

Literature, &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

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LOVE AND SELF LOVE.

It was during the very brightest days of the republic of Venice, when her power was in its prime, together with the arts which have made her, like every Italian state, celebrated all over the world—for Italy had produced in poetry and painting, and in the humbler walk of musical composition, the greatest of the world's marvels—that Paolo Zustana was charged by the Marquis di Bembo to paint several pictures to adorn his gallery.—Paolo had come from Rome at the request of the Marquis, who received a very favourable account of the young artist—he was but thirty. Paolo was handsome, of middle height, dark, and pale; he had deep black eyes, a small mouth, a finely-traced mustache, a short curling beard, and a forehead of remarkable intellectuality. There was a slight savageness in his manner, a brief, sharp way of speaking, a restlessness in his eye, which did not increase the number of his friends. But when men knew him better, and were admitted into his intimacy—a very rare occurrence—they loved him.

Then, he was generous-hearted and noble; his time, his purse, his advice, were all at their service. But his whole soul was in his art. Night and day, day and night, he seemed to think of nothing but his painting. In Rome he had been looked upon as mad, for in the day he was not content with remaining close at work in his master's studio, but at night he invariably shut himself up in an old half-ruined house, in the out skirts where none of his friends were ever invited, and where no man ever penetrated, and no women saved an old nurse, who had known him from a child. It was believed, with considerable plausibility, that the artist had a picture in hand, and that he passed his night even in study. He rarely left this retreat before mid-day, and generally returned to his hermitage early, after a casual visit to his lodgings, though he could not occasionally refuse being present at large parties given by his patrons.

On arriving in Venice he resumed his former mode of life. He had an apartment at the Palace Bembo; he took his meals there, but at night fall, when there was no grand reception, he wrapped himself in his cloak, put on his mask, and, drawing his sword-hilt close to his hand, went forth. He took a gondola until he reached a certain narrow street, and then, gliding down that, he disappeared in the gloom caused by the lofty houses. No one noticed much this mode of life; he did his duty, he was polite, affable, and respectful with his patron; he was gallant with the ladies, but no more. He did not make the slightest effort to win the affections of those around him. Now all this passed in general without much observation.

Still, there was one person whom this wildness and eccentricity of character—all that has a stamp of originality is called eccentric—caused to feel deep interest in him. The marquis had a daughter, who at sixteen had been married, from interested motives, the old uncle of the Doge, now dead. Clorinda was a beautiful widow of determined and thoughtful character, had made up her mind to marry a second time, not to please relations, but herself. From the first she noticed Paolo favourably; he received her friendly advances respectfully but coldly, and rarely stopped his work to converse. She asked for lessons to improve her slight knowledge of painting; he gave them freely, but without ever adding a single word to the necessary observations of the interview. He seemed absorbed in his art. One day Clorinda stood behind him; she had been watching him with patient attention for an hour; she now came and took up her quarters in the gallery all day, with her attendant girl, reading or painting. Paolo had not spoken one word during that hour. Suddenly Clorinda rose and uttered the exclamation:

'How beautiful!'

'Is it not, signora?'

'How beautiful,' she returned, astonished both at the artist's manner, and the enthusiasm with which he alluded to his own creation.

'I am honored by your approval,' said Paolo, lying down his pallet and folding his arms to gaze at the picture—a Cupid and Psyche—with actual rapture.

It was the face of the woman—of the girl, timidly impassioned and tender, filling the air around with beauty—that had struck Clorinda. With golden hair, that waved and shone in the sun; with a white, small, but exquisitely-shaped forehead; with deep blue eyes, fixed with admiring love on the tormenting god; with cheeks on which lay so softly the bloom of health that it seemed ready to fade before the breath from the painting; with a mouth and chin moulded on some perfect Grecian statue, she thought he had never seen any thing so divine.

'Ah!' she said, with a sigh, 'you painters are dreadful enemies of woman. Who would look at reality after gazing on this glorious ideal?'

'It is reality,' replied the painter. 'I paint from memory.'

'Impossible! You must have combined the beauty of fifty girls in that exquisite creation.'

'No!' said the artist, gravely; 'that face exists. I saw it in the mountains of Sicily. I have often painted it before: never so successfully.'

'I would give the world to gaze on the original,' replied Clorinda. 'I adore a beautiful woman. It is God's greatest work of art.'

'It is, signora,' said Paolo; and he turned away to his work.

Woman born in the climate of Italy, under her deep blue sky and in that air that breathes of poetry, painting, music, and love, are not guided by the same impulses and feelings as in our colder and more practical north. Clorinda did not wait for Paolo's admiration; she loved him, and every day added to her passion. His undoubted genius, his intellectual brow, his noble features, and, in addition, had awakened her long pent-up and sleeping affections. She was herself a woman of superior mind, and had revealed in the delights of Petrarch, Dante, Ariosto, and Boccaccio. Now, she felt. How deeply, she alone knew. But Zustana remained obstinately insensible to all her charms: to her friendship, and her condescending tone, as well as her intellectual beauty. He saw all, save her love, and admired and respected her much. But there was—at all events, at present—no germ of rising passion in his heart.

It was not long before she began to remark his early departure from the palace, his mysterious way of going, and the fact that he never returned until the next day at early dawn, which always now saw him at his labors. The idea at once flashed across her mind that he had found in Venice some person on whom to lavish the riches of his affection, and that he went every evening to plead his passion at her feet. Jealousy took possession of her. She spent a whole night in reflection; she turned over in her mind every supposition; and she rose, feverish and ill. That day, pleading illness, she remained in her room, shut up with her books.

About an hour after dark, Paolo, his bat drawn over his eyes, his cloak wrapped round him, and his mask on, stepped into a gondola which awaited him, and started. Another boat lay on the opposite side of the canal, with curtains closely drawn. Scarcely had the artist's been set in motion than it followed. Paolo, who had never, since his arrival in Venice, been watched or followed, paid no attention to it. The two gondolas then moved side by side without remark, and that of Zustana stopped as usual, allowed the artist to land, and continued on its way. A man, also wrapped in a cloak, masked, and with a bat and plumes, leaped out also from the other gondola, and, creeping close against the walls, followed him. The stranger seemed, by his gazing at the dirty walls and low shops—chiefly old cloths, rag shops, and warehouses devoted to small trades—very much surprised, but, for fear of losing the track of the other, followed closely.

Suddenly Zustana disappeared. The other moved rapidly forward in time to observe that he had entered a dark alley, and was ascending with heavy step a gloomy and winding staircase. The stranger followed cautiously, stepping time with Paolo, and feeling his way with his hands. Zustana only halted when he reached the summit of the house. He then placed a key in a door—a blaze of light was seen, and he disappeared, locking the door behind him. The man stood irresolute, but only for a moment. The house was built round a square court, like a well: there was a terraced roof. Gliding noiselessly along, the stranger was in the open air; moving along like a midnight thief he gained a position whence the windows of the room entered by Zustana were distinctly visible.

A groan, a sigh from the stranger, who sank behind a kind of pillar, revealed the countess. The groan, the sigh, was occasioned by the astounding discovery she now made.

The room into which she was looking, was brilliantly lighted up, and beautifully furnished, while beyond—for Clorinda could see as plainly as if she had been in it—was a small bedroom, and near the bed sat an old woman, who was preparing to bring in a child to Zustana. Just withdrawing herself from the embrace of Zustana was a beautiful young girl, simply and elegantly dressed—the original of the Psyche which she had so much admired. Now she understood all: that look which she had thought the consciousness of his own beautiful creation, was for the beloved original.

The child, a beautiful boy nearly a year old was brought to Zustana to kiss. Now, all his savageness was gone; now, he stood no longer the artist, the creator, the genius of art; but the man. He smiled, he patted the baby on the cheek, he let it clutch his

fingers with his little hands, he laughed outright a rich, happy, merry, ordinary laugh; and then turning to the enraptured mother, embraced her once more, and drew her to a table near the open window.

'What progress to day?' asked the painter gayly.

'See,' replied the young mother, handing him a copy-book, and speaking in the somewhat harsh dialect of a Sicilian peasant girl. 'I think at last, I can write a page pretty well.'

'Excellent,' continued the painter smiling. 'My Eleanora is a perfect little fairy. A prettier handwriting you will not see, I need give no more lessons.'

'But the reading,' said the young girl, speaking like a timid scholar; 'I shall never please you there.'

'You always please me,' exclaimed Zustana, 'but you must get rid of your accent.'

'I will try,' said Eleanora earnestly, and taking up the book she began to read, with much of the imperfection of a young school girl, but so eagerly, so prettily, with such an evident desire to please, that, as she concluded her lesson, the artist clasped her warmly to his bosom, and cried with love in his eyes and in his tone, 'My wife, how I adore you!'

One summer morning a young man, with a knapsack on his back, a pair of pistols in his belt, a staff to assist him in climbing the hills and mountains, and in crossing the torrents, was standing on the brow of a hill overlooking a small but delicious plain. It was half meadow, half pasture land; here, trees; here, a winding stream, little hillocks, green and grassy plots; beyond, a lofty mountain, on which hung a sombre-tinted pine forest; the whole illumined by the joyous sun of Sicily, which flooded all nature, and spread as it were a violet and metallic veil over her.—After gazing nearly half an hour at the delicious landscape, the young man moved slowly down a winding path that led to the river side. Suddenly he heard the tinkling of sheep-bells, the barking of dogs, and looked around to discover whence the sound came. In a small corner of pasture-land, at no great distance from the stream, he saw the flock, and seated beneath the shadow of a huge tree, a young girl.

He advanced at once toward her, not being sure of his way.

She was a young girl of sixteen, the same delicate and exquisite creation which had so struck Clorinda on the canvas, and in the garret of Venice. The eye of the artist was delighted, the heart of the man was filled with emotion. He spoke to her: she answered timidly but sweetly. He forgot his intended question; he alluded to the beautiful country, to the delight of dwelling in such a land, to the pleasures of her calm and placid existence; he asked if he could obtain a room in that neighbourhood in which to reside while he took a series of sketches. The girl listened with attention and listened for nearly half an hour, during which time he was using his pencil. She then replied that her father would gladly offer him a shelter in their small house, if he could be satisfied with very humble lodging and very humble fare. The young man accepted with humble thanks, and then showed her his sketch-book.

'Holy virgin!' she exclaimed, as she recognised herself.

'You are pleased,' said the artist, smiling.

'Oh! it's beautiful; how can you do that with a pencil? Come quick and show it to father!'

The young man followed her, as she slowly drove her sheep along, and soon found himself within sight of a small house with a garden, which she announced as her father's. She had the drawing in her hand, looking at it with delight. Unable to restrain her feelings, she ran forward, and entering the house disappeared. Zustana—of course it was he—laughed as he picked up the crook of the impetuous young shepherdess, and aided by the faithful dog, began driving home the patient animals. In ten minutes Eleanora reappeared, accompanied by her father, her brother and sister; regular Sicilian peasants, without one atom of resemblance to this extraordinary pearl concealed from human eye in the beautiful valley of Arnola.—They were all, however, struck by the portrait, and received the artist with rude hospitality.

He took up his residence with them; he sought to please, and he succeeded. After a very few days he became the constant companion of Eleanora. They went out together he to paint, she to look after her sheep—both to talk. Paolo found her totally uneducated, ignorant of every thing, unable to write or read, and narrow-minded, as all such natures must be. But there was a foundation of sweetness, and a quickness of intellect, which demonstrated that circumstances alone had made her what she was, and Paolo loved her.

He had been a fortnight at Arnola, and he had made up his mind. One beautiful morning, soon after they had taken up their usual position, he spoke.

'Eleanora, I love you, with a love that is

of my life. I adore you, I worship you; you are the artist's ideal of loveliness; your soul only wants culture to be as lovely as your body. Will you be my wife? Will you make my home your home, my country your country, my life your life? I am an artist; I battle for my bread, but I am already gaining riches. Speak! Will you be mine?'

'I will,' replied the young girl, who had no conception of hiding her feelings of pride and joy.

'But you do not know me. I am jealous and suspicious, I am proud and sensitive.—You are beautiful, you are lovely; others will dispute you with me. I would slay the Pope if he sought you; I would kill the Emperor if he offered you a gift. You are a simple peasant girl; those around me might smile at your want of town knowledge; might jeer at you for not having the accomplishments and vices of the town ladies; I should challenge the first who smiled or jeered. You must then, if you can be mine, and will make me happy, live apart from men for me alone; you must know of no existence but mine; you must abandon all society, all converse with your fellow creatures, I must be your world, your life, your whole being.'

'I will be what pleases you best,' said the young girl gently.

'The picture does not alarm you?'

'Will you always love me?' she asked timidly.

'While I live, my art, my idol, my goddess! Eleanora, while I breathe.'

'Do with me as you will,' replied the young girl.

A month later they were married, her parents being proud indeed of the elevated position to which their daughter attained. They went in the autumn to Rome, where Paolo had prepared for his mysterious existence by means of his faithful nurse. He devoted to her every moment not directed to his art, and at once began her education systematically. He found an apt and earnest scholar, and at the time of which I speak, Eleanora was possessed of all the mental advantages to be derived from constant intercourse with a man of genius.

But Paolo Zustana, out of his home, was a changed and unhappy man; he lived in constant dread of his treasure being discovered; he saw, with secret impatience, the many defects which still existed in his beloved idol; he felt the restraint of confining her always within a suite of rooms; he longed to give her air and space; but he dreaded her being seen by powerful and unscrupulous men; he dreaded ridicule for her peasant origin and imperfect education. Hence the defects in his character.

It was on the afternoon of the next day, and Zustana, who had been giving some finishing touches to the Psyche, was absorbed in its contemplation. He held the brush in his hand, and stood back a little way, examining it with attention.

'It is beautiful!' The Countess Clorinda was right,' he exclaimed.

'Not nearly so beautiful as the original,' replied that lady in a low tone.

'Great Heaven!' cried Paolo, turning round pale and fiercely, to start back in silent amazement.

There was Eleanora, blushing, trembling, timid, hanging a little back, and yet leading on the arm of the Countess, who smiled a sweet sad smile of triumph.

'Be not angry, Signor Zustana,' she said; 'it is my fault. You excited my curiosity relative to the original of this picture. You said it existed. I immediately connected your mysterious absences with something which might explain all. Last night I followed you home, I saw this beautiful creature. I understood the motives of her seclusion. This day I went to see her early; I forced my way in. Half by threats, half by coaxing, I extracted the truth from her.—Signor Paolo, your conduct is selfish; to save yourself from imaginary evils you condemn this angel to a prison life; you deprive her of air and liberty—the very life of a Sicilian girl; you prevent her from enjoying the manifold blessings which God intended for all; you deprive us the satisfaction of admiring a face so divine, and a mind so exquisite. But then you will say, she is beautiful enough to excite love; she is simple enough to excite a smile. Signor Paolo, she is good enough to scorn the first word of lawless passion; she is educated enough to learn everything that becomes a lady, and befits the wife of a man of genius, if you will but let her mix with the world. You are yourself miserable; your life is a torment.—I, the friend, the confident, the sister of this innocent, good girl, declare to you that you must change your mode of existence.'

'Countess you have conquered,' cried Zustana, who guessed the truth, and who intuitively felt that her generous heart would find, in devoting to Eleanora, means of withdrawing her attention from her unfortunate passion. 'Do with her as you please.—When the Countess Clorinda, only child of my generous patron, calls my wife her sister, my wife is hers for life.'

The result was—Paolo Zustana ceased to be suspicious and restless. Eleanora was