the occupants of the boat; the growing paleness of the other she did not notice, nor did it cause her uneasiness when he occasionally absented himself from the market-boat.

One night, about a week after she had first noticed the young men in the boat, she was awakened from the pleasantest of dreams by a divinely powerful voice from the river, singing, her heart immediately informed her, for her especial benefit. Her soul sprang forth to meet the soul that was voluptuously borne upward upon those deep, strong tones:

"Like moonlight 'tis to me,
    When, looking up, I see
Thy window, dear;
    For, like the moon at night,
It shines with borrowed light,
    The sun is near!

"Oh! let the morning break,—
    Then for the warm sun's sake
The flowers will bloom!
    My heart hath wishes none
But that its sleeping sun
    The dark illume!"

All this sounded very pretty in the Italian, in the Florentine dialect, and in the tones of one whom she fully believed to be her own lover. She blushed with modest pleasure in the darkness, but could not gather courage to rise and go to her window. The serenader continued to strike chords upon the guitar with which he accompanied his song, as if about to sing again; but the cessation of the music, and the sound of dripping oars, soon after told the little maiden that, whoever this midnight songster might be, he had finally given over his solicitations for that night. So she returned to dreams more intimately sweetened by thoughts of him she loved.

It is not strange that, as night after night passed, and each night the unseen singer offered up more melodious serenades for the delectation of his sweetheart, that, little by little, the fair Florentine began to look forward to the time when she should again hear that sympathetic voice. The moment when the man's rich voice rose, trembling as it were, fresh from the water, seemed to Bianca the moment of the day most full of unutterable joy and pathos. In the morning she saw the handsome face of her lover, the health glowing in his cheeks, his eyes forever vowing rapturous vows, and openly admiring her loveliness; but at night she heard his voice, speaking from his inmost soul, and offering upon her shrine, as to a goddess, the most irresistible incense. That was the most grateful tribute to her,—his being moved to speak to her so gently, yearningly, but, withal, so strongly and so manfully. She sometimes said to herself, "I would rather live in blindness, and hear his voice, and be with the soul that prompts the voice, than deaf, and see his form, and be without the discourse of his soul." And sometimes in the morning, looking at her lover, the handsome coxcomb from the hills, she felt that something was wanted to complete his charms,—she failed to harmonize completely his face and his voice,—so that it was a relief to withdraw her eyes from his loving face, and rest it upon the homely face and self-containing eyes beside him; and it pleased her vanity a little, perhaps, that even there she saw admiration, and, it may be, even love for her. It never occurred to her, however, that this very plain, unpretentious person could have a voice, and she had no reason to believe that her lover had none,—that is, no musical voice, one that would come very conveniently into use if a serenade were to be given. This I say with the intention that the reader shall draw his own inferences.

It was not long that the nightly serenades had been going on, when Bianca had progressed so far in the art of being made love to, that she would sometimes trip down to the garden gate that opened upon the river, and, without, of course, unlocking it, conversed in the darkness with the serenader. He always wore a very wide-brimmed felt hat, which, even in the bright moonlight, wholly concealed his face; but she could hear his voice, and even allow her hand to be pressed, through the little iron grating that filled the upper part of the gate; that was enough for her and him. No, not for him, for one night,—it was a very dark night,—he came close up to the grating and whispered