heart was then realized—my destiny was written. I will not attempt to describe her person, for my adoration of her, would render my language impious. She was all that perfection in humanity could achieve, and my youthful heart was at once captivated.

"From that moment, a total alteration took place in my feelings—sleeping or waking, Emilia was ever before my eyes. I loved her! 'Love the daughter of Morosoni?' said I, to myself; 'what temerity.' Even though my passion was reciprocated, how could I ever hope that the chief of a Ducal family would consent to give his daughter to a plebeian. Lorenzo quickly marked a change in my appearance and feelings, and questioned me as to the cause. I replied that it was owing to an illness which then had befallen my father, and endeavoured to assume my former look of joy and content.

"It happened at this time the carnival came on, that joyous season of ball and masque.—One night there was a magnificent *fete* given at the house of a senator, named Zeno, to which his son, Manfredi, had invited myself and some other students who had studied with him at Padua, and among the female guests was Emilia. About midnight, fatigued with the dance and the heat of the apartments, Emilia expressed a desire to inhale the breeze, and, in obedience to her request, her brother and myself conducted her to the balcony which overlooked the sea. It was a night never to be effaced from my remembrance. The brilliant moon rolled through a sky of spotless ether, over which were scattered innumerable stars, and the pure breeze came blandly o'er the cheek of Emilia as the wings of a zephyr saluting the rose. Oh, night of beauty! I was then young, rich and happy—in the mansion of one of the most powerful noblemen of Venice, and by the side of the idol of my heart. Alas, what a contrast! What am I now? an humble gondolier, poor, old and forsaken, without a prop to sustain me, or a friend to soothe my griefs. Oh, would to Heaven that this heart would burst."

The old man buried his head in his hands, and wept. I sought not to interrupt the luxury