

## My Lady's Love.

(Concluded.)

A deathly paleness came upon his face as he raised it to hers and saw in the depths of her eyes a passion such as he could not believe he was capable of inspiring in a woman so far removed from him. "You are playing with me—torturing me!" he cried angrily, thrusting the hand from his neck and moving a little distance off. "I am only a poor beggar, and you are a great lady and should be content with other game, and not disturb one like me, who has an honest heart to give."

His voice sank into a whisper. My lady came over by the fireplace, where he stood, and took his hand in hers.

"And that is what I want—an honest heart," she said boldly. Then she laid his hand upon her bosom and kissed his throbbing temples again and again.

Ah! how sweet to be loved like that! All his life long he had dimly dreamt of Cupid's coming. Why repulse it now?

So forgetful of the world-wide difference between them, oblivious of what the future might bring, he gave himself up to the delicious intoxication of this suddenly-awakened passion, and was nearer Paradise than he had ever imagined it possible for a mortal to be and live.

"Caro, caro," she kept murmuring between her kisses, and so Beppo took courage and kissed her in his turn.

"We shall live together always," she said softly. "Nothing shall ever part us now. I have a fortune for both, Beppo—you will not deny me the luxury of sharing that?"

"But I have not a scudi in the whole world!" he answered, the sense of his poverty falling more heavily upon him than it ever had when he was almost starving. She answered nothing. Something in his tone seemed to ring through her heart like the echo of a voice heard long ago.

"You are very dear to me," she said presently, at length, looking into his face with an earnestness which somewhat abashed him. "I cannot bear to let you leave me." But midnight came in, and she had to send him from her.

When he left she was still standing by the fire-place, and she stood there for many an hour after.

Why had she yielded to this strange infatuation? Simply because he reminded her of a first love, dead now and sleeping in a green valley by the northern hills of Italy? Because he brought before her a shadowy realization of what a little child, born to her among the Tuscan Mountains some eighteen years ago might have become, had he not died, as the peasant woman said, with whom she left him? She raised her head defiantly as such thoughts crowded on her memory and laughed harshly, and struck her hand fiercely on the marble mantel, and vowed that she would marry him, come what would.

The desire of possessing him was so strong upon her that she mistook it for a different love than that which lawfully she should have for him. But she was blind then, and did not know, or would not.

The next evening he came at his usual hour, but the charm of the old violin had departed, and they only sat and talked of their future.

They would live in Italy always, my lady said—was it because she could not face her old coterie in Paris with such a youthful husband beside her? Or was it that the wines were less adulterated, and the olives had a richer flavor, and the air was purer there than across the border?

Maybe the latter, for one must be charitable in such things, and I am charitable, for I am a man and can be so toward women, which one of their own sex cannot.

She had so much to say of her plans, of her vague desires for dreamy rest and ease forever within sight of the blue Mediterranean, that she had little leisure to give to thoughts concerning Beppo's past history, and slight wish to be questioned on her own.

But one night it occurred to her to ask him if he had lived long in Serra, whose mountain music had so displeased her at his first visit.

"I cannot remember much, for I left there when I was so young," he said.

"How young, Beppo?"

"When I was 5 years old."

"And that was—?"

"Over twelve years ago."

Her memory also wandered back for twelve years and over, but the retrospect was not a pleasant one. "My mother is dead," he continued presently. "I can't remember her, but she was very good to me, and when she died the priest took on all our furniture to pay for the masses he was going to say, and so I was left with nothing, and begged my way to Rome, where I could make my living with my violin."

"And have you nothing to remind you of that time?" she asked idly.

He hesitated, then drew from his breast a small onyx locket with the initial R. cut on one side under a coat of arms. He opened it, and the face of a man past the prime of life, with low brow and short, crisp curling hair, was disclosed in view.

Little did Beppo imagine who it really was, but the Comtesse knew in that one glance, and sat as if turned to stone.

"They said he was my father," said Beppo softly, "but the time is far off, and he never came to me, and so I cannot tell."

Reverently he kissed the portrait, then closed the locket and replaced it among the folds of his shirt.

The Comtesse did not speak. She

only sat there silent, with the same pleasant smile of indifferent curiosity on her handsome face, but her heart had almost stopped its beating in the dull terror which the portrait in the locket brought to her.

It seemed as if she could not breathe. She arose and went over to the window, and Beppo followed her. A convulsive sob burst from her lips, but no tears came from her eyes, and her face was as impassive as ever. Tenderly he laid her head on his shoulder and kissed the wavy masses of dark-brown hair. Then all self-control deserted her, and she yielded to the terrible emotions which swept over her guilty soul like a torrent. Hot tears of joy for the son so unexpectedly found—tears of rage and disappointment for the lover so suddenly torn from her anxious grasp.

For the portrait was that of Beppo's father—her lover among the hills one summer years ago, and the locket she had given him as a love gift. Now it stood forth in undeniable evidence of Beppo's claim upon her, and in the fury of her selfish passion she would not acknowledge it.

Now all her dreams were over, the luxurious future with him gone. She took his face between her hands and gazed at it with a look which he remembered ever after, then pressed him tightly in her arms and kissed him as if they were never to meet again, and these kisses were the last she could ever bestow upon him, then thrust him from her and said that he must go.

Obediently Beppo took his departure, little thinking that when he came again he too would find his dream broken, and the mistress of the villa gone.

Yes, gone; for she could not stay, now that she knew the truth. Better that he should believe her false to the vows she had so passionately pledged than that he should know why love such as they felt for each other was unnatural and sinful.

"He will love me still, though he will curse me," she thought; "but love would go at once and for all time if I confessed."

So the villa was closed, and my lady went away to Paris. Beppo's heart was broken. But, as she had said, he loved her through everything, and would not believe but that she would soon return to him.

And she did return, when he least expected it, when he was most thankful for her presence.

Three years my lady passed quietly in Paris, when a great fever broke out in the lower quarter of Rome, and poor Beppo fell a victim to it.

Strange that the man who had sarcastically advised her to invite Beppo to call on that gloomy day before the palace gates was the very one to tell her of his misfortune. Yes, the Baron with the blonde beard had just returned from Rome and brought her news of Beppo. "You remember the little rascal with the wonderful eyes—so deep, and dark, and—and—in fact, so very Italian, mon amie? Well, I saw him drop down on the Corso, and they said he was taken with the fever. So they bundled him off to the hospital, where he is dead now, I presume, with not a rag on him fit to sell for the masses his soul no doubt stands in need of."

All her maternal feeling—so long crushed and strangled by other passions—rose strong within her sorrowful heart as she listened. Bitterly she reproached herself for not having told him, for not having kept him with her and shared her fortune with him, though in a different way from the one they had planned together. But she would go to him and nurse him through the fever, and bring him back with her, whether the world laughed and sneered or not. It was just such a day as the one on which they had first met, the Comtesse de Charneau reached Rome, and drove straight to the hospital where Beppo was.

The attendants made way respectfully for her, whispered among themselves, when they saw her bend over and kiss him, that it might be her son. And it was. But Beppo did not know it. He only knew that the kisses of old were falling softly on him once again, and her dear eyes were mutely asking pardon for that long neglect.

He raised himself with effort—for he was very ill, far more so than any thought or knew—and wound his arms about her neck, and kissed away the tears which came very fast now.

"Caro—caro," he murmured feebly, "do not grieve for me, I had such faith in you I felt sure you would come back. And you are here, and in your arms I am content. Why did you go? I care not. You will be with me to the end, and that is all I ask—all that you can give me—your love till I die."

She looked on that pale face now illumined with a happiness which all her strength and fortitude could not disturb—no, she would not dare to tell him. Let him die as he said—content. But she took him in her arms and held his head on her throbbing breast, and moaned to think that in that last hour there could not be perfect truth between them. Was it so after all what a holy father once said to her—that we make a heaven or hell for ourselves on earth? Perhaps. She thought so now.

The shadow deepened in that dreary chamber, for the day was closing fast. Beppo lay very still; she could scarcely hear him breathe, though his lips were by her cheek.

For an hour he did not stir again or give one sign of life, then he opened his eyes and murmured: "Caro—caro, hold me; hold me—do not let me go," and gave a stifled cry, and hid his face in her bosom. Then she knew that the end had come, and that the child which she had abandoned in that unhappy

time was taken from her now, and her arms were empty, for his soul had fled.

Not in any cemetery in Italy was Beppo laid, but in a certain corner of Pere-la-Chaise, in the great vault where those of his mother's race forever sleep.

And tender boughs of cypress wave above it; and the wind, however harsh and boisterous elsewhere, seems tempered here to gentle murmurs which sweep over it like soft refrains from Heaven.

KENRIDGE.

### Joaquin Miller's Cabin.

Another of the aesthetic houses of Washington is the log cabin of Joaquin Miller, the "Poet of the Sierras." The exterior and the interior of this comfortable cabin are an exact counterpart of similar homes in the west. Miller is an authority on all the usages of frontier life, and here he endeavors to carry them out.



THE CABIN.

This log cabin is built on Morillon hill, outside Washington. The view from it is not to be excelled, and should gratify the most exacting poet's soul. From the well sweep out doors to the unswept corners of the interior everything suggests frontier life. There is the latch string on the outside and the big wooden button on the inside of the door. The floor has neither carpet nor mats, but rugs of fur. The broad bed as well as a lounge is covered with the skins of wild animals. The room is warmed by a log fire, burning in an open brick fireplace. On the shelf over the mantel are a few indications of civilization in the shape of photographs of personal friends. A tall-wood dip and a little iron clock, together with some pipes, are the only bric-a-brac this mantel affords. The table on which the poet works is a plain wooden one without a covering of any kind. It is the most important piece of furniture in the house, for its broad surface becomes at times a resting place for everything movable while between its straight and strong legs is harbored a collection of old boots and shoes such as one finds in the "repair" corner of a cobbler's shop. At the side of the table which the author usually occupies a furrow is plowed in the boot and shoe collection by his feet when he stretches his little and poetic legs. Mr. Miller seems to enjoy the best of health here, and if it were not for a slight hair in his step could not be said to have lost any of his early vigor, a result which he claims is due to his not exposing himself to the unhealthy homes which are the product of our civilization.

FERRY BARTON.

Mr. Johnsing (to Miss Tompkins whose family archives show her grandmother to have been nurse to George Washington):—"May I hab the pleasure of preintroducin' to yo' Miss Tompkins, a gemmen fren' ob mine?"

Miss Tompkins (rather superciliously):—"Who, an' what am de gmenne?"

Mr. Johnsing (deprecatingly):—"He am ob no pa'tickler family, Miss Tompkins, but he am pa't proprietor ob a fashionable up-town hotel tonsorial parlor."

Miss Tompkins (graciously):—"I will gratify mysel' de pleasure ob receivin' yo' fren' Mistah Johnsing"—*Ex.*

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