

broad hand on Fan's cool, rounded brow, "is not here to play but to work."

The signora was a little startled by his fierce manner, but when she saw the arch smile with which Fanchea met his glaring eyes, she caught the cue to his character at once.

"My lord," she said, in her earnest, emotional way, "this dream of yours was mine first. I had only the will; you have the power."

"Thank heaven, then, madam, that we have come together," said his lordship. "Between will and power, we shall, to use a vulgar proverb, either 'make a spoon, or spoil a horn.' But mind, I warn you; the making will be mine, the spoiling yours. I never do anything wrong; so don't imagine it." And with a scowl and a low bow he left them.

This first greeting of the old lord's to the signora was a fit introduction to the intercourse that was to exist between them. His quizzical temper and her intensity clashed together strangely sometimes, but did not exactly jar, for he had feeling enough to appreciate a nature which he nevertheless delighted to startle, and she had sufficient humor to relish the roughness and unconventionality which covered a generous heart. The old lord recognised daily the delicacy and refinement of her nature, something of which he had discerned at the first moment under the shabby cloak of the little grey woman just arrived at the end of her journey. And there never was any oppressive formality between them. Mamzelle was too much the child of genius not to feel that in her own personality she carried the key of entrance into any circle above or below her; and though said key might be rather rusty for want of use, still the possession of it enabled her to feel at home in the atmosphere of Lord Wilderspin's drawing-room.

When she had time to look around, she discovered that nothing could suit her better than this place. The beauty of the old house, the storied furniture and adornments, the choice contents of the picture-gallery, the musical atmosphere which she was to breathe, the visits of Herr Harfenspieler, whom she was to assist in the tuition of the child: all these conditions of her existence were so perfect that, true to her faculty of suffering, she began to feel oppressed by their charm.

"My dear," she said to Fan, "I shall die of all this delightfulness if I do not escape from it."

This was said with so agonised a look that Fanchea was alarmed.

"Oh, you are not going to leave me?" she cried.

"No, my love, never. But I have got leave from his lordship to fit up one of the empty rooms in my own way. There are the things I brought with me, you know; and I will live in my own nest, and only come out into the splendor when I feel myself able to bear it."

Her new life was inaugurated on the first evening when Herr Harfenspieler came, and all the actors in the little drama that was beginning met at dinner. The thought of meeting the great musician agitated her much more than the prospect of encountering his lordship had done. She prepared for the occasion with some solemnity, and appeared attired in a very antique brocade which had belonged to her mother, a much larger woman, and trailed behind her, and in her dear old black lace mantilla, worn long ago in the Italian city of her youth and dreams. Under this her loose gold and silver hair shimmered strangely, and made one at a distance ask if she were child, angel, or witch. Her worn face, with its deep lines of pain and passion, its frequent wistful, almost infantile expressions, and its wandering lights of genius, was very striking to Herr Harfenspieler, who at once recognised a good ally and a kindred spirit. As they clasped hands they seemed to know that they were brother and sister in what the world would call misfortune, each having found life a loneliness, and given up all that is comfortable and pleasant for a solitary and never-fading dream.

The man who had found happiness in varieties of dreams which always faded, or dissolved one into

another, stood over them and glowered at them in satisfaction from under his shaggy brows. He had brought them here together that out of their ruins he might build a fair temple for his own contentment and the delight of the world. As they stood talking, each with a hand on Fanchea's shoulder, the old lord strode about, laughing grimly to himself.

"With this trio," he said; "on this triangle, I will make such music as all Europe shall run to hear!"

And as these eager guardians hovered about the slender slip of humanity, with her black head and crimson ribbons, her deep-shaded eyes and pomegranate cheeks, casting their spells, of woven paces and of waving hands, around her, Kevin himself, had he been able to see, might have surely been content with her state. She herself felt a deep wonder at finding that she was the object of so much attention from such learned and travelled people, and listened with interest to their conversation.

"Madam," said Herr Harfenspieler, "allow me as a musician to pay a tribute in the name of my country to the musical genius of your beautiful land."

"Ah, sir," said the signora, "we may well feel a mutual sympathy. Your country contains the intellect of music, and mine, perhaps, the soul."

"And mine deserves some praise for producing that noble strain. 'The roast beef of old England,'" broke in Lord Wilderspin. "Let me remind you that dinner has been announced."

After dinner the old lord had a smoke and forty winks in his smoking-room, while the musician, who could not bear tobacco, drank coffee and tuned his violin, and talked with the signora in the music-room.

"I was born in Verona," said the signora, in answer to a question.

"And I in Nuremberg," said Herr Harfenspieler, touching his most delicate string with a loving finger. "I know your Verona. What a dream! That is why your face reminds me of the angels in Fra Angelico's pictures," he added, bluntly. "I am no flatterer, and you may not be heavenly for aught I know; but I have seen you blowing a trumpet in one of the Paradisaical visions of the angelic master."

Twang went a deep chord across the violin; and a silent sob echoed it in the signora's heart.

"That was said long ago," she said; "but it is like a sorry old jest to hear it now."

"Why? Angels may get worn faces for a time, perhaps through wearying after the good in some human soul. When that soul is won their wrinkles probably disappear. Whatever is intrinsically good and beautiful remains a perpetual fact, and never can be destroyed: it is only what is ugly, wrong, discordant, that is failure and negation. What is time? Ah--! Music will never cease."

Hereupon a burst of delicious melody swept through the quiet and darkening room; and noiselessly the signora wept.

"Juliet was born in your Verona," continued the old professor, laying down his bow; "and Juliet is a fact, though she never was clothed in flesh and blood. The deep red rose that comes every June is a fact, though each time it sheds its leaves we can scarcely believe it ever was, or ever will return. Beethoven's 'Dead March' is a reality that still beguiles us lovingly to the grave, while the sad, solemn, mysterious eyes that look down on us yonder from the wall are closed for ever. So, why should not the face of an angel with a lute remain an angel's face, even though Time has written a score across it. Let me talk my own way. I do not often get a listener like you."

"It is pleasant to me to listen," said the signora. "Life does not seem so wasted when one gets rid of the idea of success and failure."

"That for failure!" said the Harfenspieler, snapping his wiry fingers. "Give me the beautiful, the true, and pain with its reverse. When the height is missed, the depth is found; true, but when the abyss is touched, there is the rebound which sends us higher than we otherwise could have reached. Hist! I will tell you a secret. I have made no name like him,"