

AN ARTIST'S PUPIL.

A Story of Titian and Venice.

(CONTINUED.)

Some days passed on, and the portrait still remained in Titian's studio. Giulio often looked at it, but never spoke of it, and Titian did not err when he thought there was a meaning in this silence.

But the grand festival day of Venice was at hand. This was Ascension Day, on which the Doge performed the annual ceremony of signifying the maritime power of the signory by casting a golden ring into the waters of the Adriatic. The custom was, at this proud celebration, for Venice to send out her population of all degrees, and it was certain that at such a time the fairest daughters of Venice never were absent.

The short voyage of the Doge from the quay of the ducal palace to the boundary of Lido and Malamocco was always performed on this occasion in a stately vessel called the Bucentaur, a galley said to be of equal antiquity with these maritime nuptials. The magnificent vessel always bore a freight of some importance; for, besides the Doge, the council, the chief officers of state, and the admiral of the port (who acted as pilot, and was bound by oath to bring the vessel back to the harbor in the arsenal), it bore the ambassadors from the various countries in alliance with the republic. Sometimes, besides the nobilissimi and the state officials, it bore citizens of worth, and at all times the Doge was glad to see by his side the great painter, Tiziano Vecelli, whose pencil could confer such immortality as earth is proud of, and whose works reflected more fame upon Venice than Venice in all her glory could bestow upon him.

Giulio, with others of his age, followed in the procession, for it was a scene of matchless beauty and magnificence, well worthy the attention of a painter's mind and eye. The Bucentaur was swept on in a stately manner by the rowers, and Giulio's light gondola came near it, within full view of the gallant company beneath its gorgeous canopy of crimson damask, richly embroidered with gold. To Giulio's amazement, Titian had by his side a young lady, and when she turned her face for a moment, Giulio saw to his surprise and delight that she was the fair original of the portrait.

The ceremonials went on, and Andrea Gritti, the Doge, wedded the sea (an unstable and fickle mistress) with the accustomed words, "We wed thee with this in token of our true and perpetual sovereignty." The moment these words were uttered, and the ring cast into the sea, it was strewed with flowers and fragrant herbs in the fanciful idea that thus the bride was crowned!

The pageant ended, Giulio speeded to Titian's house. He found the great artist before the easel, busied, as usual, in some work for immortality. They spoke on various subjects, but Titian made no mention of the young signora of whom Giulio had just one glance. At last Giulio said that he had seen Titian on the deck of the Bucentaur; but this, though it challenged Titian's allusion to the lady, drew no remark from him about her, so that at last Giulio ventured to say that he thought the signora much resembled the portrait which he had admired from the moment it first met his view.

"Admire it, Signor Giulio Mantoni? Fall asleep before it in excess of admiration? Well, well, thou needst not blush. 'Tis my daughter Beatrice, whom thou shalt meet anon. But, signor, if thou shouldst not, it would be well for thee to take thy siesta ere thou meetest her. Women, as thou knowest, like not cavalieri who are drowsy. Nay, I have not told her that. She saw thee, and asked who thou wert, and I told her Giulio; but not that thou didst gaze thyself to sleep before her portrait. Now, let us within. Thou wilt like my gentle Beatrice. She reminds me of what her fair and loving mother was."

And Giulio did very much like Beatrice Vecelli, who, in turn, admired the manly beauty and chivalrous bearing of the Spaniard. Admired?—alas! that is a word all too weak. Women scarcely know a medium, in her intercourse with our sex, between the coldest indifference and the warmest love. Long before she knew it Beatrice was deeply and devotedly attached to Giulio. Her father saw this, and did not check it; he already loved Giulio Mantoni as a son, cheerily anticipated that, in the natural course of time and circumstance, he would become so—with the consent of Beatrice.

Very much did Giulio admire the loveliness, the grace, the innocence of Beatrice Vecelli, but he did not love her with more than a brother's love. To do him justice, he was all unconscious of the feelings which his attentive kindness had awakened in her gentle heart. He read to her and talked with her as if she were his dear

sister; and she made the too common mistake of thinking that these general courtesies, made most kind through the suavity of his manner, had a particular application. So, the signora was in love!

Conclusion in our next.

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