

tenderness from the tiny garden below.

Who could be playing at so early an hour? He listened with a spell-bound intensity. The music rose and fell, with a heavenly sweetness—a sweetness that filled the air with solemn, rich harmony. Softly it ebbed, as the tide of life ebbs from the unconscious bosom—lower and lower it grew, as if gradually accompanying some pure soul into the glorious paradise of eternity.

The writer strained his ears. It seemed to carry him away, soaring on the wings of ecstasy. He leaned, with his ear drooped to the open window, where the sun glinted on the rosebuds, the heads of dew hanging from their petals, sparkling like balls of crystal. As he listened his brows arched in a frown of wonder, and his eyes glowed with a spiritual light. Fainter and fainter came the solemn notes—he pressed his ear still closer to the open window, but the marvellous strains died away, as if the soul had reached its long-looked-for destination. For a few moments all was still. Then a large black cat, its coat shining in the sun like polished jet, leapt from the ground on to the fence dividing the adjacent yard. At that instant the music burst out afresh. It rose in a perfect storm of galloping harmony. The clear sweeping of the hoof beats of many horses, as if rushing to battle, the clashing jingle of the murderous bayonet—the cries of the agonised soldier, as he receives the fatal bullet—the sudden thud of the horse falling beneath its rider—all the bloody deeds of war—of licensed murder—rent the air, and carried the listener into the highest drift of imagination. Anon the sounds changed into vibrating cadence; the bubbling noise of leaping cascades, rushing brooks, mingled with the echo of the rolling surf, breaking amid rocky caverns. Every sound was perfect in itself; every note swept into the air as if guided by a supermundane player. When the

intoxicating strains ceased, the writer breathed freely, and thrusting his head out the window he saw from whence they emanated.

A middle-aged man sat turning over some music sheets close to the small flower-beds that ran along the foot of the dividing fence. He wore a tattered, dark, greasy-looking coat, had no hat on, and his hair was black, long and matted. The violin, which he had just finished playing, lay on his knees. Presently he turned his head, and his black eyes, as they rolled in a careless gaze, rested on the head projecting out of the window.

“Excuse me,” said the writer, “for acting the eaves-dropper, but I must congratulate you on your masterly playing. It is really beautiful; I have never heard anything so wonderful. It has fascinated—charmed me; I have been listening enraptured, to the marvellous flow of your heavenly chords.”

The musician ran the fingers of his right hand through his matted hair—then looked with a far-away, soft, dreamy stare at the writer.

“You have heard me play,” he said, as he laughed, ironically, rose from where he was sitting, and walked leisurely along, fingering the instrument the while, until he came directly under the window, then added in a deep Italian accent: “H’m, you have not heard me play; you have heard my soul play! I am but the instrument through which those sounds pass. You see this?” he held out the grimy violin, “there is great music in it, but it will not—will not play—will not sound that great music—powerful harmony of tone—cannot be brought out but by a great master; so with the man—the player; he is but the instrument in the hands of a great master—the glorious master of Nature. Yes, that music which you heard was the vibration of my soul shaken to its inmost fibres. It comes upon me at certain moments, and remains but for a short time. I could not play