

## PORDENONE.

### I.

HARD by the Church of Saint Stephen, in sole and beautiful Venice,  
Under the colonnade of the Augustinian Convent,  
Every day, as I passed, I paused to look at the frescoes  
Painted upon the ancient walls of the court of the Convent  
By a great master of old, who wore his sword and his dagger  
While he wrought the figures of patriarchs, martyrs, and virgins  
Into the sacred and famous scenes of Scriptural story.

### II.

Long ago the monks from their snug self-devotion were driven,  
Wistful and fat and slow: looking backward, I fancied them going  
Out through the sculptured doorway, and down the Ponte de' Frati,  
Cowled and sandaled and beaded, a plump and pensive procession;  
And in my day their cells were barracks for Austrian soldiers,  
Who in their turn have followed the Augustinian Friars.  
As to the frescoes, little remained of work once so perfect.  
Summer and winter weather of some three cycles had wasted;  
Plaster had fallen, and left unsightly blotches of ruin;  
Wanton and stupid neglect had done its worst to the pictures:  
Yet to the sympathetic and reverent eye was apparent—  
Where the careless glance but found, in expanses of plaster,  
Touches of incoherent color and lines interrupted—  
Somewhat still of the life of surpassing splendor and glory  
Filling the frescoes once; and here and there was a figure,  
Standing apart, and out from the common decay and confusion,  
Flushed with immortal youth and ineffaceable beauty,  
Such as that figure of Eve in pathetic expulsion from Eden,  
Taking—the tourist remembers—the wrath of Heaven *al fresco*,  
As is her well-known custom in thousands of acres of canvas.

### III.

I could make out the much-bepainted Biblical subjects,  
When I had patience enough: The Temptation, of course, and Expulsion;  
Cain killing Abel, his Brother—the merest fragment of murder;  
Noah's Debauch—the trunk of the sea-faring patriarch naked,  
And the garment, borne backward to cover it, fearfully tattered;  
Abraham offering Isaac—no visible Isaac, and only  
Abraham's lifted knife held back by the hovering angel;  
Martyrdom of Saint Stephen—a part of the figure of Stephen;  
And the Conversion of Paul—the greaves on the leg of a soldier  
Held across the back of a prostrate horse by the stirrup.  
But when I looked at the face of that tearful and beauteous figure—  
Eve in the fresco there, and, in Venice of old, Violaute,  
As I must fain believe (the lovely daughter of Palma,  
Who was her father's Saint Barbara, and was the Bella of Titian)—  
Such a meaning and life shone forth from its animate presence  
As could restore those vague and ineffectual pictures,  
With their pristine colors, and fill them with light and with movement.  
Nay, sometimes it could blind me to all the present about me,  
Till I beheld no more the sausage-legged Austrian soldiers  
Where they stood on guard beside one door of the Convent,  
Nor the sentinel beggars that watched the approach to the other;  
Neither the bigolanti, the broad-backed Friulan maidens,  
Drawing the water with clatter and splashing, and laughter and gossip,  
Out of the carven well in the midst of the court of the Convent—  
No, not even the one with the mole on her cheek and the sidelong

Look, as she ambled forth with her buckets of bronze at her shoulder,  
Swinging upon the yoke to and fro, a-drip and a-glimmer.  
All in an instant was changed, and once more the cloister was peopled  
By the serene monks of old, and against walls of the cloisters,  
High on his scaffold raised, Pordenone\* wrought at his frescoes.  
Armed with dagger and sword, as the legend tells, against Titian,  
Who was his rival in art and in love.

## IV.

It seemed to be summer,  
In the forenoon of the day; and the master's diligent pencil  
Laid its last light touches on Eve driven forth out of Eden,  
Otherwise Violante, and while his pupils about him  
Wrought and chattered, in silence ran the thought of the painter:  
"She, and forever she! Is it come to be my perdition?  
Shall I, then, never more make the face of a beautiful woman  
But it must take her divine, accursèd beauty upon it,  
And, when I finish my work, stand forth her visible presence?  
Ah! I could take this sword and strike it into her bosom!  
Though I believe my own heart's blood would stream from the painting,  
So much I love her! Yes, that look is marvellous like you,  
Wandering, tender—such as I'd give my salvation to win you  
Once to bend upon me! But I knew myself better than make you,  
Lest I should play the fool about you here before people,  
Helpless to turn away from your violet eyes, Violante,  
That have turned all my life to a vision of madness." The painter  
Here unto speech betraying thoughts he had silently pondered,  
"Vision, visions, my son?" said a gray old friar who listened,  
Seated there in the sun, with his eye on the work of the painter  
Fishily fixed, while the master blasphemed behind his mustaches.  
"Much have I envied your Art, who vouchsafeth to those who adore her  
Visions of heavenly splendor denied to fastings and vigils.  
I have spent days and nights of faint and painful devotion,  
Scourged myself almost to death, without one glimpse of the glory  
Which your touch has revealed in the face of that heavenly maiden.  
Pleasure me to repeat what it was you were saying of visions:  
Fain would I know how they come to you, though I never see them,  
And in my thickness of hearing I fear some words have escaped me."  
Then, while the painter glared on the lifted face of the friar,  
Baleful, breathless, bewildered, fiercer than noon in the dog-days,  
Round the circle of pupils there ran a tittering murmur;  
From the lips to the ears of those nameless Beppis and Gigis  
Buzzed the stinging whisper: "Let's hear Pordenone's confession."  
Well they knew the master's luckless love, and whose portrait  
He had unconsciously painted *there*, and guessed that his visions  
Scarcely were those conceived by the friar, who constantly blundered  
Round the painter at work, mistaking every subject—  
Noah's drunken Debauch for the Stoning of Stephen the Martyr,  
And the Conversion of Paul for the Flight into Egypt; forever  
Putting his hand to his ear and shouting, "Speak louder, I pray you!"  
So they waited now, in silent, amused expectation,  
Till Pordenone's angry scorn should gather to bursting.  
Long the painter gazed in furious silence, then slowly  
Uttered a kind of moan, and turned again to his labor.  
Tears gathered into his eyes, of mortification and pathos,

\* Giovanni Antonio Licinio, called *Pordenone* from his birth-place in the Frioli, was a contemporary of Titian's, whom he equalled in many qualities, and was one of the most eminent Venetian painters in fresco.



"THEN HE FRONTED TITIAN, WHO STOOD WITH HIS ARMS LIGHTLY FOLDED."—[SEE PAGE 832.]

And when the dull old monk, who forgot, while he waited the answer,  
 Visions and painter and all, had maundered away in his error,  
 Pordenone half envied the imbecile peace of his bosom;  
 "For in my own," he mused, "is such a combat of devils,  
 That I believe torpid age or stupid youth would be better

Than this manhood of mine that has climbed aloft to discover  
 Heights which I never can reach, and bright on the pinnacle standing  
 In the unfading light, my rival crowned victor above me.  
 If I could hint what I feel, what forever escapes from my pencil,  
 All after-time should know my will was not less than my failure,  
 Nor should any one dare remember me merely in pity.  
 All should read my sorrows and do my discomfiture homage,  
 Saying: 'Not meanly at any time this painter meant or endeavored;  
 His was the anguish of one who falls short of the highest achievement,  
 Conscious of doing his utmost, and knowing how vast his defeat is.  
 Life, if he would, might have had some second guerdon to give him,  
 But he would only the first; and behold! Let us honor  
 Grief such as his must have been: no other sorrow can match it!  
 There are certainly some things here that are nobly imagined:  
 Look! here is masterly power in this play of light, and these shadows  
 Boldly are massed; and what color! One can well understand Buonarrotti  
 Saying the sight of his Curtius was worth the whole journey from Florence.  
 Here is a man at least never less than his work—you can feel it  
 As you can feel in Titian's the painter's inferior spirit.  
 He and this Pordenone, you know, were rivals; and Titian  
 Knew how to paint to the popular humor, and spared not  
 Foul means or fair (his way with rivals) to crush Pordenone,  
 Who with an equal chance'—

“Alas, if the whole world should tell me

I was his equal in art, and the lie could save me from torment,  
 So must I be lost, for my soul could never believe it!  
 Nay, let my envy snarl as fierce as it will at his glory,  
 Still, when I look on his work, my soul makes obeisance within me,  
 Humbling itself before the touch that shall never be equalled.”

As one who sleeps in continual noise is wakened by silence,  
 So Pordenone was roused from these thoughts anon by the sudden  
 Hush that had fallen upon the garrulous group of his pupils;  
 And ere he turned half-way with instinctive looks of inquiry,  
 He was already warned, with a shock at the heart, of a presence  
 Long attended, not feared; and he laid one hand on his sword-hilt,  
 Seizing the sheath with the other hand, that the palette had dropped from.  
 Then he fronted Titian, who stood with his arms lightly folded,  
 And with a curious smile, half of sarcasm, half of compassion,  
 Bent on the embattled painter, cried: “Your slave, Messer Antonio!  
 What good friend has played this bitter jest with your humor?  
 As I beheld you just now full-armed with your pencil and palette,  
 I was half awed by your might; but these sorry trappings of bravo  
 Make me believe you less fit to be the rival of Titian,  
 Here in the peaceful calm of our well-ordered city of Venice,  
 Than to take service under some Spanish lordling at Naples,  
 Needy in blades for work that can not wait for the poison.”

Pordenone flushed with anger and shame to be taken  
 At an unguarded point; but he answered with scornful defiance:  
 “Oh, you are come, I see, with the favorite weapon of Titian,  
 And you would make a battle of words. If you care for my counsel,  
 Listen to me: I say you are skillful far in my absence,  
 And your tongue can inflict a keener and deadlier mischief  
 When it is dipped in poisonous lies, and wielded in secret.”  
 “Nay, then,” Titian responded, “methinks that our friend Aretino\*

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\* Pietro Aretino was a satirical poet of Venice, and a friend of Titian, whose house he frequented. The story of Tintoretto's measuring him for a portrait with his dagger is well known.

Makes a much better effect than either of us in that tongue-play.  
But since Messer Robusti has measured our wit for his portrait,  
Even he has grown shy of using his tongue than he once was.  
Have you not heard the tale? Tintoretto was told Aretino  
Meant to make him the subject of one of his merry effusions;  
And with his naked dirk he went carefully over his person,  
Promising, if the poet made free with him in his verses,  
He would immortalize my satirical friend with that pencil.  
Doubtless the tale is not true. Aretino says nothing about it;  
Always speaks, in fact, with the highest respect of Robusti.  
True or not, 'tis well found." Then looking around on the frescoes:  
"Good, very good indeed! Your breadth and richness and softness  
No man living surpasses; those heads are truly majestic;  
Yes, Buonarroti was right, when he said that to look at your Curtius  
Richly repaid him the trouble and cost of a journey from Florence.  
Surely the world shall know you the first of painters in fresco!  
Well? You will not strike me unarmed? This was hardly expected  
By the good people that taught you to think our rivalry blood-red.  
Let us be friends, Pordenone!"

"Be patron and patronized, rather;  
Nay, if you spoke your whole mind out, be assassin and victim.  
Could the life beat again in the broken heart of Giorgione,  
He might tell us, I think, something pleasant of friendship with Titian."  
Suddenly over the shoulder of Titian peered an ironical visage,  
Smiling, malignly intent—the leer of the scurrilous poet:  
"You know—all the world knows—who dug the grave of Giorgione.\*  
Titian and he were no friends—our Lady of Sorrows forgive 'em!  
But for all hurt that Titian did him he might have been living,  
Greater than any living, and lord of renown and such glory  
As would have left you both dull as yon withered moon in the sunshine."  
Loud laughed the listening group at the insolent gibe of the poet  
Stirring the gall to its depths in the bitter soul of their master,  
Who with his tremulous fingers tapped the hilt of his poniard,  
Answering naught as yet. Anon the glance of the ribald,  
Carelessly ranging from Pordenone's face to the picture,  
Dwelt with an absent light on its marvellous beauty, and kindled  
Into a slow recognition, with "Ha! Violante!" Then, erring  
Willfully as to the subject, he cackled his filthy derision:  
"What have we here? More Magdalens yet of the painter's acquaintance?  
Ah—!"

The words had scarce left his lips, when the painter  
Rushed upon him, and clutching his throat, thrust him backward and held him  
Over the scaffolding's edge in air, and straightway had flung him  
Crashing down on the pave of the cloister below, but for Titian,  
Who around painter and poet alike wound his strong arms and stayed them  
Solely, until the bewildered pupils could come to the rescue.  
Then, as the foes relaxed that embrace of frenzy and murder—  
White, one with rage and the other with terror, and either with hatred—  
Grimly the great master smiled: "You were much nearer paradise, Pietro,  
Than you have been for some time. Be ruled now by me and get homeward  
Fast as you may, and be thankful." And then, as the poet,  
Looking neither to right nor to left, amid the smiles of the pupils  
Tottered along the platform, and trembling descended the ladder  
Down to the cloister pave, and, still without upward or backward  
Glance, disappeared beneath the outer door of the Convent,  
Titian turned again to the painter: "Farewell, Pordenone!"

\* Giorgione (Giorgio Barbarelli) was Titian's fellow-pupil and rival in the school of Bellini. He died at thirty-four, after a life of great triumphs and successes.



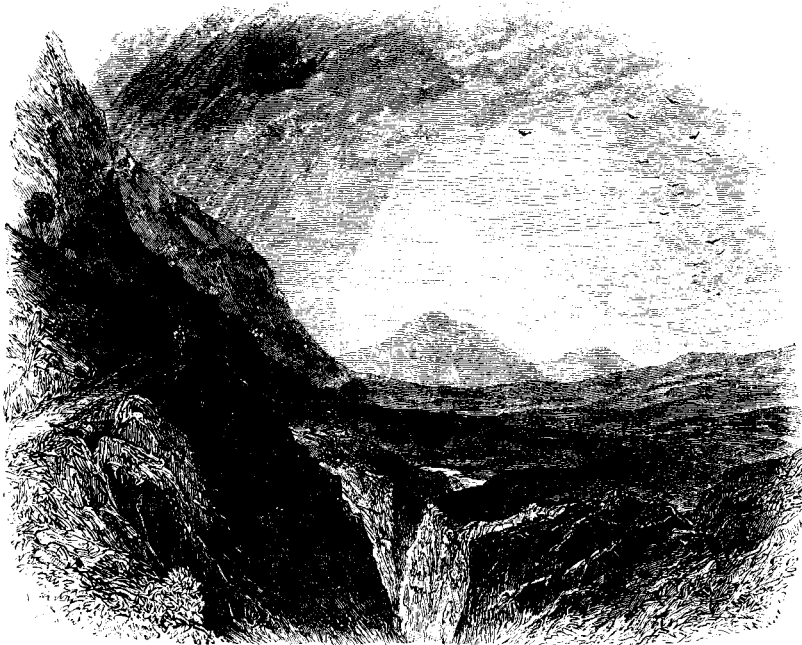
Learn more fairly to know me. I envy you not; and no rival  
 Now, or at any time, have I held you, or ever shall hold you.  
 Prosper and triumph still, for all me: you shall but do me honor,  
 Seeing that I too serve the art that your triumphs illustrate.  
 I for my part find life too short for work and for pleasure;  
 If it should touch a century's bound, I should think it too precious  
 Even to spare a moment for rage at another's good fortune.  
 Do not be fooled by the purblind flatterers who would persuade you  
 Either of us shall have greater fame through the fall of the other.  
 We can thrive only in common. The tardily blossoming cycles,  
 Flowering at last in this glorious age of our art, had not waited  
 Folded calyxes still, for Pordenone or Titian.  
 Think you if we had not been, our pictures had never been painted?  
 Others had done them, or better, the same. We are only  
 Pencils God paints with. And think you that He had wanted for pencils  
 But for our being at hand? And yet—for some virtue creative  
 Dwells and divinely exists in the being of every creature,  
 So that the thing done through him is dear as if he had done it—  
 If I should see your power, a tint of this great efflorescence,  
 Fading, methinks I should feel myself beginning to wither.  
 They have abused your hate who told you that Titian was jealous.  
 Once, in my youth that is passed, I too had my hates and my envies.  
 'Sdeath! how it used to gall me—that power and depth of Giorgione!  
 I could have turned my knife in his heart when I looked at his portraits.  
 Ah! we learn somewhat still as the years go. Now, when I see you  
 Doing this good work here, I am glad in my soul of its beauty.  
 Art is not ours, O friend! but if we are not hers, we are nothing.  
 Look at the face you painted last year—or yesterday, even:  
 Far, so far, it seems from you, so utterly, finally parted,  
 Nothing is stranger to you than this child of your soul; and you wonder—  
 'Did I indeed then do it?' No thrill of the rapture of doing  
 Stirs in your breast at the sight. Nay, then, not even the beauty  
 Which we had seemed to create is our own: the frame universal  
 Is as much ours. And shall I hate you because you are doing  
 That which when done you can not feel yours more than I mine can feel it?  
 It shall belong hereafter to all who perceive and enjoy it,  
 Rather than him who made it: he, least of all, shall enjoy it.  
 They of the Church conjure us to look on death and be humble:  
 I say, look upon life and keep your pride if you can, then:  
 See how to-day's achievement is only to-morrow's confusion;  
 See how possession always cheapens the thing that was precious  
 To our endeavor; how losses and gains are equally losses;  
 How in ourselves we are nothing, and how we are anything only  
 As indifferent parts of the whole, that still, on our ceasing,  
 Whole remains as before, no less without us than with us.  
 Were it not for the delight of doing, the wonderful instant  
 Ere the thing done is done and dead, life scarce were worth living.  
 Ah, but that makes life divine! We are gods, for that instant immortal,  
 Mortal for evermore, with a few days' rumor—or ages'—  
 What does it matter? We, too, have our share of eating and drinking,  
 Love, and the liking of friends—mankind's common portion and pleasure.  
 Come, Pordenone, with me; I would fain have you see my Assumption  
 While it is still unfinished, and stay with me for the evening:  
 You shall send home for your lute, and I'll ask Sansavino to supper.\*  
 After what happened just now I scarcely could ask Aretino;  
 Though, for the matter of that, the dog is not one to bear malice.  
 Will you not come?"

\* Sansavino, the architect, was a familiar guest at Titian's table, in his house near the Fondamenta Nuove.

## V.

I listen with Titian, and wait for the answer.  
 But, whatever the answer that comes to Titian, I hear none.  
 Nay, while I linger, all those presences fade into nothing,  
 In the dead air of the past: and the old Augustinian Convent  
 Lapses to picturesque profanation again as a barrack;  
 Lapses and changes once more, and this time vanishes wholly,  
 Leaving me at the end with the broken, shadowy legend,  
 Broken and shadowy still, as in the beginning. I linger,  
 Teased with its vague unfathomed suggestion, and wonder,  
 As at first I wondered, what happened about Violante,  
 And am but ill content with those metaphysical phrases  
 Touching the strictly impersonal nature of personal effort,  
 Wherewithal Titian had fain avoided the matter at issue.

## THE HOME OF THE DOONES.



ON EXMOOR, THE LAND OF THE DOONES.\*

WHOEVER has read Mr. Blackmore's clever novel of *Lorna Doone, a Romance of Exmoor* (and who has not?), has become familiar with the eastern part of that region whose western shore Kingsley has immortalized in his *Amyas Leigh*,

\* This illustration, and those on pages 839 and 842—"The Torr-Steps" and "Oare Church"—are taken by permission from the sumptuous illustrated edition, just issued, of Mr. R. D. BLACKMORE's celebrated novel *Lorna Doone*. London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington.

or *Westward Ho*. *Westward Ho* is not an exclamation addressed to aspiring young men, as might be supposed, but a little village on the western coast of North Devon, the westward *hold* or *height* of the land. It was chiefly Kingsley's enthusiastic descriptions of this coast of North Devon which first led our errant footsteps in that direction, for we had no idea, until we were fairly within the enchanted region, that *Lorna Doone* was so largely historical, so made up of all the traditions