

Charles E. Strong Esquire.  
Compliments of  
Emma Lazarus.

# THE SPAGNOLETTO,

A Play,

IN 5 ACTS,

BY

EMMA LAZARUS.

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1908



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## ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Studio of the SPAGNOLETTA. RIBERA at work before his canvas. MARIA seated some little distance behind him; a piece of embroidery is in her hands, but she glances up from it incessantly toward her father with impatient movements.*

*Maria.* *Father!*  
(RIBERA, absorbed in his work, makes no reply; she puts by her embroidery, goes toward him and kisses him gently. He starts, looks up at her, and returns her caress.)

RIB. My child!

MAR. Already you forget,  
Oh, heedless father! Did you not promise me  
To lay aside your brush to-day at noon,  
And tell me the great secret?

RIB. Ah, 'tis true,  
I am to blame. But it is morning yet;  
My child, wait still a little.

MAR. 'Tis morning yet!  
Nay, it was noon one mortal hour ago.  
All patience I have sat till you should turn  
And beckon me. The rosy angels breathe  
Upon the canvas; I might sit till night,  
And, if I spake not, you would never glance  
From their celestial faces. Dear my father,  
Your brow is moist, and yet your hands are ice;  
Your very eyes are tired—pray, rest awhile.  
The Spagnoletto need no longer toil  
As in the streets of Rome for beggars' fare;  
Now princes bide his pleasure.

RIB. (*throws aside his brush and palette*). Ah, Maria,  
Thou speak'st in season. Let me ne'er forget  
Those days of degradation, when I starved  
Before the gates of palaces. The germs  
Stirred then within me of the perfect fruits  
Wherewith my hands have since enriched God's world.  
Vengeance I vowed for every moment's sting—  
Vengeance on wealth, rank, station, fortune, genius.



Poor sinner that I am. And what are these,  
The painted shadows that make all my life  
A glory, to the splendor of that light?  
For thee, my child, has not my doting love  
Sufficed, at least in part, to fill the breach  
Of that tremendous void? What dost thou lack?  
What help, what counsel, what most dear caress?  
What dost thou covet? What least whim remains  
Ungratified, because not yet expressed?

MAR. None, none, dear father! Pardon me! Thy love,  
Generous and wise as tender, shames my power  
To merit or repay. Fie on my lips!  
Look if they be not blistered. Let them smooth  
With contrite kisses the last frown away.  
We must be young to-night—no wrinkles then!  
Genius must show immortal as she is.

RIB. Thou wilt unman me with thy pretty ways.  
I had forgot the ball. Yea, I grow old;  
This scanty morning's work has wearied me.  
Once I had thought it play to dream all day  
Before my canvas and then dance till dawn,  
And now must I give o'er and rest at noon.

(Rises. ~~Exit~~ LUCA, ushering in LORENZO, who carries a  
portfolio.)

LUCA. Signor Lorenzo. (LORENZO ceremoniously salutes RI-  
BERA and MARIA.) [Exit LUCA.

LOR. Master, I bring my sketch. (Opens his portfolio and  
hands a sketch to RIBERA.)

RIB. (after a pause). Humph! the design is not so ill-con-  
ceived;

I note some progress; but your drawing's bad—  
Yes, bad, sir. Mark you how this leg hangs limp,  
As though devoid of life; these hands seem clenched,  
Not loosely clasped, as you intended them.

(He takes his pencil and makes a few strokes.)

Thus should it stand—a single line will mend.  
And here, what's this? Why, 'tis a sloven's work.  
You dance too many nights away, young gallant.  
You shirk close labor as do all your mates.  
You think to win with service frivolous,  
Snatched 'twixt your cups, or set between two kisses,  
The favor of the mistress of the world.

LOR. Your pardon, master, but you do me wrong.  
Mayhap I lack the gift. Alas, I fear it!  
But not the patience, not the energy  
Of earnest, indefatigable toil,  
That help to make the artist.

Enter /



DON JOHN.                   Where is that?  
I ne'er have seen the painting.

RIB.                         'Tis not in oils,  
But etched in aqua-fortis, ~~and the plate~~  
~~Is still in my possession.~~ Luca, fetch down  
Yonder portfolio. I can show your Highness  
The graven copy.

(LUCA brings forward a large portfolio. RIBERA looks  
hastily over the engravings and draws one out, which he  
shows DON JOHN.)

DON JOHN.                 Ah, most admirable!  
I know not who is best portrayed—the god,  
Plump, reeling, wreathed with vine, in whom abides  
Something Olympian still, or the coarse Satyrs,  
Thoroughly brutish. Here I scarcely miss,  
So masterly the grouping, so distinct  
The bacchanalian spirit, your rich brush,  
So vigorous in color. Do you find  
The pleasure in this treatment equals that  
Of the oil painting?

RIB.                         All is in my mood;  
We have so many petty talents, clever  
To mimic Nature's surface. I name not  
The servile copyists of the greater masters,  
Or of th' archangels, Raphael and Michael;  
But such as paint our cheap and daily marvels.  
Sometimes I fear lest they degrade our art  
To a nice craft for plodding artisans—  
Mere realism, which they mistake for truth.  
My soul rejects such limits. The true artist  
Gives Nature's best effects with far less means.  
Plain black and white suffice him to express  
A finer grace, a stronger energy  
Than she attains with all the aid of color.  
I argue thus and work with simple tools,  
Like the Greek fathers of our art—the sculptors,  
Who wrought in white alone their matchless types.  
Then dazzled by the living bloom of earth,  
Glowing with color, I return to that,  
My earliest worship, and compose such work  
As you see there.                   *(Pointing to the picture.)*

DON JOHN.                 Would it be overmuch,  
In my brief stay in Naples, to beg of you  
A portrait of myself in aqua-fortis?  
'Twould rob you, sir, of fewer golden hours  
Than the full-colored canvas, and enrich  
With a new treasure our royal gallery.