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until now a secret, but this much is certain, that he tyrannises over the poor girl in the most hateful fashion. He watches her as Doctor Bartholo watches his ward in the *Barber of Seville;* she hardly dare show herself at the window; and if, yielding now and again to her earnest entreaties, he takes her into society, he follows her with Argus' eyes, and will on no account suffer a musical note to be sounded, far less let Antonia sing—indeed, she is not permitted to sing in his own house. Antonia's singing on that memorable night, has, therefore, come to be regarded by the townspeople in the light of a tradition of some marvellous wonder that suffices to stir the heart and the fancy; and even those who did not hear it often exclaim, whenever any other singer attempts to display her powers in the place, 'What sort of a wretched squeaking do you call that? Nobody but Antonia knows how to sing.'"

Having a singular weakness for such like fantastic histories, I found it necessary, as may easily be imagined, to make Antonia's acquaintance. I had myself often enough heard the popular sayings about her singing, but had never imagined that that exquisite *artiste* was living in the place, held a captive in the bonds of this eccentric Krespel like the victim of a tyrannous sorcerer. Naturally enough I heard in my dreams on the following night Antonia's marvellous voice, and as she besought me in the most touching manner in a glorious *adagio* movement (very ridiculously it seemed to me, as if I had composed it myself) to save her, I soon resolved, like a second Astolpho,[1] to penetrate into Krespel's house, as if into another Alcina's magic castle,

[1] A reference to Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso.* Astolpho, an English cousin of Orlando, was a great boaster, but generous, courteous, gay, and remarkably handsome; he was carried to Alcina's island on the back of a whale.

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