‘The Sculptor of Florence, or The Broken Statue’

Our tale commences on one of the delicious evenings when the splendour of an Italian sun-set, and the beauties of an Italian sky seem purposely adapted by Nature to imbue with tenderness and joy the hearts of those fond lovers who seek the shady grove, or wander on the banks of the Arno, to breathe in each other’s ears renewed vows of affection and fidelity. The balmy breeze was laden with the perfume of sweet flowers; the feathered choristers of the woods were closing their daily harmony with a few plaintive and touching notes of melancholy; and already were the lamps bright and numerous in many of the gay cassinos which adorned the vale of Arno. The towers and spires of the city of Florence were for a moment gilded with the departing rays of the setting sun: the mighty dome, which at that period ornamented the ducal palace, shone as if it were covered with a sheet of the most precious of metals; and then a soft and delicious twilight succeeded the evanescent effulgence of that splendid sunset.

The period to which we allude was the middle of the sixteenth century: and on the evening in question, and at about the hour of sun-set, two forms might have been distinguished in a secluded spot on the banks of the Arno. They walked slowly up and down the place which they had evidently selected as one of *rendezvous*; and from the melancholy which pervaded their countenances, and the earnestness of their conversation, an imaginative mind might gather all their history of hopeless and unchangeable love – of passion which some stern command or unkind fate refused to render happy – of vows which were probably never to be fulfilled – and of promises which young hearts so long, so tenaciously, and so faithfully cling to. Oh ! love is like the vine which clings around the forest tree in a secluded spot; so long as its tendrils are watered by the dews of hope, they flourish and are verdant; but when the arid heat of despair pours its influence upon them, they gradually relinquish their hold of the trunk which has long supported them, and so wither and die away.

By what we have ere now said, the reader will have no difficulty in perceiving that the individuals to whom we have partially introduced him were a lover and his fond mistress – a youth and a beauteous girl, on both of whom nature had been prodigal in the distribution of her embellishments. The former was tall and handsome, with a countenance cast in a Grecian mould, and a slender and sinewy form, which the vesture of the age set off to peculiar advantage. His companion was nearly as tall as he; and her graceful figure, with her long robe nearly dragging upon the ground, resembled the Madonnas which the artists of those times loved to trace upon their canvases. Her large black eyes were suffused in tears – her vermilion lips, apart, disclosed a set of the whitest teeth – and her scarf, falling from her shoulders, revealed glimpses of a bust of which the low *corsage* then in fashion could not conceal the snowy and voluptuous beauties.

‘Wherefore distress yourself, Leonora ?’ said the youth, in a soothing tone of voice. ‘Destiny cannot have so sad a fate in store for us.’

‘O Manuel !’ exclaimed the weeping girl: ‘my father is inflexible; and, as he himself declared, the laws of the Persians and the Medes were not more unalterable than his will. The Marquis Appiani is rich and powerful: he is the favourite of the grand duke – and through his influence my father hopes to re-establish his fallen fortunes.’

‘True – alas ! it is too true, Leonora !’ said the young man, striking his forehead with his hand. ‘Appiani is wealthy and great – and I – a poor sculptor – an artist without a name – a wretch whose daily toils are scarcely sufficient to procure him his daily bread ! Oh ! Leonora – Leonora !’

‘Do not give way to despair, Manuel.’

‘And yet you dare not bid me hope, Leonora !’

There was a bitterness of woe in the words of each, which went to the hearts of these disconsolate lovers.

‘And yet,’ said Manuel hastily, and after a long pause – ‘and yet I have one chance of acquiring fortune, fame, and the consent of your sire, Leonora: but it is madness – it is childish – to entertain so ambitious a design.’

‘Speak – speak,’ cried Leonora, a ray of hope animating her pale countenance. ‘Speak; in situations like ours, I could fain see flowers of hope glowing on the very verge of impossibility itself.’

‘Leonora,’ said the youth in a solemn and impressive tone of voice, ‘in ten days the exhibition of the prize statues takes place. The Grand Duke awards a laurel crown, a princely fortune, and a title to him who produces the best statue of Saint Cecilia. Michael Angelo – the pride of Italy, and the wonder of the whole world – Michael Angelo is the judge; and he is as impartial as he is keen in his perception of real merit.’

‘All this I know, Manuel,’ cried Leonora, somewhat impatiently. ‘But what reference has it to our position ? You are aware that my father has fixed the wedding to take place on the day which succeeds the one which marks the election of the happy artist who shall please the great Michael Angelo by his talent and his labour.’

‘I know that you will laugh at me, Leonora – that you will fancy my words to be the ravings of an idiot, or conceited fool,’ continued Manuel, impetuously: ‘but all may not be so vain and futile as you think. I have prepared *my* statue also – I have worked night and day for months past –’

‘Hence those hollow eyes – that pale countenance !’ interrupted Leonora, glancing tenderly at her lover.

‘Oh ! I have toiled as never yet man toiled,’ proceeded the enthusiastic youth; ‘and my work is complete – save the arm which supports the lyre. Three strokes of the chisel – and it is finished ! And my Saint Cecelia is the counterpart of my Leonora – else had not the statue stood the slightest chance of success !’

‘Manuel, you have not been guilty of this imprudence ?’ said Leonora, in a melancholy tone of voice, which went like a dagger to the heart of her lover.

‘Oh ! it is too true,’ returned the sculptor, after a moment’s pause. ‘But do not laugh at the folly. I cling to the statue, not as an artist – Oh ! no – as a lover. The Greeks concealed the most sublime truths in their fables: that of Pygmalion is my history. When I am with the statue, I am not alone; and now that it is almost complete – now that it has the appearance of a lovely living object, I tremble before it as before you. It seems to me that the statue palpitates as I approach it; and then I kneel to it – and meseems that sweet music issues from its lyre. Oh ! the statue is now my only hope and joy !’

Leonora threw herself into the arms of her lover, and wept bitterly. Her voice was lost in sobs – he kissed her chaste forehead, besought her to be calm – and when she had again recovered her presence of mind, he resumed his discourse.

‘When the Grand Duke had filled all Italy with the news of his proclamation relative to the intended competition, of which Michael Angelo was invited to be the judge and arbiter, a sudden idea struck me that I would hew from a shapeless block of marble the image of the most faultless of God’s creatures. And I have succeeded, Leonora – and Oh ! I know not that urges me thus to hope – but I feel, that if my statue be exhibited on the day appointed, the prize will be awarded to him who sculptured it.’

The hope, that thus illuminated the mind of the enthusiastic Manuel speedily communicated its invigorating influence to the bosom of his Leonora; and she smiled through her tears at her lover, as she poured forth her sanguine anticipations and heart-felt wishes, that the laurel crown would encircle his brows.

‘And Oh !’ said the beauteous girl, as she leant upon the arm of Manuel, ‘how dear in after life will be this spot to us both. It was here’, she continued in a more playful tone, ‘that we first met, Manuel – here that you first told me that you loved me – here that your first statue of the Virgin was placed, for pilgrims to kneel to – and here that you first disclosed the existence of your Saint Cecelia.’

Scarcely had Leonora finished speaking, when the lovers drew near to a tall marble image of the mother of our Saviour, which ornamented the spot. It had been placed there agreeably to the will of a miser who had died a few years previously; and the moderate pecuniary tender of Manuel, to the executors of the bequest, had procured for him the sculpture of that monument of a miser’s

penitence and charity in the hour of death. The lovers drew near the statue, and gazed upon it in silence.

‘The hand that moulded this form will one day produce works which shall be the glory of Italy,’ said a solemn voice; and in a moment an old man, whom the shades of evening had hitherto concealed from the view of the lovers, stood before them: but even in the dubious light of that hour, they could not fail to mark his keen dark eye, his venerable grey hair, and his modest attire, which gave him the appearance of a patriarch-shepherd of the olden time.

‘And yet so splendid a production is suffered to remain in the public road,’ continued the old man, surveying the outlines of the statue as he spoke. ‘I examined it this morning, when it was light – and it is faultless.’

‘You are then a judge in these matters, old man,’ said Manuel hastily.

‘A little,’ returned the venerable stranger carelessly: ‘I once made them in my study.’

‘And do you really attach so much importance to a work which scarcely occupied the sculptor a month to complete ?’ resumed Manuel.

‘Even in rough designs the germination of great talent may be discernible,’ was the reply. ‘But how do you know that only a month –’

‘Because it is the poor fruit of my toil,’ said Manuel anticipating the stranger’s question.

‘O this is a strange coincidence then,’ observed the old man; and with a chucking laugh he added, ‘But may I be informed if you have prepared a Saint Cecelia for the election that is to take place in a week or ten days ?’

‘What artist in Florence has not ?’ demanded Manuel, impatiently; for there was something in the manner of his interrogator he liked not. He accordingly bade the inquisitive stranger farewell, and having conducted his beauteous Leonora to the gate of her father’s cassino, he hastened back to the modest apartments which he occupied, in a humble dwelling, situate in one of the most obscure streets of the city of Florence.

Manuel was met at the door of his apartments by a laughing fair-haired, bright-eyed, intelligent youth of sixteen, who ran to him and embraced him fervently, crying at the same time ‘Good news, dear brother Manuel: we have gold enough now for many days !’ and he displayed a well-filled purse, as he repeated his ejaculations.

‘Whence came that money, Stephano ?’ demanded Manuel.

‘From the sale of the statue of Saint Peter you gave me to take to Solomon the Jew, this morning,’ was the immediate reply. ‘And Solomon paid you thirty ducats ?’ said Manuel, in a tone of the most unaffected surprise.

‘No – no – not he !’ answered Stephano, with an arch smile. ‘But I will not keep you in suspense, dear Manuel. I was hastening to old Solomon’s shop, with the little statue in my hands, when as I passed the grand exhibition-hall, I just stopped to see the statues that are already sent thither. An old man, dressed like a countryman, with white hair –’

‘And a cap without a plume ?’ said Manuel hastily.

‘Exactly,’ replied Stephano. ‘Do you know him ?’

‘I have seen him – this evening,’ said Manuel. ‘Proceed !’

‘Well – this identical old man, then, was busily examining the statues, with a most critical eye, and peering at each, as if he were the best judge of all their respective merits in Christendom, when he suddenly exclaimed “What a splendid production !” I turned round, and saw that he was gazing at your little statue of St Peter, which I held in my hands. “Is that yours, young man ?”’ said he. I replied that it was my brother’s; he asked your name and place of residence – and I could not help telling him the truth. “Manuel Ascanio !” cried he, repeating the name several times: “what, he who was employed to sculpture the statue of the Madonna, on the banks of the Arno ? I only arrived here yesterday,” continued he, “and I have already heard much about it.” I replied in the affirmative: he asked me to sell him the little statue I had with me; and when he offered me that purse, containing thirty ducats for it, I was only too glad to make him close the bargain. Old Solomon would not have given us more than six ducats at the outside.’

‘This is a fortunate presage,’ said Manuel, ‘and argues well for my Saint Cecelia.’

‘O my dear brother,’ cried Stephano, ‘I am so overjoyed that I have at last met some one who knows how to appreciate your works. I feel certain you will succeed at the approaching exhibition.’

‘To supper and to bed, Stephano,’ exclaimed Manuel, without noticing his brother’s observations. ‘I must arise betimes to visit the gallery and inspect the statues of my rivals. My own performance shall not be placed there before the grand day of trial.’

Manuel slept soundly that night, for hope beat high in his breast; and in his dreams he saw Leonora smiling upon him. He fancied that all obstacles would be speedily removed, and that he should shortly lead the beautiful girl to the altar, where his most sanguine expectations were to be fulfilled. But when he awoke in the morning, he recollected that he still had the Marquis Appiani as his rival; and he hastened to the gallery where the exhibition was to take place, to distract his mind for an hour or two from dwelling upon aught that was disagreeable to him.

Manuel had not left his modest dwelling half an hour, when a loud knock summoned Stephano to the door; and in the visitor, who walked unceremoniously into the front room, the youth recognised the old man who had purchased the statue of Saint Peter of him the day before. Stephano accordingly received him with all possible politeness, and desired him to be seated.

‘Good morning,’ said the old man, sinking into a chair. ‘Is your brother within ?’

‘He is gone to inspect the statues,’ was the answer, delivered in a respectful tone.

‘Perhaps he intends to send one himself to the exhibition ?’ continued the stranger.

Stephano nodded an affirmative in a certain mysterious and arch manner, which implied that the matter was more than half a secret.

‘I must see it,’ said the old man abruptly.

‘Impossible !’ cried Stephano. ‘My brother has given me the most positive orders never to admit any one into his private studio.’

‘Did I not offer you a good price for your little statue yesterday ?’ demanded the old man.

‘You did – and I thank you,’ answered Stephano, ‘for never was money more welcome. We had not an oboli in the house.’

‘And in case your brother’s statue does not obtain the prize,’ continued the stranger, ‘which is very probable, especially as some of the first artists have forwarded their works to the exhibition, – what would become of the Saint Cecelia *then* ?’

Stephano’s countenance became suddenly clouded as he calculated the changes and consequences of his brother’s failure. The stranger saw the advantage he had gained, and hastened to follow it up.

‘In case your brother’s statue should rejected,’ said the old man, ‘I will purchase it.’

‘You !’ exclaimed Stephano, starting from his seat.

‘Yes – I !’ calmly rejoined the stranger. ‘Although an humble individual, I fancy that I have some taste and discrimination in the fine arts; and I pledge myself to purchase the statue, if it be rejected at the exhibition.’

Stephano did not hesitate another moment.

‘Follow me, then,’ said the youth; and he led the way to an inner apartment in which the statue of Saint Cecelia was standing upon a pedestal. That was the room in which Manuel had toiled ‘as

never before man had toiled' – in which he had devoted hours and days to the contemplation only of his magnificent work, – in which a faithful lover had hewn from a shapeless block of marble an all but speaking counterpart of her he adored – in which he had reiterated in private all the vows and protestations he had ever made to Leonora during their evening walks; – that was the room, in fine, where had been passed some of the most felicitous as well as some of the most wretched hours of Manuel's life ! And that room contained the statue on which rested all his hopes – the symmetrical, the beautiful statue, which was full of life, and meaning, and love, and tenderness to him – the statue which, although bearing the name of the patroness of music, might immortalize the transcendent beauties of her whom he loved so sincerely, and so well.

'This is the statue !' said Stephano.

'A *chef-d'oeuvre* !' exclaimed the old man.

Stephano clapped his hands together in delight.

'O it is no wonder that your brother kept this delicious image concealed from every eye !' cried the old man, with a smile of the most unfeigned rapture. 'The very air – the breath of mortals would almost seem to be capable of spoiling that fragile marble, and tainting that most exquisite flower of beauty. – Ah !'

And the old man started as if he were suddenly bitten by a venomous reptile.

'Is anything the matter ? are you ill ?' enquired Stephan, anxiously gazing upon the changed countenance of the stranger.

'No – boy – no,' said the old man, in an agitated tone of voice. 'But there is a fault – a grievous fault – or rather negligence in that statue. The arm, which supports the lyre, is incomplete.'

'A fault ! O no !' cried Stephano, 'it cannot be !'

'A fault, I say,' exclaimed the stranger. 'Three stokes of the chisel – three blows of the hammer – and that statue is complete.'

And as he uttered these words, the old man seized a chisel and a hammer which lay upon a table near him, and approached the statue.

'Consider, Signor – what are you about ?' cried Stephano, rushing forward and catching the stranger by the skirt of his doublet.

'Boy, did I not say I would purchase that statue, if it failed to please at the exhibition,' said the old man, calmly pushing Stephano aside. 'I will forfeit a thousand ducats if I spoil it;' – and he advanced towards the statue.

‘And my brother ?’ cried Stephano.

‘He will rejoice at what I am about to do,’ was the reply.

Stephano urged no farther objection, but stood trembling in the middle of the room, while the old man slowly and cautiously applied the chisel three times to the defective part of the statue, and then surveyed his work with admiration and delight. At that moment a knock was heard at the door; – Stephano recognised his brother’s signal, hurried the stranger into the front room, closed the studio, and hastened to admit Manuel, who started when he recognised in his visitor the individual he had spoken to on the evening before on the banks of the Arno, at the statue of the Madonna.

‘This is the gentleman who purchased the statue of St Peter,’ said Stephano, presenting the stranger to his brother. ‘He has called to ascertain if you intend to exhibit a specimen of your abilities –’

‘O no !’ cried Manuel in a sorrowful tone of voice, ‘I have just now inspected the statues already placed in the gallery, and see so much perfection *there*, that I dare not expose myself to the certainty of defeat and consequent disgrace.’

‘Be not discouraged, young man,’ exclaimed the stranger. ‘I am not vain, – but I flatter myself that I am able to discern merit where it exists; and by the specimens of your capabilities I have already seen – the Madonna and Saint Peter – I augur well in your favour.’

The old man waited not for a reply; but having wished the brothers a hasty ‘good morning’, he abruptly withdrew.

‘Be not discouraged, dear brother,’ said Stephano, when the visitor had departed. ‘That individual is apparently a judge, and his opinions must not be lightly value.’

‘No Stephano ! I have this day seen some splendid productions of art,’ exclaimed Manuel. ‘Let me contemplate my own statue once more, and thus acquire fresh hopes and fresh courage.’

‘One moment,’ said Stephano.

‘No, – come with me,’ cried Manuel; and he led his brother into the adjacent apartment.

Manuel cast one look at his statue, and gave a sudden start. He ran up to it, examined the arm, passed his hand across his eyes, and again convinced himself it was no delusion.

‘Stephano !’ said he, in a voice of thunder, as he turned hastily round to his terrified brother, ‘that individual who has just left the house –’ ‘Pardon me – and I will tell you all,’ cried Stephano, falling upon his knees.

‘He applied the chisel to my statue !’ejaculated Manuel; ‘and there is only one man living who could have touched it as he touched it !’

‘O my dear brother – pardon me !’ cried Stephano, still trembling at Manuel’s feet.

‘And that old man – ’ continued the sculptor.

‘Who is he ?’ said Stephano.

‘Michael Angelo himself !’ was the answer.

‘Michael Angelo !’ cried Stephano, leaping upon his feet. ‘Manuel – he will award you the crown, and we shall be rich and happy evermore !’

‘Michael Angelo is my friend !’ exclaimed Manuel, in a paroxysm of the wildest joy. ‘Michael Angelo has seen my statue – Michael Angelo has been in my house ! O this mean dwelling will henceforth appear to me to be a palace ! For Michael Angelo has been here – the pride of Italy – the Wonder of Europe – and he has bade me hope ! O Stephano ! I suffocate with joy: I fain would weep, and cannot ! O that such unexpected happiness should have bene in store for me.’

‘He said your Saint Cecilia was a *chef d’oeuvre*, Manuel,’ cried Stephano. ‘the opinion of Michael Angelo is the opinion of Italy: a prophecy of Michael Angelo is as an order of destiny. O what a great man has deigned to visit us ! and what bounty on the part of heaven is this !’

‘What will happen to me in the next ten days I know not,’ said Manuel solemnly; ‘but this I feel – that I have just experienced the most profound emotion which a man can support. Another such shock, of happiness or misery, would kill me on the spot, or send me a raving madman to a receptacle for the insane. But O God ! my prayers are pure, and thou canst change my crown of thorns into one of laurels.’

Ten days passed tediously away; and during that period Manuel had not a single opportunity of conversing with Leonora Vivaldi. Her father, who was well aware of her passion for the obscure sculptor, and who was desirous of accomplishing the union between her and the Marquis Appiani, ordered her to be so narrowly watched, that she could not repair to the usual place of *rendezvous* during the time that elapsed between the evening on which our tale opens and the day that was fixed for the exhibition of the statues, and the final judgment of Michael Angelo. A note from Manuel had, however, informed her of all that had occurred in reference to his statue and to the great man who had spoken so highly in his favour.

The morning of the eventful day dawned; and many an artist rose from a sleepless couch with a brow rendered feverish, and a heart aching with uncertainty, hope, and fear. Florence was all confusion, mirth, bustle, and joy; the streets leading to the gallery in which the statues were exhibited were crowded to excess. Every one was anxious to catch a glimpse of the ducal

cortège; but all were more impatient still to see the arbiter of the competition – Michael Angelo – the mighty artist who had been invited from Rome to preside at the ceremony.

It had been ordered by proclamation that all the statues should be conveyed to the gallery by mid-day; the decision was to be made at about three in the afternoon. Manuel and Stephano rose early, and were anxiously waiting for the arrival of the vehicle which had been ordered to convey the Saint Cecilia to the gallery, when a letter was brought by a page bearing the livery of the Count Vivaldi. The missive was addressed to the elder brother; and its contents were as follows:

'Manuel, I have long been aware of your attachment for my daughter; and were I alone with her on earth, – if I had not a son whom I should leave poor and miserable, I would gladly consent to your union. But this cannot be. If the Marquis Appiani espouse my daughter, my fallen fortunes will be established once more, and my son will be placed in a condition worthy of his family and his ancestors. Ought not Leonora, then, to sacrifice herself for her parents and her brother ? If thou thinkest she ought, I pray thee show thy love for her, and do not dishonour her. Recollect that Lisa del Giocundo was disgraced when Leonardo da Vinci published her portrait. Renounce, then, the exhibition of your statue, – consider my old age, my gray hairs – respect the honour of Leonora – and we will both bless you together.'

Vivaldi

The letter dropped from Manuel's hand – Stephano picked it up and perused it hastily.

'I wait your reply, signor,' said the page.

'Lisa del Giocundo was disgraced;' mused Manuel audibly, 'and she awarded not stolen interviews to her lover, – and she was not promised to a Marquis Appiani. Tell the Count, your master,' he added in a firm tone of voice, turning to the page, 'that I obey his wishes, and that if he order me to break my statue to pieces, I am ready to fulfil his orders.'

The boy was to depart, when Manuel, recollecting a question he was desirous of asking, called him back.

'You are acquainted with the contents of this letter ?' inquired Manuel.

'I am in my master's confidence,' was the reply.

'Tell me, then, how came the Count Vivaldi to ascertain that my statue was the image of his daughter ?'

'Michael Angelo was presented to the count last evening by the Marquis Appiani, and when he was introduced to Signora Leonora, he discovered the likeness.'

‘You may go,’ said Manuel: and the page withdrew to bear the sculptor’s message to his master. So soon as he was despatched, Manuel shut himself up in his studio, and Stephano gave way to his grief in the front chamber.

It was about one o’clock when the Marquis Appiani, who was ignorant that Manuel was his rival in Leonora’s affection, called at the humble dwelling of the two brothers. Manuel was summoned by Stephano from his studio, and the marquis hastened to unfold the object of his visit.

‘Your name, I believe, is Manuel Ascanio ?’ said the marquis.

‘It is, my lord,’ was the reply.

‘You have accomplished a *chef d’oeuvre*, Signor,’ continued the marquis; ‘and the Grand Duke has sent me to fetch it. My followers wait outside. You are to accompany me: his highness is desirous of seeing you.’

‘Accident, my lord,’ said Manuel with a deep sigh, ‘or rather the venial indiscretion of my brother, discovered that the statue of which you are speaking to a great man –’

‘Despatch – I am anxious to see it,’ interrupted the marquis: ‘Michael Angelo has already spoken so highly of its merits.’

‘I dare not show it to a soul,’ said Manuel, with difficulty suppressing his tears.

‘But I,’ urged the marquis, smiling, ‘am ordered by the Grand Duke to carry it to his presence; and I dare not disobey.’

‘My word is pledged,’ said Manuel.

‘So is mine,’ returned the marquis, taking a heavy purse from his pocket, and throwing it upon the table. ‘If the statue be sold, there is money – I re-purchase it: but mine it must be;’ – and the marquis summoned his followers from the passage where they were waiting without.

‘You dare not take it by force,’ cried Manuel, fiercely confronting the Marquis Appiani.

‘I dare execute the duke’s orders,’ was the calm reply, as the marquis beckoned his followers to attend upon him whithersoever he might lead.

‘This tyranny – this injustice is insupportable !’ exclaimed Manuel, wildly.

‘O brother, give them the statue,’ cried Stephano; ‘your fame, your fortune depend upon it.’

‘Wait one moment –one moment only,’ said Manuel, after an instant’s consideration; ‘and the statue shall be yours.’

The marquis nodded and affirmative, and Manuel rushed into his studio and closed the door.

‘He wishes to take one last fond view of it alone,’ said Stephano, as his brother disappeared.

But a loud and long laugh, and then a cry of rage, echoed from the adjacent apartment; and they were followed by the din of a chisel and hammer upon the marble; and then succeeded a crash, which shook the house to its foundation. Stephano, the marquis, and his followers, ran into the studio; and as they entered, they stumbled over the shapeless pieces of broken marble which Manuel had scattered upon the floor. The statue had disappeared; but the remnants were before them.

‘Oh Manuel, what have you done ?’ exclaimed Stephano, bursting into an agony of tears.

‘Let them take the statue now, – the face is all disfigured, and the limbs are scattered over the room,’ said the sculptor with an ironical laugh.

‘What can I say to his Highness ?’ cried the maquis, as he turned to leave the spot. ‘It is as much as my head is worth to have been the cause of the destruction of that statue !’

With these words the Marquis Appiani departed, followed by his attendants, and leaving behind him two hearts so full of sorrow and despair that a misanthrope would have wept at the sight of the desolation which was depicted upon their countenances.

‘Fame and fortune for ever gone !’ said Stephano, after a long silence.

‘And her honour preserved from calumniating surmise,’ added Manuel, firmly; and he felt a momentary glow of pride and happiness, for he knew that he had done a noble and generous deed: but these sentiments soon passed away, and gave place to others of a more gloomy character still. ‘And yet, Stephano, I can weep – I can cry – I can gnash my teeth with rage ! I have destroyed a statue which Michael Angelo had perfected – I have effaced the most lovely lineaments that ever represented a living thing. O it is a crime, that which I have done – a great crime.’

‘Yes – weep. Brother, weep – O you have good cause for sorrow !’cried Stephano. ‘But – hark ! numerous footsteps approach our door; the Grand Duke has sent his slaves to take us to the Inquisition for the deed you have done !’

And as Stephano spoke, the outer door of which had been left open by the marquis’s followers, was filled with visitors, at the head of whom were Michael Angelo and the Count Vivaldi.

‘Rash youth !’ cried Michael Angelo, addressing himself to Manuel, with ill-assumed sternness; ‘you destroy the *chef d’oeuvre* of the age, at the moment when I obtain the consent of the Count Vivaldi to your union with his daughter ?’

‘Impossible !’ cried Manuel, scarcely daring to believe his ears. ‘and the Marquis Appiani ?’

‘The duke has pardoned him,’ said Michael Angelo; ‘and here is the golden crown for you. His Highness, moreover, accords you a year to perfect another statue of Saint Cecilia.’

‘And Leonora anxiously waits to greet the champion of the exhibition,’ said the Count Vivaldi. ‘You have made a noble sacrifice, Manuel – and you are well worthy of my daughter. Let us hasten to the cassino and celebrated the happy termination of this eventful day !’