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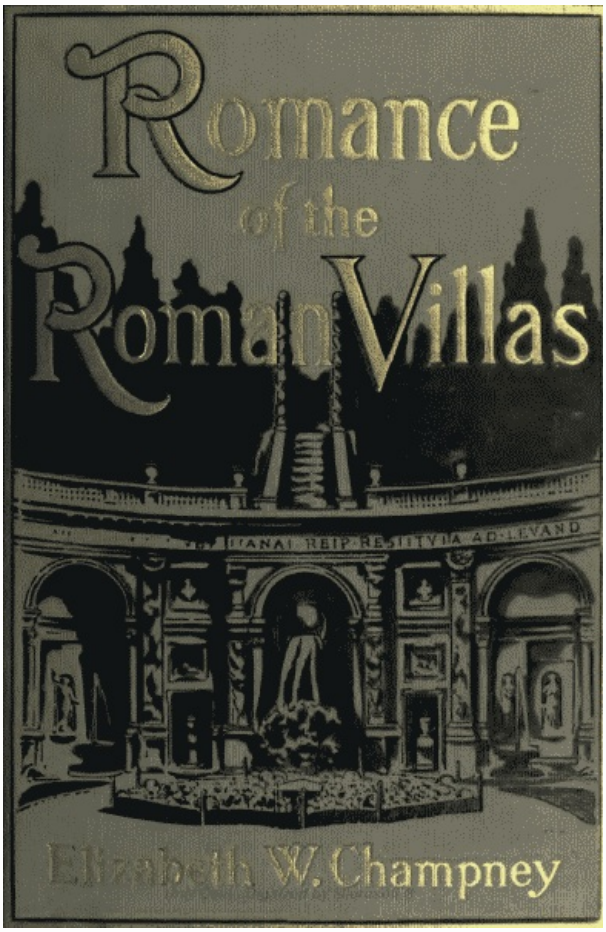

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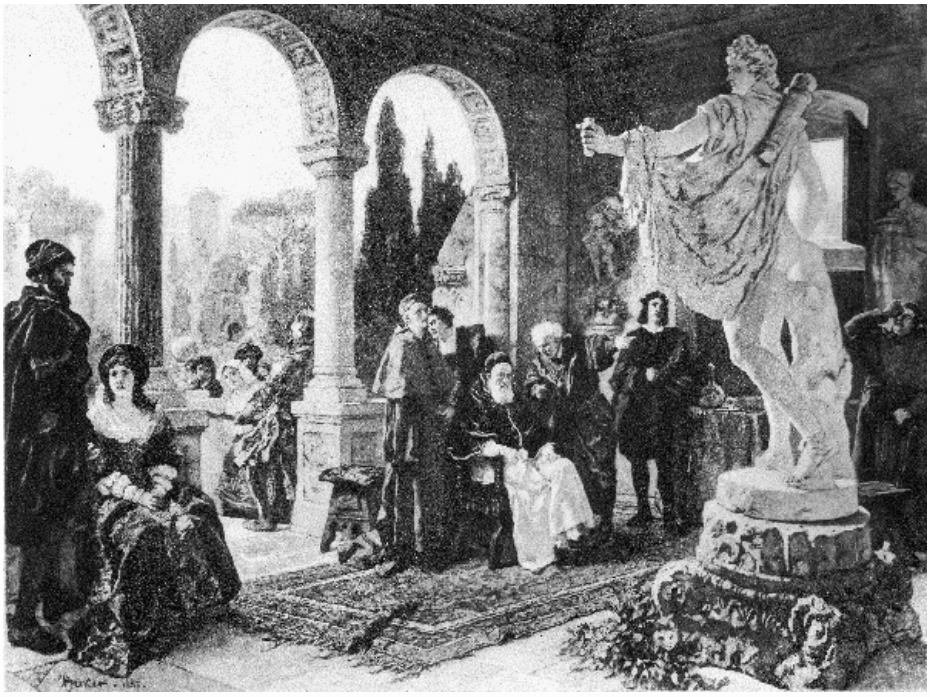

Pope Julius II. Viewing the Newly-found Statue of the Apollo Belvedere
From the painting by Carl Becker. Permission of the Berlin
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ROMANCE OF ROMAN VILLAS

(THE RENAISSANCE)

BY

ELIZABETH W. CHAMPNEY

AUTHOR OF "ROMANCE OF THE ITALIAN VILLAS," "ROMANCE OF THE FEUDAL CHÂTEAUX," "ROMANCE OF THE FRENCH ABBEYS," etc.

ILLUSTRATED

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
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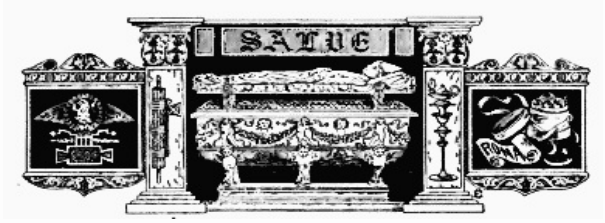

INTRODUCTION

In came the cardinal, grave and coldly wise,
His scarlet gown and robes of cobweb lace
Trailed on the marble floor; with convex glass
He bent o'er Guido's shoulder.

WALTER THORNBURY.

STILL unrivalled, after the lapse of four centuries the villas of the great cardinals of the Renaissance retain their supremacy over their Italian sisters, not, as once, by reason of their prodigal magnificence but in the appealing charm of their picturesque decay.

The centuries have bestowed a certain pathetic beauty, they have also taken away much, and the sympathy which these ruined pleasure palaces evoke whets our curiosity to know what they were like in their heyday of joyous revelling.

If we run down the list of the nobler villas of Rome we will find that, with few exceptions, they were built by princes of the purple, and that the names they bear are not Roman but those of the ruling families of other Italian cities.

That the sixteenth century should have produced the most palatial residences ever inhabited by prelates was but a natural outcome of the conditions then existing. The society of Rome was a hierarchical aristocracy made up of the younger sons of every powerful and ambitious family of Italy, and the red hat was so greatly desired not for the honour or emoluments of the cardinalcy *per se* but because it was a step to the papacy.

"To an Italian," says Alfred Austin, "it must seem a reproach never to have had a pope in the family, and you will with difficulty find a villa of any pretension, certainly not in Frascati, where memorial tassels and tiara carven in stone over porch and doorway do not attest pontifical kinship."

The young cardinal's first move in the game which he was to play was at all expense to create an impression, and if, as in the case of Ippolito d'Este, he had no benevolent uncle in St. Peter's chair to guide his career, the parental coffers were drawn upon recklessly and the cadet of the great house led a more extravagant life in his Roman villa than the duke his elder brother in his provincial court. The object of his ambition once attained the new Pope unscrupulously enriched his family, and endeavoured to make his office hereditary by elevating his favourite nephew to the cardinalcy, and endowing this future candidate for the papacy with means from the revenues of the Church to purchase the votes of his rivals. This is the constantly reiterated history of the builders of the palaces and villas of Rome.

Sixtus IV. made the fortunes of his numerous de la Rovere and Riario nephews,—one of whom, Pietro, Cardinal of San Sisto, for whom Bramante built the Cancellaria Palace, set the pace for his comrades of the Sacred College by squandering in two years the enormous sum of $2,800,000. Cardinal Raphael Riario of the next generation began the most beautiful of all villas, Lante, which three other cardinals subsequently perfected.

Leo X. after his election as pope, proved to be a greater spendthrift than Sixtus IV., for he not only repaired the broken fortunes of the Medici but eclipsed his father as a patron of art, making the erection of monumental buildings and the collection of objects of art a mania among all men of wealth and culture. Cardinal Giulio (afterwards Clement VII.) in the Villa Madama, and Cardinal Ferdinando in the Villa Medici sustained the family tradition, but Cardinal Alexander Farnese (Pope Paul III.)

outrivalled them both, by filling the Farnese palace with the most valuable collections ever amassed by a private individual.[1]

Immediately succeeding Alexander Farnese Julius III. built the noble Villa di Papa Giulio, and Pius IV. the charming Villa Pia; but nepotism did not scandalously reassert itself until the last quarter of the century, when the immense Villa Aldobrandini was erected by a nephew of Clement VIII.

Pope Paul V. in his turn bestowed more than a million dollars upon his Borghese nephews, to one of whom, Cardinal Scipione, we owe the delightful Villa Borghese, just outside the Porta del Popolo.

Early in the next century the evil attained greater proportions. Olimpia Pamphili, whose name and memory are perpetuated in the villa built by her son, received from Pope Innocent X. more than two millions. But Innocent seems to have a fair claim to his name when compared with his immediate predecessor Urban VIII. who conferred upon his nephews, the brothers Barberini, sums amounting to one hundred and five millions!

An architecture of pompous ostentation and riotous overloading of ornament, the Baroque, now took the place of the classical beauty of the Renaissance and art degraded became the slave of wealth, until the great Cardinal Albani erected his villa to serve as her temple.

We are ready to expect great results in the villas and palaces of the millionaires of the earlier half of the sixteenth century when we reflect that they were executed by Bramante, Peruzzi, San Gallo, Michael Angelo, and Raphael with a host of lesser men who would have been great in any other age, and that the ruins of imperial Rome furnished them with models for their designs and an inexhaustible quarry of statues, columns, mosaics, and other materials.

The point of view of the present volume is the life rather than the art of these villas, but it is not possible to ignore the stimulus which the daily discovery of the masterpieces of ancient art afforded to the artists of the day, and the connoisseurship imposed upon the rivalling patrons and collectors.

In the chapters entitled: "The Finding of Apollo" and "The Lure of Old Rome" I have striven to depict the influence of these discoveries upon such sensitive souls as those of Raphael and Ligorio, and the gradual education of the financier Chigi and Cardinal Ippolito d'Este in the refinements of dilettantism.

But the Fornarina left a more potent impression on Raphael's art than the Apollo Belvedere, and her memory and that of Imperia still haunt the villa of the Farnesina indissolubly united with that of the master of art and the master of revels.

In the noble Colonna palace the personality most vividly present to-day is that of Vittoria Colonna, making good the boast of Michael Angelo's sonnet,—

> "So I can give long life to both of us
> In either way by colour or by stone,
> Making the semblance of thy face and mine,
> Centuries hence when both are buried thus
> Thy beauty and my sadness shall be shown
> And men shall say, 'For her 't was right to pine.'"

But if Michael Angelo carved or painted Vittoria the portrait is lost; and it is to his love, not to his art that she owes her immortality. So from the history of these beautiful dwellings I have chosen as the focal point of each of the following chapters, the half-forgotten face of some woman, and were it not that the story of Vittoria Colonna is so well known that noble woman might well have led the procession. For the same reason, and because her castle of Spoleto could not be classed under my topic, I have laid aside a study of Lucrezia Borgia and of another Lucrezia who may have resided within its walls.

But from the succession of beauties who kissed their lovers beneath the rose-trellises of Rome, I have stolen secrets enough to overfill these pages, secrets which few of the gentle shades would forbid my telling, since for the most part they are sweet and innocent and true. For the others, daughters of disorder, may their sufferings bespeak your pity.

The difficulty in arriving at just estimates has only made the attempt the more engrossing, as those will attest who have tracked through the mass of conflicting

histories the story of the elusive lady who gave the name of Madama to the exquisite villa which Raphael designed for Clement VII.

The Villa Aldobrandini recalls an ancient legend preserved in more than one of the Italian novelli; and reading between the lines of the Amyntas we may trace Tasso's love for Leonora which blossomed in the terraced garden of the Villa d'Este.

The villas Borghese and Mondragone are still instinct with the personality of a romantic little lady of a later period, the bewildering Pauline Bonaparte. It is impossible while enthralled by her portrait statue to remember any other princess of that noble house; but as we wander through the portrait gallery of the Colonna palace it is equally difficult to choose a favourite from its brilliant gallery. My apologies are due to many another in fixing upon Giulia Gonzaga, wife of Vespasian Colonna as my heroine, though such was the fame of her beauty that the Sultan of Turkey despatched a fleet for her capture.

In the last decade of the century, Marie de' Medici looked down upon Rome from the villa of her uncle, Cardinal Ferdinando, and wandered among that wonderful array of statues which now form the glory of the Pitti Palace.

This was the time, if ever, that Shakespeare visited Italy, and I have attempted to give a true picture of the life and scenes which he may have viewed.

To my last chapter is left the confession that the supreme charm of Rome of the Renaissance lies not in itself, but in the fact that it is the bridge which unites modernity to the Rome of antiquity.

Each statue unearthed in the cardinal's garden, as it reassumed its place upon the familiar terrace, must have whispered to its marble companions: "They call this the Villa d'Este! We know better, it is Hadrian's. Their learned men have labelled you, 'By an Unknown Sculptor,' little suspecting that your lips were arched by Praxiteles. They have christened our friend in the garden of Lucullus, the 'Venus de' Medici,' ignorant of the prouder name she bore, and they call the relief in that new villa, 'The Antinous of Cardinal Albani,' not knowing that the portrait and its original were alike, Faustina's."

Shall we, indulgent reader, on some fair, future day, led by the lure of *old* Rome, together revisit our loved villas and win the confidences of these marble men and women who smile on us so inscrutably, and yet with such all-compelling fascination?

Dear Italy, the sound of thy soft name
  Soothes me with balm of Memory and of Hope.
  Mine for the moment height and steep and slope
That once were mine. Supreme is still the aim
  To flee the cold and grey
  Of our December day,
And rest where thy clear spirit burns with unconsuming flame.

Fount of *Romance* whereat our Shakespeare drank!
  Through him the loves of all are linked to thee,
  By Romeo's ardour, Juliet's constancy
He sets the peasant in the royal rank,
  Shows, under mask and paint,
  Kinship of knave and saint
And plays on stolid man with Prospero's wand and Ariel's prank.

Then take these lines and add to them the lay
  All inarticulate, I to thee indite;
  The sudden longing on the sunniest day,
The happy sighing in the stormiest night,
  The tears of love that creep
  From eyes unwont to weep,
Full with remembrance, blind with joy and with devotion deep. [2]

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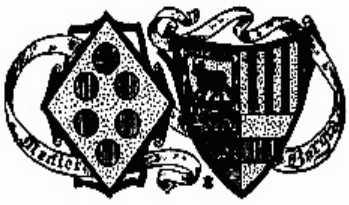

ILLUSTRATIONS

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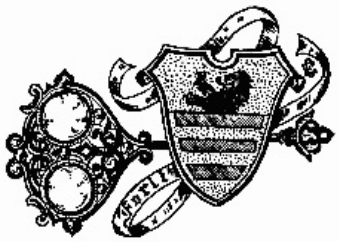


ILLUSTRATIONS

OTHER THAN PHOTOGRAVURE

ROMANCE OF ROMAN VILLAS

CHAPTER I

THE EYES OF A BASILISK

(AN EPISODE OF THE FRENCH WARS IN ITALY, FROM THE MEMOIRS OF THE GOOD KNIGHT YVES D'ALLEGRE)

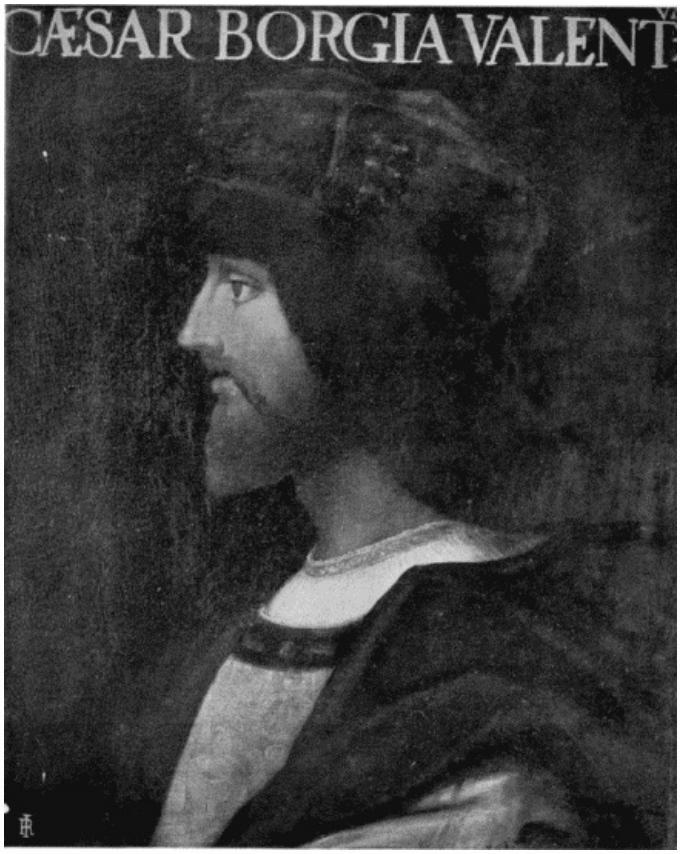
I

There is not one that looketh upon her eyes but he dieth presently. The like property has the basilisk. A white spot or star she carrieth on her head and setteth it out like a diadem. If she but hiss no other serpent dare come near.—PLINY.

A STRANGE story is mine, not of love but of hatred, the slow coiling of a human serpent about its prey, with something more than human in the sudden deliverance which came from so unexpected a quarter when all hope had gone and struggle ceased.

Certes, I am not one of your practised romancers thus to reveal my plot at the beginning, and yet, with all I have told, you will never guess in what mysterious guise, yet so subtly that it seemed a breath of wind had but fluttered a leaf of paper, the enemy we feared was struck with such opportune paralysis.

Let those who doubt the truth of this tale or the existence of the basilisk question Cesare Borgia, for we saw the creature at the same time as we rode together near Imola in northern Italy. It was the beginning of that campaign in which I, much against my will, was in command of the French troops, which his Majesty Louis XII. had sent to aid his ally in the conquest of Romagna. I would far liefer have gone with my brother knights deputed to sustain Louis's right to the Milanese, for it is one thing to fight honourably for France and another, as I soon discovered, to aid a villain in the massacre of his own countrymen, and all for aims in which I had no interest. But it was only by degrees that I was enlightened concerning the character of Borgia. He was brave beyond doubt, and courage had for me great fascination. I never saw him flinch but once, and that before a thing which seemed so trivial that I counted it but a matter of physical repulsion.



Cæsar Borgia *Alinari*

We were riding thus side by side in advance of our men, when a small snake darted from the thicket and hissed its puny defiance. I stooped from my saddle, impaled it on my sword, and waved it writhing in the air. But Cesare, to my astonishment, turned deadly pale and galloped incontinently in the opposite direction.

When I rejoined him after throwing the reptile into the underbrush he explained the seizure. The astrologer, Ormes, had predicted that he would meet his death neither from natural sickness nor from poison, nor yet by the sword or cord, but from the eye of a basilisk.

"And what manner of creature may that be?" I asked, wonderingly.

"It is a serpent," he replied, "but one so rare in Italy that not once in a century is it met with. The monster is gifted with the evil eye, killing whomsoever it looks upon. It bears a star-shaped spot upon its head, and when you whirled yon reptile in the air methought I discerned its baleful flash."

"And so you did," I replied, "but you need have no apprehension, the creature is blind."

"Blind!" he repeated incredulously.

"Of a verity. Its eyes have long since been removed, for the flesh has grown over the empty sockets."

"Then," said Cesare, "some wizard must have extracted them to serve him in his black art, and has let the serpent go free knowing that it is only by the eye of a living basilisk that this prodigy can be wrought. Fortunately you have killed it and there is no longer any danger."

"Nay," I replied, "I but wounded the creature. It crawled away when it fell."

"Then he who holds its eyes holdeth my life and by his hand I shall die," he stammered with white lips. Little thought I then that Cesare's inhuman cruelty and perfidy would cause me to thank God for his belief in the creature's malignancy and that the basilisk was to aid in the one episode which was in some measure to take the evil taste of this campaign from my mouth.

Only a few weeks later, on the first of January, 1500, our combined forces began in earnest the assault of the citadel of Forlì, which we had held in siege throughout the previous month. Little stomach had I for the business, since to my shame I was making war upon a woman. Imola which had already surrendered to us, was also her fief, but

had she commanded its forces in person we would not have taken it so easily. For fighting blood ran in the veins of the Lady of Forlì, she being the grand-daughter of the great condottiere Francesco Sforza. And this was not the first time that she had fought for her castle.

She had come to it first as the bride of Girolamo Riario, but the townspeople had refused to recognise his authority and had stabbed him to death, throwing his naked, mutilated body into the moat before her windows.

The young widow instantly trained the guns of the citadel upon the town, and when it surrendered caused the murderers and their families to be hacked in pieces; and this was but one of many instances reported of her dauntless and vindictive character. She had remarried, but her second husband, Giovanni de' Medici, had recently died, and Caterina Sforza Riario de' Medici, in spite of her noble birth and connexions, had none to help her.

If Cesare Borgia had not already married perchance the opportunity would have been offered her to add another great name to those she already bore, for he recognised in this tigerish woman a fitting mate. He hated her indeed, but one does not hate one's inferiors, one despises or pets them, and Cesare hated the Lady of Forlì because he knew that he could never master her.

Therefore on New Year's Day, we having, as I have said, drawn our forces so closely about the citadel that for weeks past not a mouse could escape, Cesare before ordering the assault sent me to its lady with sealed conditions of capitulation.

I thought, as I rode across the draw-bridge with the white truce pennon fluttering from my lance, how at that other siege when summoned to surrender on pain of having her children put to death before her walls, this unnatural mother had replied coldly: "Children are more easily replaced than castles," and I was unprepared for the vision which greeted me in the gloomy hall.

For Caterina was no repulsive termagant, but a woman of marvellous charm. This fascination was something quite different from ordinary beauty. Its seat was in her eyes, which many thought not at all beautiful, for they were like those gems called aquamarine, of a puzzling tint varying from blue to green, lustrous and lapping the beholder with their gentle lambency, except when passion moved her, when I have seen them glow with a menacing light as though they might shoot forth green flames. But now she was all loveliness. The vicissitudes of her tragic life had left no trace except the slight scowl, which might be due to defective vision, for from the curiously linked chatelaine there depended a lorgnon with which she had a nervous trick of trifling.

Alinari

Catenna Sforza
Castle of Forlì in Background
By Palmezzani

She leaned forward as I entered, her lips a little apart and her cheeks glowing with excitement.

"You have brought me a message from your commander?" she asked, and I presented the letter.

But as she read her colour flamed to deeper crimson and her small hands tore the missive in fragments. "And these are the terms proposed by a belted knight, companion of Bayard *sans reproche*; this your fufilment of your sworn devoir to women in distress? Then here is my answer," and she dashed the bits of paper in my face, "for my garrison will prefer annihilation rather than permit me to submit to such indignity."

"Believe me," I protested, "that, far from assisting in the framing of those terms, I am in utter ignorance of their purport. Believe also that though what I have hitherto heard has not prepossessed me in your favour, I now count those charges as lying slanders, knowing that no evil soul could inhabit so lovely a person."

Her lip curled scornfully. "I have listened to lovers' flatteries ere this," she answered, "and know how little they are worth."

"By your pardon," I retorted, "I am a lover indeed, but none of yours. It is because I love my good wife in Auvergne that I honour all women."

She had lifted her eyeglass as though to scan my face the more keenly to know if I spoke the truth; but apparently my words alone convinced her, and, feeling the discourtesy of such an act, she looked about the room irresolutely and let the lorgnon fall without meeting my eyes.

"Good," she said at length, "I like you better for that word. 'Tis a pity we must be enemies. Tell your master that I shall defend my fortress to the last extremity. If I am so unfortunate as to be conquered, demand that he appoint you my jailer, for to no one else will I submit myself alive."

I have taken part in many sieges but never saw I a more gallant defence than the one made by that doomed citadel. Its besiegers were quartered within the town, fattening on the supplies which flowed in from the country and sleeping warm at night, while the garrison of the castle burned its carved wainscotings for fuel and daily buried

some famine-stricken sentry. Twice with blazing missiles Caterina's archers set fire to the houses within range of her guns, striving by destroying the homes of her own people to drive us from our shelter, and once in the dead of night she made sortie and strove to cut her way through only to be beaten back. She seemed more a deluding spirit of evil leading us on to our own destruction than an ordinary mortal, and when Cesare gave orders to bombard the castle it made our flesh creep to see her seated nonchalantly upon the ramparts scanning the artillerymen through her lorgnon, laughing when their shots went wild, and clapping her hands when they tore off fragments of the parapet on which she leaned as though she were but applauding a play. That very night an epidemic so deadly broke out among the cannoneers that some foolishly superstitious declared she had bewitched them with the evil eye, and others as falsely that the springs in the hills above the castle which supplied the fountains of the town were poisoned at her command.

But the inevitable day came when the Lady of Forlì announced that she was ready to surrender. Even then she demanded lenient and honourable terms as though mistress of the situation.

There must be neither bloodshed nor pillage. The allegiance of her subjects should be transferred indeed to Cesare as Duke of Romagna, and she offered herself and her children as hostages for their loyalty, but not to Cesare. They would trust themselves only to the watch-care of the Pope, and she stipulated that the French troops should be their body-guard to Rome.

Cesare laughed maliciously. "She is as safe in my care as in that of his Holiness," he said, "and it is to my interest that the boy alone should die. It was the great statesman Machiavelli who counselled that when a city was captured every male heir to its former lord should be slain, to guard against uprisings in the future. I will take her son into my own safe-conduct, but you may escort his sisters and mother in welcome, for I have no wish to come within the range of her quizzing glasses."

When I reported this to Caterina she shuddered slightly and answered questioningly, "From Cesare's so great personal solicitude I gather that the health of the young duke might suffer at the Borgia's table?"

To these alarms I could not reply reassuringly, but the lady presently laughed gleefully. "This is not a recent thought of mine," she said. "The idea occurred to me when Cesare first laid claim to our estates. Tell him that I cannot take advantage of his kind offer for I sent my son before the siege to join his cousin and godfather, Cardinal de' Medici, in his exile. The Cardinal's family feeling extends even to his most distant relatives and the boy could have no better guardian."

"Surely it is fortunate that you were so wise," I replied, and even Cesare had no doubt that she spoke truly.

It was the twelfth of January, the very day of the surrender, that I set out with my captives for the Eternal City. Caterina was conveyed in her litter with her elder daughter, but the younger insisted on riding on horseback at my side. She was an ugly little hoyden of five years, this Giovanna, who, squat of stature and swarthy as a gypsy, bestrode her little pony like a man; but, though by nature stubborn and subject to fits of anger in which she bit and scratched like a wildcat, to me she had taken a fancy as intense as it was inexplicable.

When I upbraided her manners as ill befitting a little maid, and marvelled at her unlikeness to her mother, she made answer: "Nay, but mamma can scratch also. You should have seen the face of the messenger who told us that the town of Forlì had opened its gates to the besiegers. I am like my father in looks, but I have my mother's spirit. Cardinal de' Medici said that if my father had worn the petticoat and my mother had been the man, the Medici would be ruling now in Florence."

"Would you like to rule, little princess?" I asked.

"Nay, I would rather fight. When I am grown I will be a great condottiere like you, Sir Knight."

"Tush!" I reproved her. "A girl a condottiere—who ever heard of such a prodigy?"

The child smiled mysteriously. "I have a mind to tell you a secret," she said.

"Giovanna, Giovanna!" her mother called, beckoning from her litter, but the little maid had fast hold of my stirrup leather, and pulled me close while she confided: "I am not Giovanna, I am not a girl at all. I am Giovanni de' Medici, Duke of Forlì, and one of

these days I will cut off that Borgia man's head. But fear not; I will be good to you if only you do not tell."

The Borgias
From a painting by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.
(Pope Alexander VI. regards the dancing children, Lucrezia plays the viol, Cesar beats time with his stiletto on the stem of a wine glass.)
Permission of George Bell & Sons

I had no mind to tell, and though I let the Duchess know that her little son had betrayed his disguise, and reproached her for bringing him into the wolf's jaws, I swore to her that the secret should be safe in my keeping.

II

The bob of gold
Which a pomander ball doth hold,
This to her side she doth attach
With gold crochet or French pennache.

Then raises to her eyes of blue
Her lorgnon, as she looks at you.

Arrived at Rome, the Pope assigned the captives to the Villa of the Belvedere, so named from a graceful tower which shot high above the encircling walls, and commanded a delightful prospect. A charming garden connected the villa with the Vatican, but it was none the less a prison whose only approach or egress was through the corridors of the papal palace. The Lady of Forlì had been received with hypocritical cordiality by the family of the Pope at one of those intimate gatherings in the Borgia apartments which, devoted to song, dance, and feasting were greatly enjoyed by Alexander and his children, and so shamelessly disgraced the residence consecrated to the head of the Church.

Cesare upon his return would find in them an opportunity for meeting his prisoner, and, if she denied him further familiarity, he held the power of executing swift vengeance. It behooved us therefore to act quickly and before the arrival of my superior. The only hope which seemed to me at all reasonable was of French interference.

Cardinal d'Amboise was in Milan, having recently arrived from the French Court,

and acting upon my advice the Lady of Forlì appealed through him to the King of France, I urging her petition with every conceivable argument.

While anxiously awaiting his reply I took advantage of my authority as her body-guard to station a French sentinel at her door, relinquishing my own cook to protect her from poisoning, and my faithful valet as groom and guardian of the children.

But all these precautions were swept away by Cesare on his arrival in the middle of February. For he sent me at that time a curt note stating that after we had taken part in the triumph granted him by the Pope in recognition of his victories in Romagna, he would have no further need either of my troops or myself; and we would be at liberty to report ourselves at Milan to the commander of the French army.

The "triumph" to which he referred consisted of a procession with allegorical floats and every description of gala costume. The houses along its course were hung with brilliant draperies; flags and pennons should wave, martial music bray, and salvos of artillery were to be fired at frequent intervals.

But the principal feature of the demonstration and the one on which the Pope counted to raise popular enthusiasm to the point of delirium was to be the parade of the captives.

Cesare, in emulation of the celebration of the conquest of Palmyra by the Emperor Aurelian, had conceived the brilliant idea of compelling Caterina to walk in the procession bound like Zenobia with golden chains.

Hitherto Caterina and I had discussed with each other every plan of action, but now unfortunately we had no opportunity of taking counsel with one another. Still she had been accustomed too long to self-reliance to hesitate for that reason, and divining by a flash of woman's intuition how this spectacle might be converted into an opportunity of escape, she consented gracefully to Cesare's plans, requesting only that the French troops should march as her guard.

To this arrangement Cesare gave his ready acquiescence, promising also of his own accord that I should ride directly behind her and beside her children. It was well thought out, for she had counted not alone upon my assistance, but had determined to use every detail of the programme which Cesare had devised to rouse the populace of Rome to aid in her rescue.

She robed herself therefore in most becoming though sable garments, allowing her veil of thinnest gauze to flutter artfully and display her beautiful face while the long velvet sleeves open to the shoulder showed the double manacles at the wrist and above the elbow, made purposely too tight and cutting into the lovely rounded arm.

Growls of indignation from the men and cries of sympathy from the women rose as they marked her fatigue, and how ruthlessly the men-at-arms who led her dragged her on, and the demonstration was a triumph to Caterina rather than to Cesare. As the float representing the dismantled citadel of Forlì tottered by with her little girls upon the battlements, waving, the one the bull-blazoned ensign of the Borgias and the other the reversed and degraded arms of the Medici, shouts of "Shame, shame!" were heard, and the riotous crowd surged so close to the float that it was impossible for it to proceed. We had reached at this critical juncture the Porta del Popolo and through its open gates the via Flaminia stretching straight to the north across the free Campagna was discernible. With that sight I comprehended Caterina's intention and at the same instant the boy-girl Giovanni let fall the Borgia emblem, which was instantly trampled in the mire by the mob, and snatching the banner bearing the Medici balls from his sister's hand he waved it triumphantly in its proper position, crying "Palle, palle! Rescue, rescue!"

Then it was that Caterina had counted on my trusty Frenchmen to sweep her and her children on to liberty while the mob hindered pursuit. But alas! Cesare had suspected some such plot, and had interposed between the prisoners and my brave troopers his own corps of veteran pikemen. For an instant they wavered, for Caterina had sprung upon the float and was gazing at them through her lorgnon. They remembered what had happened to the gunners at Forlì, and shuddered, but the mob attacking them with paving stones interposed a screen between them and the danger they dreaded and roused their mettle. With their old war cry their first battalion charged the rioters while their second division, halting, kept back my men.

As the full signification of this lost opportunity overwhelmed me, I could not in my mortification meet Caterina's reproachful eyes. Her last gallant stroke for liberty had

failed through my lack of co-operation. Cesare's pikemen enclosed her with a wall of bristling spears; the populace slunk into side alleys, the gates of the Porta del Popolo had been closed during the tumult, and the procession resumed its line of march in the direction of the castle of St. Angelo. As I cursed my stupidity, Cesare, purple with rage, rode back to me with Giovanni struggling wildly in his arms.

"Take this brat of a girl to the Belvedere," he commanded, "and beat her soundly."

But as I lifted the child before me he ceased not to shriek to Cesare: "Beat me if you dare. I am no girl-brat. I am Giovanni de' Medici, Duke of Forlì!"

There was a chance that Cesare had not rightly understood him, for I had held my hand over the boy's mouth. I would not save him and desert his mother, so I rode with him to the Belvedere; but I paused on the way to obtain a rope-ladder, and to conceal it in a basket of fruit which I bade Giovanni give to his mother. I dared not write a letter had there been time to I do so, but the child was intelligent and I made him repeat my message again and again.

With the help of the ladder they must descend at midnight into the garden of the Belvedere, and climb by the rose espalier to the top of the garden wall. I would be on horseback on the other side and would receive them in my arms. Then with forged passports I would take them to Milan.

A light in the window of the tower at eleven would signify her acquiescence in this plan.

But at the time appointed I saw no light, and though my men waited in the lofts of the stable where their horses stood ready saddled, and I paced the lane on the hither side of the garden wall until dawn, no fugitives joined me.

When I returned to my lodgings at daybreak I found a summons from the Pope awaiting me which bade me attend him at the Vatican at his morning levee. Presently, too, a man in Cesare's livery brought me the basket of fruit and the rope-ladder which I had sent to Caterina.

"My master bade me return this to you," said the lackey, "as you may find it useful for your own needs in future."

I understood the cold sarcasm of the message. I was to be imprisoned, and I did not flatter myself that any opportunity for use of a rope-ladder would be left me. But in that supreme moment it was not my own doom that I thought upon but that of the unfortunate Lady of Forlì.

As I prepared to obey the papal summons my landlady brought me a letter which had arrived during my absence, the long-expected instructions from Cardinal d'Amboise. They called me and my troop to Milan—the Pope would not dare controvert that command; and as my eye sought eagerly for an answer to my appeal for Caterina it caught at the bottom of the page this line:

"As for Caterina Sforza Riario de' Medici and her children——"

Trembling with excitement I turned the leaf but my hopes died within me as I read on:

"——that belligerent and unwomanly woman hath but received her just deserts. We are to be congratulated that her fortresses and her army fell into the power of our ally before it was possible for her to aid her uncle Lodovico Sforza, usurper of Milan, at present our prisoner.

"Our fortunes are now so assured either by conquest or alliance that all the leading families of northern Italy are on our side. Even the Medici are with us. Sooner or later"——

Here I turned a page again.

"They must be returned to Florence, as the King desires the good will of the Medici."

There was more to the effect that the Cardinal desired me to kiss for him the hands of his Holiness, and to assure both him and Cesare that—if their promise to the King of France were carried out—they would ever find in the French army a sure defence. But all this seemed of little moment to me since the letter contained no hope for Caterina. I thrust it in my pouch and pursued my way to the Vatican, cudgelling my brains for some other means by which to save her.

Was there, I questioned, no motive within the complicated mechanism of Cesare's mind upon which I could play? Was there nothing which he held sacred, no terror in earth or hell which could daunt his inexorable will?

Then suddenly I remembered the flaw in his armour, and that he who could neither be persuaded by friendship nor coerced by authority trembled before a baseless superstition—the dread of the evil eye.

I had still a card to play, and would continue the game resolutely to the end. It might be that I could arm his captive with the one weapon which he feared.

With this thought in my mind I came upon Cesare suddenly, in the ante-room of the Pope's audience chamber.

"Ah," he exclaimed maliciously, "you thought to anticipate me in gaining my father's ear. I confess I had the same intention. Well, since chance will have it so, we will go in together."

"One moment," I replied; "I am glad to have met you thus opportunely, for I have a word of warning for you."

"Of warning?" he questioned.

"Yes," I replied, "in return for that you so kindly sent me with the rope-ladder this morning. You may need mine first. Let me beg you to pursue the Lady of Forlì no further. If you do not instantly let her go free she may work you a terrible mischief—the only one you dread."

The scornful smile which had curled his lip died out, and though he asked my meaning I knew he already had an inkling of it.

"You remember the eyeless basilisk which we found near Imola?" He nodded and caught my hand. "She has the eyes?" he asked. "Nay, you need not answer, I know where she keeps them,—in the pomander that hangs always at her chatelaine." "That is no pomander," I replied, "but a lorgnon. She is near-sighted; have you not noted, as she looks from her window of the Belvedere how she scans the objects in the garden through its lenses?"

"She was looking for me," he chattered insanely, "she was looking for me through the eyes of the basilisk; but I am not so dull as you think. I have long suspected this, and when she glared at my men as they charged the rioters I struck the diabolical things from her hand with the flat of my sword. I know not where they fell but she has them no longer."

"Be not so sure of that," I ventured with a grimace, which I strove to make a smile. "I found the lorgnon in the street and carried it back to the Belvedere. Be warned and anger her no more."

"It was a thoughtful and friendly act," he sneered exultantly, "but useless, dear fellow, quite useless. *Mal vedere* should that falsely named villa be called; but neither for good nor for evil will she evermore gaze forth from any casement. She and the son whom she thought to palm off as a girl lie at this moment in a windowless dungeon in the vaults of the castle of St. Angelo. I had thought for a moment to give you guest-room beside her, but you have warned me of her designs, and my father argues that we must not anger the French King in any fashion. Had he demanded my prisoners I might even have lost this dear revenge, but now I shall give orders to their gaoler that he waste no good money on their nourishment. In less than a week's time their career and my danger will be over."

I would have strangled him as he stood there but at that instant the doors of the audience-chamber flew open and the Pope, attended by his guards, stood between us.

He extended his left hand, which Cesare kissed, and he gave me his benediction with the other.

"I have sent for you, my friend," he said, "to bid you farewell, for I have just received word from Cardinal d'Amboise that you and your good fellows are needed in the Milanese. The Cardinal informs me that he has written you by the same post. May I read the letter? Perchance I may gain from it a clearer understanding concerning his desires and how we may forward them."

"I will go and fetch it," I stammered, for the request was a demand, and the thought came to me that I might cut out all reference to the Lady of Forlì from the letter.

"I think we shall not need to trouble you to do so," cried the lynx-eyed Cesare. "Your pouch is open, and if I mistake not that is the handwriting of the Cardinal."

He had snatched the letter, and it was in his father's hand before he had said half

these words. I am not a man given to prayer, but from the bitterness of my despair my soul cried silently in that instant, "O God, save her, for vain is the help of man!"

The Pope ran his eye quickly along the lines without speaking until he came to the name of the Lady of Forlì.

"As to Caterina Sforza Riario de' Medici and her children"—he read aloud with illy suppressed excitement, and then in his eagerness to know more he turned two pages at once, without perceiving that the one which should have followed next adhered to that which he had just read—"As to Caterina Sforza Riario de' Medici and her children," he repeated, "they must be returned to Florence, as the King desires the good will of the Medici."

In utter stupefaction, I could not at first understand how this misreading had chanced.

"Hem, hem!" grunted the Pope—"but she is only the widow of a member of the cadet branch, a person of no importance. I see not why the King of France should concern himself with her fate. Nevertheless, since our prisoners have his patronage, they shall be detained no longer. I will write to the Florentine signory commending the lady and her children to their loving watch-care, and as you, Sir Yves, have been their conductor hither, so shall you escort them to their destination."

Cesare could not gainsay his father's command. An hour later the gates of St. Angelo opened for the departure of the Lady of Forlì and her children. I waited not for any chance of fate to turn backward the wheel of fortune, and as my faithful troop galloped into line about her litter, I gave the triumphant order—

"To Florence."

She dwells there even as I write these chronicles, in the Medicean villa of Castello, and as at first she dared not keep her little son with her (the men of the Medici being banished from Florence), she confided him, still habited in girlish disguise, to the care of a community of nuns, who kept a seminary for the daughters of noble families. But at length, on the restoration of the Medici, he issued from that retreat, and is now being bred to the profession of arms, in the which he bids fair to realise the ambitions confided to me as we rode from Forlì, what time I deemed him the most unmannerly little princess which it had been my lot to meet.

CHAPTER II

THE FINDING OF APOLLO

(AN ESCAPADE OF BAZZI'S)

I

Giovanni Antonio Bazzi (called Sodoma) to Giulio Romano, painter and architect at Mantua.

Good Friend and sometime Pot-Comrade:

By the which epithet I would signify that comradeship at Chigi's villa at Rome in orgies of paint pots and brushes, flesh pots and flagons, feasts of reason and of unreason, wherein we were alike insatiable until the light of our revels went out in the death of our adored Raphael.

You write me that in the intervals of your labour you are piecing together memoirs of those glorious Roman days in order to leave to the world some record of the more intimate private life of our friend, and you ask me for any anecdotes or remembered conversations which may fill out this sheaf of tribute.

Faith, you, who have a whole garden of such souvenirs from which to cull, in that you shared his labours, his home, his confidence and his largess, have come to a wild and barren pasture for such sweet flowers; and yet there was love between us, love which ever radiated from him as it were sunshine and caused many a briar-rose to blossom in the thorny tangle of my life. I knew him also before you, in the summer of 1503, at Siena; and it is of certain pranks in that early comradeship that I will now write. Raphael was then a youth of scarce twenty years. He had come fresh from his apprenticeship to that old pietist Perugino, to assist in the decoration of the cathedral library. I was twenty-four, but older far in world-knowledge, and exulting in my first success as a painter, for though the spoiled favourite of the town I stood *facile princeps* among the Sienese of my craft.

We met first at Cetinale, the villa of our patron, Agostino Chigi. From the first Raphael's honest admiration of my work warmed me to friendship and I strove to enlighten his ignorance. Chigi had placed at our joint disposition a loft in his stables which we fitted up as a studio and bed-chamber, and hither we resorted for work or play as opportunity and inclination moved us.

It was oftener play for me, for I was more interested in my host's horses in those days than in my art. Chigi and I were both amateurs of the race-track and though he spent enormous sums on his stud I had once beaten him at the *palio*. In spite of this we were good friends. I had the run of his stables and many a reckless ride have we enjoyed together. I was fond of all sports which were spiced with danger, and particularly of hunting. But there was no sport I loved so well as a practical joke, no game that for me had so delicious a flavour as the teasing of my friends and especially the more serious and dignified—though such pranks have frequently cost me dear. From the multitude of which I have been guilty I recall one which had different consequences from those I had foreseen.

I was hunting in the neighbourhood of Siena late one afternoon in the summer of which I speak. Chigi was detained at his villa in the expectation of guests, and I was alone save for the company of my ape, Ciacco, which I had purchased of some strolling Bohemians. I was training the creature to retrieve my game, in which service he was extremely zealous and clever.

We had ridden far and were both parched with thirst, when I paused to rest in the shadow of a ruined tower which crowned a hill and commanded the road to Siena. Two sumpter mules, guarded by armed men, had just passed on in the direction of the city, and following at some distance in the rear two travellers, an elderly man and a young girl, were approaching the tower where at that moment I chanced to be stationed.

In spite of the fact that their horses were jaded they were pushing them to the utmost, anxious, doubtless, to rejoin their convoy and to gain Siena before the closing of the gates.

I doubt not, that, armed as I was, and with wind-disordered hair, I presented in front of that grim barbican a sufficiently sinister appearance. Certain it is they took me for a bandit and their faces blanched. The man retained some vestiges of self-possession, however, and, doffing his hat, craved permission to pass.

Apprehending the situation, the spirit of mischief with which I am at all times possessed moved me to personate the character for which he took me, and I gruffly bade him stand and deliver toll of the valuables he carried.

"My property has preceded me," he replied unsteadily, "but I will blow this whistle and bid the knaves unload it for your worship's choice."

"Nay," I replied, "my merry men are dealing with your servants. I am a robber-knight, it is true, but one not altogether devoid of courtesy. I therefore ask but a kiss from your pretty daughter, and that small melon which dangles in the netted pouch at her saddle-bow, for which my thirsty ape is gibbering."

If the traveller had been pale hitherto he was livid now.

"Not that, not that," he cried; "hold me in ransom if you will, but let my niece pass on unmolested. She will send back whatever sum you demand, for we have wealthy

friends in Siena."

"Is it so?" I replied; "then I will forego the kiss, which is doubtless reserved for a wealthier suitor, but the fruit you will not deny, for I have ridden far to-day, and have the thirst of the evil one." The man's only reply was to cut the girl's horse so savagely across the flanks that the frightened creature dashed past while his own horse blocked my pursuit.

But Ciacco, perceiving that the coveted fruit was about to be lost, in three flying leaps overtook the fugitive and clambering up the lady's draperies seized on the swaying pouch, which his sharp teeth managed to unravel, and presently came hopping back, man-like upon his hind feet, the melon clasped within his hairy arms.

My prisoner uttered a wail of anguish. One would have thought the ape's trifling booty an inestimable treasure, for he rode so furiously toward Ciacco that the ape dropped the melon and scampered up a neighbouring tree. But my blood was up. I was not to be defrauded of my prey, and as the traveller was on the point of dismounting, I fired my arquebus in the air, and so terrified his horse that it galloped after the fleeing maiden. Its rider was also well frightened, for, though he drew rein uncertainly when he saw me possess myself of his luncheon, when I fired again (though purposely wide of the mark) both travellers resumed their flight, nor paused until they had gained Siena.

I laughed to myself at the success of my prank, thinking of the added mirth I should enjoy in telling the tale that evening. Meantime I hastened to rescue the melon from my pet, but his strong hands had already rent it asunder, and to my astonishment there rolled from its interior and broke open upon the flinty road a little casket for which the rind had been but the concealing envelope.

I was in very truth a highwayman, for unaware I had stolen the travellers' treasure. The melon had hidden a quantity of jewels, which now besprinkled the dust; rubies, emeralds, pearls, sapphires, beryls, as well as semi-precious stones such as jacinths, onyx, and sardonyx, rendered more costly than their brilliant fellows by the skill with which they had been cut into cameos and intaglios. It needed but a glance at an amethyst incised with a scene from the history of Cupid, and Psyche, and at another larger stone bearing a marvellous Apollo and Marsyas, to realise that they were antiques of inestimable value, the collection of some great prince. I gathered up the gems by handfuls and stuffed them into my wallet. I was sobered by the realisation of the enormity of my crime, for I had possessed myself, *vi et armis*, of jewels worth a king's ransom; and I had no clue by which I could safely return them.

I sifted the dust with my fingers, explored Ciacco's mouth, and gathered up the fragments of the melon-rind that no stray gem should escape me; but it was with sincere repentance and the gravest apprehensions that I took my way to Villa Cetinale.

Repairing to the stables, I put up my horse and climbed with my booty to my loft. Raphael was not there, and tying Ciacco to my bed-post I again examined the gems, gloating over their beauty and yet wishing with all my heart that they had never come into my possession. I compared them with a list in the box, found none missing, and returning them to the little casket carefully corded and sealed the same, and sat for a long time racking my brains for some issue from the dilemma. I was awakened from my dreams by a servant who announced that dinner was served, and that his master awaited my coming to present me to his guests. While hastily dressing, I resolved at the first opportunity to confide frankly in Chigi and to take his advice in the matter. Having thus lightly shifted the responsibility from my mind, and not being able to think of any better method of concealment, I once more placed the casket within the melon with the intention of returning for it in the course of the evening, and so hastened to my friend's table.

Here what was my astonishment at being presented to the very persons who had figured in my adventure, and who proved to be Messer Bernardo Dovizio, Chancellor of his Eminence Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, and his niece Maria, whose beauty was somewhat lessened by weariness and the traces of recent tears. The Chancellor, also, —who to my relief did not recognise me,—was by no means in good form, nor did he regale us with any of those witty stories for which he is so justly famed, but sighed and groaned between every mouthful. His misfortune had so afflicted him that he could not keep silence, and disregarding my presence, which indeed he hardly noticed, he poured forth the cause of his woe. The gems which he had lost were a part of the famous collection of Lorenzo de' Medici, which his son, the Cardinal Giovanni, had

carried with him in his flight from Florence, and was now secretly sending by his Chancellor in the expectation of pledging them to Chigi, in return for bills of exchange which would serve him in good stead during his exile in France.

The faithful Dovizio, devoted to the Cardinal's service, as he had been to that of his father, was in an agony of despair. "I will bring this highwayman to the gallows," he continually repeated. "I will move heaven and earth to discover the villain."

"Have you any guess as to whom he may be?" I asked, for the humour of the matter grew apace upon me.

"Certainly not of his name," replied Chigi, "but the description given by my friend is so exact that he cannot fail to be discovered."

"A man of gigantic stature," repeated the Chancellor, "with eyes of green fire gleaming from under his matted hair, a raucous voice which I could not fail to recognise; and on his croup an enormous baboon, as dangerous and malignant a beast as his master, trained also to like acts of brigandage, for it attacked my niece and robbed her while I held the bandit in play with my sword."

"The baboon will bring him to justice," said Chigi, for it so happened that he had never seen Ciacco; "there is no such creature in Siena. This description shall be sent to every town in the vicinity and the miscreant will be easily identified."

I could scarcely conceal my amusement, but turning to the Signorina I asked her if she could recognise their assailant.

"Of a surety," she rejoined "though I cannot corroborate my uncle's description. The brigand's eyes were not green, for I marked them well, and they were black and merry as your own, nor was his voice harsh, but sweetly cadenced. Indeed now I bethink me you resemble him in other particulars."

"You resemble that villain not at all, young man," interrupted her uncle. "He was twice your weight and bulk. I would know him anywhere and at our next meeting he shall not escape me."

"Truly," I said, "a most lamentable mischance, and to think that you lost not only the jewels but your fruit as well. However, since you have a fondness for melons I may be able to furnish this repast with a desert of your liking, and if our host will excuse my absence I will fetch it."

I ran to my loft bubbling over with appreciation of the exceeding wittiness of my own joke, but on opening my door a cry of dismay escaped me. My window was broken, the cord which had tied Ciacco gnawed through, and both the ape and the casket had disappeared.

Nemesis had now loaded me with a despair identical with that of Bernardo Dovizio's. Like him, I foresaw myself suspected of having stolen the jewels. The amusing joke had assumed the proportions of a dangerous situation, and since I could not restore my ill-gotten gains I rashly determined to make no confession. I reflected that though the Signorina Dovizio might have shrewd suspicions she could bring forward no proofs. Ciacco, my compromising partner in crime, had fled. No one at the villa knew that I had ever owned such a pet. Even Raphael had not seen him, for he had been busy in Siena for a fortnight, and the Bohemians from whom I had bought Ciacco had passed by a week before. In an evil hour I determined to hold my peace for the present, hoping that some happy chance would lead to the discovery of the lost jewels, for which indeed I sought continually with every means at my command.

Chigi too had instituted such search as was possible without putting the matter in the hands of the authorities, which would have brought about awkward complications with the signory of Florence. In the meantime he had invited the Dovizios to remain at the villa as his guests, an invitation which was accepted with much content. The Chancellor gave himself up to the delay with such resignation that I presently perceived that he had business of his own at Cetinale other than procuring funds for his patron, that in fact he had brought his niece in the hope of securing for her husband the banker Chigi, a good match even then in point of fortune. There was in Maria Dovizio such dewy freshness and sweetness, such absolute simplicity and purity as could not fail to appeal to any man with eyes to see; but Chigi was blind, being enamoured of another woman and she of a very different type, the improvisatrice Imperia, accounted the most talented singer in all Italy.

While the Dovizios lingered in this unavailing quest, of which the gentle Maria was

in utter ignorance, Raphael returned to the villa, and Love, who is always sharpening his arrows for the unwary, was not idle. It was the lady whom he first wounded, though we suspected it not at the time. Later, in Rome, the Signora Giovanna de Rovere gave me a letter written her by Maria Dovizio when at Cetinale, because forsooth I was mentioned therein, though in no complimentary a wise; and as this letter showeth forth the trend of affairs better than could any words of mine, I enclose it with this memorial.

Alinari

Unknown Lady (probably Imperia), by Sebastian del Piombo
Uffizi

Virgin and Child, by Sodoma
Pinacoteca, Milan

Maria Dovizio to the Lady Giovanna Feltra de Rovere (Sister of the Duke of Urbino), Duchess of Sora and Prefectissa of Rome at Urbino.

"SIENA, October, 1504.

"*Most magnificent, most beloved, and most sweet Lady*:

"For whom my heart longs with true devotion. Truly Madam, since we parted in Urbino most strange adventures have befallen me which I will now relate. On our way to Siena we fell in with a bandit who robbed us, and though my uncle is tarrying here in the hope of the recovery of his property the matter is not altogether simple but presents more complications than I can explain or indeed understand.

"While we are thus delayed we are the guests of the banker Agostino Chigi at his villa of Cetinale. With the exception of our host and of two young painters, also his guests, we see no one, so, for lack of other material, I will describe these young men. The elder is a conceited prankish fop, if no worse, called Giovanni Bazzi, and why his comrade, Raphael Santi, should hold him in affection I can by no means understand, unless the vulgar saying be indeed true that love goes by contraries. In presenting Raphael to us our host assured my uncle that though as a painter he is as yet unknown he is destined to make for himself a great career. But to these eulogies of Chigi's I scarcely listened, my attention being held by the charm of the artist's personality. Though he said but little, his eyes were eloquent, and a smile of heavenly sweetness lighted from time to time the gravity of his thoughtful face.

"At our host's insistence Bazzi showed one of his paintings—a Madonna and Child—which I scarce regarded until Raphael praised its excellencies, boldly defending the painting from my uncle's strictures.

"While he spoke so eloquently I made a feint of examining the picture and was indeed moved by the love which overflowed it, the Madonna caressing her babe and he in turn petting a little lamb; but my uncle pished and poohed, saying that this sentimentality was but a feeble reflection of his master Da Vinci; and our host cut the discussion short by demanding that Raphael should show his own work. This he could not be persuaded to do, modestly persisting that he had naught worthy of our consideration, though he promised later to show us a Sposalizio upon which he was engaged but which was not then finished.

"With all this, I have not related the circumstance which at once put us upon the familiar footing of old acquaintanceship. It was Chigi's chance remark that Raphael was a native of Urbino, where he had been a favourite with all those choice spirits who make your brother's court the most brilliant in Italy.

"And when I demanded of Raphael if he knew you and he told me of your goodness to him, and how you were held in love and admiration of all, then it was that our common affection for your ladyship made us to feel that we had known each other from the time that we first knew you.

"It is true that he did not boast as he might well have done that you had kindly written a letter in his behalf to the Gonfalonier of Florence, whither he intends later to journey. But my uncle learning of this later was duly impressed thereby, and pronounced him a young man of engaging manners who doubtless deserved such distinguished favour.

"Even with this warrant our acquaintance has made no such rapid strides. I meet him rarely except at our host's table where there are often other guests and always that pest Giovanni Bazzi, whom I can in no wise abide, and concerning whose honesty I have of late entertained very grave suspicions. So serious indeed are they that I will not at present divulge them but shall continue to watch the rogue, knowing that the guilty sooner or later accuse themselves. I think he dreads me for he leaves me always to converse with Raphael, with whom my topic is ever Florence, which I knew as a child before the banishment of the Medici.

"He tells me that he longs to see the city on account of the artists there assembled and chiefly the painter Frate, formerly known as Baccio della Porta, who turned monk under the preaching of Savonarola.

"'And truly,' said he, 'I think that art and a monastic life wed well together, and I would willingly retire to some cloistered garden afar from the world if I might carry my box of colours with me, and might sometimes see as in a vision a face like thine to paint from.' Then was I seized with a foolish timidity so that I could in no wise answer—nay, nor so much as lift up my head—but my heart said, 'And why afar from the world? Why not in it making all better and happier?'

"And while I sat thus silent, abashed, he, continuing to gaze upon me, cried: 'Nay, but I *must* paint thee: for thou art the very embodiment of the ideal which I am striving to shadow forth in my picture. I wish to depict the Virgin at the time of her betrothal to St. Joseph, And to show a soul as pure as any of Fra Angelico's angels shining through a body that shall have all the

perfection and charm of Da Vinci's women. It is what my master, Perugino, strove for but never attained. How could he when he had only his beautiful but soulless wife Chiara Fancelli to paint from?'

"'And do I look thus to thee?' I asked in wonder. 'Then, indeed, I would that I might pose for thy painting; but, alas! I fear that to this my uncle would in no wise consent.'

"And so, indeed, it proved. For later, when my uncle fancied that he perceived some likeness to myself in the Sposalizio, though I had given Raphael no sittings, he was vehement in his denunciation of the presumption of all artists.

"My uncle might not have been so vexed but for the ill-timed jesting of this same Bazzi. We had been asked to inspect the picture before it should be sent to the monks for whom it was painted, and while I stood entranced with its exceeding loveliness and my uncle himself was astonished by the skill displayed, the Signor Chigi explained the details of the composition.

"'It is a tradition,' he said, 'that the blessed Virgin was sought in marriage by so many young men that her parents besought the high-priest to aid them in their choice of her husband. He accordingly demanded that her suitors should give their staves into his keeping, to be placed over night before the altar, with the understanding, in which Mary herself meekly acquiesced, that he whose staff budded should become her husband. On the morrow Joseph's staff was found to have put forth blossoms. This legend, as you see, our artist has followed in his painting, for not only is Joseph's staff tipped by a cluster of small flowers, but the young men who accompany him, the disappointed suitors, bear flowerless staves, and one of the rejected is breaking his across his knee in token of his vexation.'

"Of this incident I would make no account, had it not been the occasion for Bazzi's unmannerly trick. For that graceless fellow chancing to spy leaning against his easel, the rod upon which Raphael was wont to rest his hand while painting, he very slyly made fast to it a nosegay of orange blossoms which the Signor Chigi had presented to me on my entrance and which I had carelessly let fall.

"You cannot imagine the coil which this trick occasioned, for its author speedily called our host's attention to the decorated rod, and the signification of its adornment was at once apprehended to be my own approval of the painter.

"Raphael alone retained his senses, for he at once divined that the perpetrator of the jest was his scapegrace friend and extorted from him full confession of his prank, asserting that it was inconceivable that I could have had any part in it.

"My confusion was such that I accepted the explanation with gratitude as an escape from the bantering of the Signor Chigi and the displeasure of my uncle. But as days passed by and Raphael held himself aloof, giving me no opportunity to thank him for his tactful defence, I perceived that it was not so much the meaning of the token which had been imputed to me at which my heart revolted, as the shameless and public way in which it had been thrust upon my friend. In this plight I still remain and turn to you for sympathy in my trouble, to you sweet lady who cannot fail to think me sadly love-sick and bold, but I pray you chide me not, seeing the matter can go no further, for I learn that Raphael has been recalled to Urbino by your ladyship's brother to execute certain commissions. So that your ladyship will soon see him and will have an opportunity of learning from him whether he at all regrets leaving Siena, though I beg that you will ascertain this without so much as suffering him to suspect that I have in any way signified that I have met him. For it is perchance best that he is going, for were I to see him often I do fear me that my heart might become so pitched and set upon him, that I should in time most rashly and inconsiderately fall in love, which were a bold and unmaidenly thing to do, and I mind that you once said that no virtuous woman would allow her affections to conduct themselves thus insubordinately until the Church had by the sacrament of marriage given her good and sufficient license thereto.

"And so Madam, praying Maria Sanctissima and Maria, the sister of Lazarus, my patroness, to keep me constant in this mind, I rest your ladyship's loving friend and devoted servitor

"Maria Dovizio."

It must be understood that this letter came not to my knowledge until long after its writing. I knew not then either the deep affection of the writer for Raphael, or her aversion for myself. By an irony of fate we had begun our acquaintance by loving at cross purposes. The "prankish fop" and "graceless fellow"—whose affection had indeed been hitherto no great compliment to a woman, being lightly caught and as lightly lost—was to his own surprise falling very honestly in love. So accustomed was I to the attraction of false lights that I said to myself often in the earlier stages of the malady, "This will pass like the others," not realising that I was entering upon the one great passion of my life, which all my later experience would but deepen, and death itself, if the soul be immortal, will have no power to quench.

II

APOLLO PROMISES

Little we see of Nature that is ours.

. . . . . .

It moves us not,—Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn,
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathéd horn.

W. WORDSWORTH.

Raphael, at the period of which I write, had but one mistress,—his art,—and after finishing the Sposalizio he withdrew from the society of the Dovizios, painting most assiduously. I remember that his model was a pretty maid of seven years, named Margherita, the child of one of Chigi's servants, as playful and as ignorant as a little fawn. The startled look in her eyes, when spoken to by any one but Raphael, reminded me of some wild creature of the woods. But with him she was never shy,—singing and prattling the livelong day with the most charming and naïve affection. While Raphael painted, Bernardo Dovizio, who apparently regretted having wounded him, came from time to time to lend him books, much deploring that one so gifted by nature should be unread in the classics.

His daughter watched them from a distance, and when Raphael left his easel would steal near and study the picture or chat with me and with the little Margherita. On such occasions the child, usually merry and loving, would sulk and scowl unhandsomely, and though Maria Dovizio was sweet and generous to her, she showed an unreasoning prejudice amounting to discourtesy, for which at first I was at a loss to account. I mind me that she was present when I tied the bunch of orange blossoms to Raphael's mahl stick, and after the visitors had left the studio the child, believing that the flowers were the gift of the Signorina Dovizio, tore them from the rod and trampled them beneath her feet.

When I chid her for such savage behaviour Margherita burst into tears and cried out passionately that Raphael was her friend, and that the strange lady had no business to try to steal him from her. Seeing her so unreasoningly jealous at such a tender age I was mightily amused, having no premonition that these two would one day be rivals in good earnest for Raphael's love.

But Margherita's jealousy woke in me a curiosity as to how far it was well-founded, and bantering Raphael thereon I came to the conclusion that he loved Maria Dovizio, but that he had so modest an estimate of his own talent and prospects that he would never tell her of his affection. The knowledge that I had a rival enlivened mightily my own passion, and determined me to lay the matter plainly before the lady and demand that she should choose between us.

Finding my opportunity I argued my friend's cause, as it seemed to me with great magnanimity, but at the same time I neglected not to set forth how superior were my own advantages. To my immense surprise she refused me in such terms as to leave me with no ground for hope,—persisting at the same time that I was mistaken in regard to Raphael's feelings.

In sheer contrariety and because her refusal had temporarily taken away my senses, I maintained that I knew whereof I spoke.

"Would that I had known this before," she said turning from me.

"You would not then have disclaimed sending the message implied by the flowers which I attached to his mahl stick?" I persisted rudely.

"Nay, nay," she cried all of a tremble, "it is best as it is," and she made me swear that I would tell nothing of all this. The oath sat lightly on my conscience, and when my pride had somewhat recovered from the wound which it had received, my better nature asserted itself for I reflected that here were two young creatures whom nature intended for one another and I determined to give these bashful lovers another opportunity in which to understand each other.

Though I prided myself not a little on the rare nobility of soul which I manifested by such unusual procedure, it was not so disinterested as might at first appear. For, I reasoned in my heart, when all comes to be known Maria Dovizio will give me credit for great self-sacrifice and delicacy of feeling, while Raphael cannot fail to be touched by my magnanimity. Back of all this self-laudation there was an ulterior motive hardly confessed to myself. By springing the mine prematurely I would either cement their

union or drive them permanently apart, thus clearing my path of a dangerous rival while removing any imputation of underhand dealing upon my part. I dared the risk for I was nearing that point of desperation where uncertainty is worse than the knowledge of absolute defeat.

While I sought for some promising way in which to execute my scheme, Raphael read the translations of the pagan writers which Dovizio had lent him, and this plunge into a bath of the old literature, so new to him, had a tremendous effect upon his susceptible mind. He regretted deeply that Pico della Mirandola, who strove to harmonise Greek mythology with the Christian religion, had been snatched away by death before he could have had the opportunity to converse with him. He read his writings with avidity and listened to what Dovizio remembered of his arguments that the religion of the Greeks was as truly a revelation from God as our own, and he could readily believe the assertion of certain of the humanist's friends that at Pico's death-bed the Virgin and Venus had met, and comforting his dying gaze with their presence, had together borne away his soul to the regions of the blest.

Without being any less Christian, Raphael's soul expanded in the sunshine of these influences, absorbing all that was joyous and beautiful in pagan ideas. Chigi lent him his favourite manuscript, the Myth of Psyche, translated from Apuleius, which he declared Raphael must one day paint for him. But of all the gods of antiquity the one which roused our young enthusiast to deepest admiration was Apollo, whose avatar was the sun, but whose spiritual significance was infinitely more, the light of the soul, the god of music, art, and poetry and all that elevates the spirit of man.

"Listen Giovanni," he said to me one day, "I could pray to such a deity. Think you that it would be sin to utter a prayer like this of Socrates: 'Beloved Pan, and all ye gods who haunt this place, give me beauty of the inward soul, and may the outward and the inward man be at one'?"

Seeing sport in the idea I assured him that such adoration was commendable and would doubtless meet with a response. I had my own idea of what form that response should take. Chigi held revel that night to celebrate a visit from the improvisatrice Imperia, who was on her way to Rome. Raphael could not be induced to join the company, preferring to spend the night devouring some books lately come from Venice. He had striven to tell me of a mysterious experience. A stone bearing the image of Apollo had fallen before him as he read, and he had accepted it as a propitious omen. I laughed rudely and he shrank from me offended.

"I would have shown it to you," he said, "but now you shall not see it."

I repeated this hallucination to Chigi and Imperia, and they also found it amusing.

"He is as drunk with poesy," I insisted, "as ever I have been with wine. If the Signorina would graciously sing some old Greek chant yonder in the garden he would believe that he heard the voice of the gods."

Imperia's eyes sparkled with mischief. "Let us humour this young enthusiast to his bent," she said. "I will hide in the laurel copse at the foot of the garden if Bazzi here will bring him out upon the terrace."

"He could never be content to hear your divine voice," Chigi objected, "without seeking you out, and then—"

"And then, my friend, you would imply that the disillusion would be too cruel. No, I am too evidently a part of this solid earth to pass as a nymph of Apollo."

I remained silent but I looked meaningly at Maria Dovizio, who stood near the window, her slight figure outlined against its darkness. Imperia followed my glance.

"Ah! there is a girl, graceful and ethereal enough to satisfy an artist's ideal."

"What a pity," Chigi said, "that she has not your voice."

"Nay, if the Signora will but deign to sing as she suggested," I persisted, "we will robe the Signorina Dovizio in Greek draperies and pose her in the little pillared temple in front of the laurel thicket and Raphael will not doubt that the voice is hers."

Thus, at last, my scheme was carried out, though we had much difficulty in persuading Maria Dovizio to lend herself to it. Only when Chigi explained that it was an ovation to Raphael, in which she was to crown him with a wreath of laurel and foretell him a glorious future, did she consent. Even then she had no suspicion that I had any ulterior motive in suggesting the little tableau.

It was late at night, or rather early in the morning, when all our arrangements were completed and, returning to the studio, I dragged Raphael from his books on pretence that we both had need to cool our brains.

The view from the terrace was a favourite one with each of us. In the mysterious morning twilight there seemed something supernaturally sentient in the atmosphere, as though it quivered in expectation of the dawn. A soft trill, faint with rapture, filtered through the foliage of the neighbouring wood. It was a solitary nightingale calling his mate; and presently he was answered by flute-like notes which soared above the soft murmur of a viol still strumming in the villa as a skylark cuts the mists. It was not another nightingale as I at first thought, but Imperia's voice from the laurel thicket mocking the melody. As she sang there appeared within the circle of the tiny temple's columns a white-robed figure, outlined against the pale green and lemon yellow of the dawn. It might have been a statue save that as the song of the improvisatrice, a rhapsody to Apollo, thrilled the air with passionate sweetness, it raised its perfect arms in invocation. As though in response to the gesture the clouds flushed through delicate rose to crimson, while the radiance beneath their exquisite arch burned like molten gold, with ever-increasing intensity, until the sun itself blinded our eyes with its intolerable white fire.

Though this was exactly the event which I had planned, I was not prepared for such phenomenal success, and I stole nearer the temple spellbound by my own artifice.

The effect upon Raphael in his exalted mood may readily be imagined. To him my little comedy was a supernatural vision, and kneeling before Maria Dovizio he exclaimed: "Beautiful priestess, beseech Apollo to grant me the power to make the world more beautiful."

Mechanically the Signorina repeated the lines which I had assigned her: "To you it is decreed to find Apollo and to bring back the Golden Age."

Then, as she bent to crown him with the wreath of laurel, the perfume and warmth of her person intoxicating his senses, her bared arms encircling his neck, her soul in her eyes, Raphael awoke to the consciousness that this was no phantom but a woman pulsing with life and love, and that woman Maria Dovizio.

He might have revolted at the trick and have thrust her from him; but look you—it is always the unforeseen which happens. His arms were around her and he drew her to him unresisting till for an instant her lips touched his forehead and his face was buried in her bosom. Then she withdrew herself, pushing him from her very gently and steadying herself tremblingly with her hands upon his shoulders.

"And shall I not find you again, O my beloved?" he cried, springing to his feet.

"Surely," she answered, "surely, when you have found Apollo."

She had turned from him and was hurrying toward the villa, but he followed her, calling her name.

"Claim me not now, not now!" she cried, as he caught her hand.

"When you will," he answered, closing her fingers over some small object, "this is my pledge that when you call me I will keep the tryst."

He passed me a moment later, but so great was his preoccupation that he did not see me. I knew by the exalted look upon his face that I had played and lost. Raphael had awakened from his dreams to love. That instant of mutual enlightenment for two such natures was not alone an ineffaceable memory but a sacred though wordless betrothal.

Through my pain I vaguely heard Chigi calling and returned to the villa. Neither he nor his friends had understood the full significance of what had just happened, and Bernardo Dovizio was demanding of his niece an explanation of the scene.

"He thought me one of the muses," she said, "and begged me to beseech for him the favour of Apollo."

"But he gave you something," said Dovizio. "Show it to me," and he wrenched open his niece's fingers.

For one instant he gazed wonder-stricken at the token, and as I pressed close with the others I also recognised the famous Apollo intaglio, the gem of the collection of Lorenzo the Magnificent, of which for a few hours I had been the unlawful possessor.

Exclamations of wonder and admiration arose on all sides. But Dovizio, recovering his power of speech, seized Chigi by the arm, exclaiming: "We have the thief! Look you Agostino, I have had my suspicions all along. It was Raphael who played the bandit, and robbed me of my jewels. I demand that you arrest the villain."

Maria's look of anguish cut me to the heart. "Nay, listen to me," I cried; "it was not Raphael but I who stole your gems. You shall not burst in upon him and kill him with the shock of your accusations. Listen while I confess the truth." And then and there I did confess it, to the wonder but not to the satisfaction of Dovizio.

"But where are the other gems?" he insisted. "You are a pair of rogues, the two of you. Come with me to your confederate and disgorge your booty."

"Give o'er, my good Dovizio," said Chigi. "I will sift this matter; come with me but keep silence, for I believe in my soul that Bazzi speaks the truth. I will hear Raphael's version of how he came by this intaglio; since a portion of your lost property has been returned, perchance the remainder is on the way."

And so indeed it proved. Raphael had not returned to the studio, but as we opened the door we heard a scampering and chattering, and caught a glimpse of Ciacco leaping to the top of a high cabinet and thence to a rafter where he perched whimpering in fear of punishment.

"Come down, you rogue," I cried, "come down and retrieve your game."

The creature understood and climbing into the hay loft, which joined the studio, returned, hugging to his breast the lost casket.

Dovizio, nearly fainting with excitement, counted his treasures, and compared them with the list. All were there, excepting the Apollo intaglio, which Ciacco, driven by hunger, had that evening restored to Raphael.

As it came so pat with the matter of his reading, it is no wonder that he imagined it had fallen from the skies, and this view of the case even the placated Dovizio took upon reflection.

"It were a pity to rob him of his illusions if they are an inspiration to him," he mused. "Let him think himself favoured by Apollo; and as for my niece, since our business here is now accomplished and we shall leave Siena on the morrow, he will probably never see her again, and it is as well that he should not connect her with his visions."

Thus ended our adventures at the villa of Cetinale for Raphael also presently left us for Urbino and Florence and all things seemed as they had been before our meeting together. But I knew that the day would surely come when he would claim his beloved, and that in the spinning of their fates so slight a thing as the pranking of a fool had twisted itself into the very fibre of their lives, never to be unravelled until the shears of Atropos should cut the cords asunder.

III

APOLLO FULFILS HIS PROMISE

Federigo de Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, gives his views of Raphael

Then why too will he try so many things,
  Instead of sticking to one single art;
He must be studying music, twanging strings,
  And writing sonnets with their "heart and dart,"
Lately he's setting up for architect,
  And planning palaces, and, as I learn,
  Has made a statue—every art in turn.

W. W. Story.

Raphael, as I have said, betook himself to Florence, that centre of the arts, and for a matter of four years I saw him not, nor can I, my Giulio, give you any record of his Florentine experiences, vital as they were to the flowering of his character and genius. I saw only the change; he left me a youth, naïve, ignorant, but filled with a divine enthusiasm, inspired as it were by the very spirit of God. In those four years he became instructed, absorbing all that was best from ancient and modern art, but still a mystic, a young archangel in knowledge and power.

He studied first with Fra Bartolommeo in the cloister of San Marco, and the painter-monk yearned over him, as the child of his soul. But he divined also from the mere

beholding of Da Vinci's pictures what I had been able to learn only by painful study, the secret of the master's charm.

At the same time the strong undercurrent of the Greek spirit rife in Florence was bearing him irresistibly on to his mission as leader of all that is beautiful, joyous, and noble in classical art. Fra Bartolommeo could not fail to be distressed by these tendencies in his disciple. Raphael came to him one day saying, "Beloved Master, his holiness the Pope has called me to Rome; and I go with joy, for it has been revealed to me that there I shall find Apollo."

"Ah! my son," the pious painter replied in anguished warning, "beware, for whoso findeth Apollo loseth Christ."

And now I come to our Roman life and especially to that familiar intercourse at the Villa Chigi where Raphael and I were nearer of one spirit, for all your opportunities, than were you and he, my Giulio. In Rome, as in Siena, I preceded him, and had the better chance for fortune's favours, which I wilfully threw away. For early in his pontificate, Pope Julius II. made Agostino Chigi his banker and farmer of the alum mines whose yearly revenue was estimated at $100,000. Nor did Chigi with this elevation forget old friends, for in the spring of 1507 he came to Siena to fetch me as a personal favour to Rome, but on our arrival he introduced me to the Pope, and obtained from him my commission to decorate the Stanza della Segnatura. But, fool that I was, I fancied my luck could not desert me, and painted only when it pleased me, ran my horses at all the races in Italy, and played the dandy, the spendthrift, and the roistering spark, until his Holiness in disgust turned me from the Vatican, and called Raphael to take my place, bidding him erase the little work I had done upon the ceiling.

This, however, Raphael refused to do. On the contrary he did me the honour to paint my portrait beside his own, where you may see both of them to-day in that glorious fresco of the *School of Athens*, the serious inspired face of the young maestro cheek by cheek with the coarser features of his laughing, devil-may-care friend; and I prize more highly that testimony of his esteem than all the other honours of my life.

I lingered on aimlessly at Rome, watching him at his work, fascinated by the superb conceptions with which he glorified the walls of the Vatican, and admiring the daring which enthroned Apollo and his attendant muses there in the very sanctuary of Christendom.

It was his homage to the old worship, his endeavour to bring back Apollo, and that he thought then of Maria Dovizio's promise that he should find her when this was accomplished I had one day convincing proof; for, turning over his sketches, I found scribbled upon the back of a study for the *Disputa* this sonnet:

"LOVE'S BONDAGE"

"Love, thou hast bound me with a cruel force,
The light of her two tender starry eyes,
A face like snow flushed rose 'neath sunset skies,
With gentle bearing and with chaste discourse.
But I would make no plaint, so great my bliss.
The more I love, I long to love again.
How light the yoke, how sweet the circling chain
Of her arms round my neck! And 'neath her kiss
Leaps forth the embodied soul in ecstacy.
Unloosed those bonds I suffer ceaseless pain,
For great joy kills whom it doth wholly move.
Though throbbing still with tender thought of thee,
My heart is heavy and I speak in vain,
But be my silence eloquent of love."[3]

Raphael and Sodoma *Alinari*
Fragment of School of Athens, in the Vatican—
Raphael

I knew that the poem was addressed to Maria, for it was at this time that Bernardo Dovizio, dazzled by the change in Raphael's fortunes and repenting of his hasty action at Cetinale, offered my friend the hand of his niece.

Raphael had told me of this, begging my congratulations. "She is at Urbino," he said, "but has written me confirming our betrothal. She tells me, too, that she has loved me all these years. Such constancy is miraculous, and I am the happiest of men."

It was with a sore heart that I wished my friend joy. He knew not of my trouble, or I think it would have poisoned his happiness, for he sympathised so deeply with all his friends that their sorrows were his own. I mind me that we met Agostino Chigi that day, and that he told us of his prosperity; how he was sole owner of five score banking houses outrivalling those of the Medici and, indeed, every other firm in the world; how he monopolised not alone the alum, but also the wheat and salt industries; how his lakes alone supplied Rome with fish and his stock farms its markets; that his fleet numbered upwards of an hundred merchant vessels, while thousands of men did him service; that, in short, his fortune was now past computation, and his income beyond his power of spending.

He explained all this not in a spirit of boastfulness, but, with an arm about each of us, told how he desired that we should share in his glory. He had determined to build a villa in Lungara upon the Tiber which should excel all of the Roman palaces, and while Peruzzi was his chosen architect, Raphael and I should divide its decoration. "For if I have become a prince of finance," he ended, "you, dear friends, are princes of art, and we will all three join in making this villa a worthy dwelling-place for one whom you knew and admired at Cetinale."

Thinking for the instant that he referred to Imperia, who was now in Rome, Raphael congratulated him warmly and confided his own betrothal to Maria Dovizio. But at that news a sudden transformation was wrought in the demeanour of our old friend. His face became purple and swollen and his arms fell to his sides. Not a word spake he for a full minute, but he drew his breath hard, flinging out at length a bitter sarcasm on the faithlessness of women, and bidding Raphael trust not too much to their promises, he abruptly left us.

Villa Farnesina, Rome *Alinari*

There was only one construction to be put upon his conduct. Maria's loveliness had apparently made no impression upon him at Cetinale, but the memory of it had lingered in his heart, and when he met her after a lapse of years and saw how her beauty had matured, an affection, of which he himself may not have been conscious, flowered suddenly, just as a rose-tree set in ungrateful soil and long accounted dead may in the fulness of time come to unlooked-for efflorescence.

Sharing his envy, I could only mark it with a laugh, but Raphael said, kindly, "Poor fellow, with all his wealth, I am many times richer than he."

In my heart I knew that of her three lovers Maria had chosen wisely, and Chigi's disappointment would not have added to my own affliction, but for the reflection that in the present turn of affairs he would not be likely to hasten the building of his villa, and my last hope of employment in Rome was fading like a cruel mirage. But Raphael could well afford to waive Chigi's patronage, for him it was but another step in the golden staircase of success which now mounted invitingly before him. The Pope not only overwhelmed him with projects for the decoration of the Vatican but made him curator of all antiques which might be discovered near Rome, with full power to direct excavations.

Returning to the Vatican from the walk during which we had encountered Chigi, Raphael found awaiting him a letter from the Pope, announcing that certain ancient statues had been discovered in the gardens of the villa of Nero at Antium, (now Porto d'Anzio), and desiring him to examine them and arrange for the transportation of the more remarkable to Rome.

"Come with me," Raphael cried, "since you have nothing better to do—pardon me, my friend—since such an excursion is exactly what you would enjoy. We will ride to-morrow morning to Ostia and charter some fishing craft there for the sail to Porto d'Anzio."

I accepted the invitation, glad to visit this favourite seaside resort of the Roman emperors. Even before we landed we could see the ruins of their villas deep in the clear waters of the bay, fish gliding through arches and the seaweed waving its pennons from the walls. The cliff at the back of the town presented a most impressive appearance, being pierced by great arched openings like the portals of a Roman bath. And such, indeed, they were, for on the promontory above had been the gardens of the imperial villa, and from them staircases carven in the rock descended to this subterranean chamber, which at full-tide the sea, rushing through a long canal, once converted into a swimming-pool. The great cavern had been dry for centuries, for the tides had piled their own sandy dykes before it, and the vaulting had fallen bringing with it a portion of the garden of the imperial villa and burying its statues beneath the debris. It was here that excavations had been begun, and as we entered the cave from

the beach, our way was bordered by the fragments of many a column and capital, by broken vases and by headless statues.

But none of these attracted us, for in the centre of the chamber, perfectly illumined by a shaft of light which fell upon it slantwise from the chasm in the roof, was the most superb statue which our eyes, nay, which any human vision had ever beheld.

Apollo's very self stood there, god-like in superhuman majesty, as though he were an archangel who had alighted from his flaming chariot to lift a threatening hand against the workers of iniquity.

I cannot describe the profound impression which this discovery made upon Raphael. He was raised to the seventh heaven, as on that memorable night at Siena, and while he gazed at the statue a mysterious voice, clear but freighted with intense emotion, chanted the *Hymn to Apollo* to which we had listened at Chigi's villa.

At first we could not tell from whence it came but looked about in startled surprise. Presently, however, a branch of laurel fell through the opening in the roof, the song ended in a peal of laughter, and we knew that some one was looking down upon us from the old Roman garden. No one but Imperia could sing like that, and when Raphael exclaimed. "It is the same song, the same singer that we heard at Cetinale." I cried out. "The same, the same. She is celebrating the discovery of Apollo."

"She promised to come to me when I had found Apollo," he said, and bounded up the rude stairway. Even then I did not realise that though Raphael had recognised the voice he still supposed that it was Maria Dovizio who had sung on that evening, and that it was she whom he now believed he was about to meet.

There was no one in the ruined villa. A goatherd at a little distance, of whom I inquired, pointed to the shore, and we saw some pleasure-seekers embarking in a small sailboat.

"It is Chigi's yacht," said Raphael, "that is his pennon which flaps from the mast, and Chigi himself is standing at the stern waving his cap to us. There is a lady with him. He is steadying her with his arm. Your eyes are better than mine, is it she?"

"It is indeed," I replied, "I would know her anywhere. His arm is around her waist and she is clinging to him as of old. The unsteadiness of the vessel is but an excuse. Many times at Cetinale have I seen them standing thus. What else could you expect of such a woman? He is the richest man in Italy."

IV

AN ORGY AT CHIGI'S VILLA

And Chigi made a joyous feast; I never
Sat at a costlier; for all round his hall
From column on to column, as in a wood,
Great garlands swung and blossomed, and beneath
Heirlooms and ancient miracles of Art
Chalice and salver, wines that Heaven knows when
Had sucked the fire of some forgotten sun
And kept it through a hundred years of gloom,
Yet glowing in a heart of ruby, cups
Where nymph and god ran ever round in gold,
Others with glass as costly, some with gems
Movable and resetable at will,
And trebling all the rest in value.
Ah! heavens!
Why need I tell you all? Suffice! to say
That whatsoever boundless wealth like his,
And genius high, can compass, rare or fair,
Was brought before the guest.

TENNYSON:—Altered.

So I found Raphael and so I left him, successful and apparently happy. Had I comprehended what the incident which I have just related meant to him,—had I even suspected his misconception of the situation,—I might have made him understand that neither at Cetinale nor at Porto d'Anzio had Maria Dovizio sung the *Hymn to Apollo*, that in both places it was Imperia who had chanted, Imperia who had responded to

Chigi's caresses, and so this woful misunderstanding might never have divided these young lovers. Maria, far from being Chigi's guest at the moment of the discovery of the *Apollo*, was in Urbino, awaiting in ever-increasing wonder and dismay some word of affection from her betrothed. Failing to receive it she came to Rome, but Raphael held himself aloof, pleading the Pope's demands upon his time. He thought that she would understand the cause of his neglect, and herself sunder the engagement, for he would not shame her by any accusation.

One ineffaceable picture of my friend I carried with me into my exile, for going to the Vatican to bid Raphael farewell, I was told that he was in the Pope's villa of the Belvedere superintending the placing of the *Apollo*, which had just arrived. The guards barred my entrance to the loggia, and indeed I cared not to intrude, for I saw that the Pope was there, gazing at the statue with a grim delight, as though he believed that the god had descended to earth to expel as of old the barbarian Gauls.

Raphael stood entranced, unmindful of the presence of Maria Dovizio, who sat a little apart, heart-sick and bewildered, unable to grope her way through the thick fog of misconception which had drifted between herself and her beloved.

And over all the white form of *Apollo* gleamed in heartless gladness, untouched by any feeling for his votary's sins of ignorance for which he would cry in vain repentance, "Had I but known, had I but known!"

It was impossible for me to tarry longer in Rome without employment, and I bethought me of the monks of Oliveto, and how they had asked for a series of paintings for their cloister. To this refuge, therefore, I repaired, completing, in two years, thirty-one great frescoes for little more than my sustenance. Yea; and for my belly's sake I might have accepted the life of a cowled monk, had not Chigi in the nick of time drawn me from that slough with the announcement that Peruzzi had completed the building of his villa, and that it was now ready for decoration.

Here accordingly, while painting in the upper rooms, I enjoyed the comradeship of that brotherhood of choice spirits—Giovanni da Udine, Francesco Penni, and the rest—who with thee, my Giulio, wrought so lovingly under Raphael's direction, illuminating the lower loggia with the legend of *Cupid and Psyche*.

It is true that to my surprise and sorrow Raphael himself came not, but I knew that he was overwhelmed with commissions, and to their demands upon his time I attributed his avoidance of the villa. In the meantime I delayed not to seek him out, and to express my surprise that I found him still a bachelor. But at my first probing of that old wound he winced so perceptibly that I perceived that it was by no means cured, and I made no demand upon his confidence for an explanation of his delay in demanding the consummation of an engagement which had not been publicly dissolved.

Giovanni Antonio Bazzi, called Sodoma *Alinari*
From the portrait of himself in the Abbey of Monte Oliveto Maggiore

The world gossiped as to the cause of Raphael's neglect of his affianced. The most part declared him cold, absorbed only in love of his art, and some whispered that the Pope who was insatiable in his demands for his work, feared that marriage would lessen his enthusiasm for art, and had put off indefinitely the wedding-day, promising Raphael the Cardinal's hat if he remained a celibate.

While I could not believe that this was the true explanation of the estrangement between the lovers, I was far from suspecting the truth. Though I called upon Maria Dovizio I got no enlightenment in that quarter, nay, nor encouragement for my own passion, for when I put forth some timid essays, they were promptly crushed by a look of such reproach that I called myself brute as well as fool for my persistency.

Longing to do her service, I determined to haunt my friend until he should voluntarily confide the secret of the trouble, and if it were possible bring them together.

With this end in view, in all my leisure hours I frequented Raphael's studio, where he was painting the most glorious of his Madonnas for the monks of San Sisto. And here, posing for that divine work, I found again our child-model of Cetinale, the little Margherita.

She was no longer a child, for the years which had elapsed had transformed her into a woman; but she had retained her old characteristics of shyness, simplicity, and a worshipful love of Raphael. She had followed him to Rome, so he told me, like some faithful, dumb animal which could not live away from its master, and moved by her great affection he had given her lodging and employment as his model. There lacked not malicious tongues who called her his mistress; but so modest yet unabashed was her demeanour that I can well believe that she deserved to the end the honour which he paid in choosing her face as his ideal of all that is noblest in woman.

Margherita (La Fornarina), Attributed to Raphael
Pitti Gallery, Florence
Alinari

While I worked at Chigi's villa my patron gave me much of his company; for though the decorations were unfinished he had established his residence here. Imperia was his guest at this time, and as we sat at table one evening Chigi complained in her presence that Raphael slighted his engagements and avoided his company.

"Have I not heard," Imperia hazarded boldly, "that he is to marry the Maria Dovizio whom I met at Cetinale?"

"If her uncle speaks true," Chigi replied, "Raphael is but a recalcitrant lover, continually putting off the date of the marriage. Bernardo Dovizio admitted to me that his niece's patience is at an end, and that she could be persuaded to accept a more ardent suitor."

Imperia darted a keen look at Chigi, but replied calmly, "It is plain that Raphael has been entangled by some other woman," and she demanded of me suddenly if it were not so.

"It may be," I admitted reluctantly, for this possibility had of late occurred to me, and I told them of Margherita.

Chigi was delighted. "If Maria Dovizio but knew of that liaison," he cried, "she would send her betrothed about his business."

"Have a care, Agostino," Imperia exclaimed. "Let the news reach her through any one but you. She would hardly regard with kindness the man who brought her proof of Raphael's faithlessness."

Chigi looked at me significantly. "*You* knew her," he said. "It is in your power to serve us both."

"God knows I would give my life to serve her," I cried unguardedly.

Imperia laughed. "You have more than one rival, my Agostino," she said. "Bazzi is a good fellow, but not to be trusted with your love affairs."

"I deny the accusation that I am your honour's rival," I cried hotly. "I had never any hope in that quarter."

Chigi nodded thoughtfully and pressed my hand. "Do not torment yourself, Imperia," he said after a moment, as he left us. "We have neither of us any chance with Maria Dovizio; and you shall be mistress of this villa and of its master so long as you care for

your kingdom."

But Imperia was not deceived though she feigned to believe Agostino's protestations. Chigi's information that Maria's hand had been practically offered him by her uncle had wakened the most intense alarm for her own position, and she instantly determined to effect a reconciliation between Maria and Raphael.

"Look you, Bazzi," she said when we were alone, "that hussy, Margherita, must leave our friend's house at once. I can see that you love Maria Dovizio so disinterestedly that you prefer her happiness to your own. Now it is certain that Raphael and Maria love each other; and we must not allow any foolishness to part them. Let us work in concert to bring them together."

I remember that when I heard Imperia say this it struck me as an instance of an angel being served by the machinations of an evil spirit. But I hesitated not to make her my fellow-conspirator, nor did I revolt that Margherita must suffer, nay, that I myself must relinquish any lingering hope of winning my idol's heart if so be that her happiness could be secured.

"I am with you in that business," I assured Imperia, "but how can we effect it?"

"Very easily," Imperia replied. "Margherita is the daughter of Chigi's pastry-cook at Cetinale. Send for him—I will give you money. He shall exercise a father's authority to compel his daughter to return to her home. His mistress once beyond his reach, Raphael will forget her, and imagine that he has never loved any one but his betrothed. I know you men—the nearest is ever the dearest."

Imperia's plot was but partially successful. She brought Margherita's father indeed from Siena and established him as a baker near the villa; but no commands, threats, or bribe of his could induce his daughter to renounce Raphael's protection.

Imperia again took counsel with me. "The fool loves him," she said; "we must act through her love, not against it."

"And how shall we do that?" I asked.

"We must make her understand that her lover, intoxicated by his delight in her company, is disregarding his own advantage in neglecting Chigi's commissions, and that she must reside here in order to induce Raphael to follow her."

The scheme seemed to me likely to succeed, and one morning, when I shrewdly suspected that Raphael would be busied at the Vatican, I took Imperia with me to his studio to try her powers of persuasion upon Margherita.

Even then she could not have succeeded but for my help, for Margherita, trusting in my friendship for Raphael, appealed to me. "It is for his good," I assured her.

"Then I will not refuse," she replied, "but will go with you at once. So write for me to my master that if he wishes to paint from me, he will find me when he is prepared to fulfil his promises to his patron."

Thus, without giving her time to reflect, we carried Margherita in Imperia's carriage to Chigi's villa. I guessed that she had no intention of sending the girl's message to her lover; that she planned to keep Margherita hidden until Raphael, believing her false or losing all hope of finding her, would return to his allegiance to Maria.

But there were other forces at work on which I had not counted, and the first of these was Chigi.

Something like the same chain of reasoning had been started in his mind by my mention of Margherita, but he had reached the conclusion that Raphael's infatuation for his pretty model must be encouraged. He therefore privately requested me to induce her, by exactly the same arguments which we had already employed, to do precisely what she had already done.

The humour of the situation was so great that I burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

This so angered the unsuspecting man that I managed to ejaculate between my paroxysms: "Margherita in this villa! And what pray you would the Signora Imperia say to that?"

At this question Chigi whistled. "I had forgotten Imperia," he admitted, and then to my utter confusion that lady entered the room with her arm about the waist of Margherita.

Never before had I seen Imperia unable to give a plausible account of a situation, but while she hesitated, Margherita did her good service by telling the simple truth. She thanked Chigi warmly for his patronage of Raphael, and explained how Imperia and she had plotted to induce him to complete the frescoes.

"And you did this to give me pleasure?" Chigi asked, regarding Imperia with wonder and admiration. She felt her advantage and found her tongue. "You little know your Imperia," she said, sweetly; and true though the words were he understood them falsely, as she meant he should, and the recording angel gave her credit for a lie.

"I am more grateful than I can express," cried Chigi, "for I have great need of Raphael at this moment, and you, dearest Imperia, shall never regret this kindness."

"We have played into the hands of the enemy," Imperia said to me in a low voice as Chigi darted away to write to Raphael; "nevertheless the game is not yet lost. I know my dear Agostino's cards, and though they are good ones I have some which he recks not of and he shall never wed the fair Maria."

A wonderful woman was this Imperia, as I was beginning to realise, though I had not yet sounded the depths of that strange nature.

Chigi's letter to Raphael was a masterpiece of duplicity. He confided to him as the most sacred secret the information that his engagement to a certain mutual acquaintance of Cetinale days would soon be announced, and he begged his friend, for the sake of the lady, to give his personal and inimitable touch to the frescoes of *Cupid and Psyche*, and to other decorations in the villa which he was preparing for his bride. Although he also confessed the stratagem by which he had secured the presence of Margherita, it was the news of Chigi's approaching marriage which determined Raphael to accede to his request. Though Agostino had worded his allusions to his betrothed so skilfully that they applied with equal fitness to either Imperia or Maria Dovizio, Raphael never doubted that he referred to the latter. The news simply confirmed the suspicions which he had long entertained, and with characteristic magnanimity, he determined to leave Maria the highest masterpiece of which his hand was capable.

He came at once, and Imperia sat smiling at his side while he painted Margherita as the principal figure in the glorious *Triumph of Galatea*, Chigi, marking Margherita's look of rapt devotion, drew me aside in ecstacy. "It is plain that they love each other," he said. "When the picture is nearly finished I will invite Bernardo Dovizio and his niece to see it. They will understand the relations of this artist and model. He is cutting his own throat with every stroke of his facile brush, for Maria Dovizio will brook no divided affection."

But when in alarm I reported this conversation to Imperia—"Children!" she cried scornfully; "what children you men are! Can you not see, Giovanni, that, though Margherita worships her painter as a god, he cares for her only as a piece of stuff, a marble column, or a jewel, beautiful truly and therefore serviceable to paint from, but nothing more. Let Agostino bring Maria Dovizio here. I desire nothing more warmly than to compass her meeting with Raphael. But give me a moment with her to prepare her for that meeting, and one in which to withdraw Margherita and all others from the scene, and think you that in the joy of their reconciliation either he or she will give a thought to his picture or to the models who posed for it?"

Pope Leo X, Giulio de Medici (afterward Pope Clement VII), and Luigi De Rossi, by Raphael
Pitti Gallery
Alinari

Chigi did not at once carry out his intention of inviting the Dovizios to his villa, for another project for the moment eclipsed that design and demands a temporary digression from my story; for if he was to be reckoned with as a lover, in a review of the hidden causes which brought about the catastrophe, he is still less to be neglected in his proper rôle of financier.

Pope Leo X. was to discover this as his predecessor Julius had done, and with more reason, for Leo was the greater borrower, all of his family and the adherents of the Medici descending upon him on his accession to the papacy like a flock of buzzards. Julius had left the papal coffers well filled, but Leo had not only emptied them, but he had anticipated his own revenues and those of his successor. Truly was it said after his death, that upon his family and the building of Saint Peter's he had spent the income of three pontificates. Chigi was not distressed that there was no likelihood that the Pope would ever repay what he owed, for he had not only received ample security through Dovizio at Cetinale, but there were richer spoils in view which made that transaction seem of trifling account. Agostino desired to become the sole manager of the papal finances; and he did indeed inaugurate that system of loans by which the Pope's entire revenue was not sufficient to meet the interest on his debts.

As a means of impressing Leo not only with his friendship but with his boundless wealth, he determined to entertain his Holiness with hospitality so lavish that it would put to shame the very feasts of Lucullus. Leo was in a certain way to blame for this foolish display, for Cardinal Riario was building his palace at this time, and his Holiness piqued Chigi by insinuating that the residence of Riario would rival the one which he was erecting. To this slur Chigi retorted hotly that Riario's palace would not be able to compare with his own stables.

It was no empty boast, but in order to realise it our patron immediately put a stop to the work upon the main villa and, as you, my Giulio, will well remember, set us all to the task of transforming the larger building upon the river bank (originally planned to house his stud of horses) into an immense banqueting-hall. The stalls of inlaid woods were concealed by the Medici tapestries; and by means of stucco, paint, lavish gilding, and innumerable sparkling lights, depending in crystal lustres and silver lamps, we achieved an effect of magnificence unsurpassed by the imaginary creations of oriental enchanters.

In this gorgeous apartment, carpeted by rugs given Chigi by eastern princes and crowded with the costliest works of art, was served a feast for whose menu the scholars of the city ransacked the records of the orgies of the Roman emperors. The cardinals and foreign ambassadors invited were surprised by dainties and wines peculiar to their own countries, timed to arrive in Rome from many distant lands on the very eve of the banquet. Golden beakers richly ornamented in *repoussé* with bacchanalian subjects, and engraved with the coat of arms of the guest before whom they were placed, were provided with every different wine, and the convives were begged to accept the entire set as trifling mementos. To prove that the plates of solid gold on which the many courses were served were not used twice, they were when changed ostentatiously cast through the open windows into the Tiber.

But here I had contrived to secure my friend the reputation of prodigality without its penalty, for we caused nets to be stretched in the river under the windows so that the service was presently hauled safely in by Chigi's servants, who patrolled the river in small boats.

I was responsible also for another feature, which was in a manner too successful. When the fruit was served I placed before Bernardo Dovizio (now Cardinal Bibbiena) a melon, which upon cutting open he found filled with what he took to be the very gems lost and found at Cetinale in so remarkable a manner, and which he had left in pawn with Chigi. As with trembling fingers he was attempting to transfer them to his pocket, I set free my ape Ciacco, who, previously coached to this performance, descended a rope which depended over the table, seized the melon, and climbing again beyond Dovizio's reach pelted the company with the jewels.

Great was the indignation of the Cardinal as he saw them scrambled for and pocketed as souvenirs by the guests, until our host presented Leo with the casket containing the original intaglios of which the ones placed before Dovizio were but imitations.

The banquet being now concluded, the tapestries concealing the stalls were drawn aside, and a hundred pages, each habited like a prince, led in as many superb horses caparisoned in cloth of gold, and fastened them with silver chains to feeding-racks of the same metal.

Chigi then apologised for having received his Holiness in a stable, saying that he would not have dared to do so had not the great Head of the Church accepted such humble hospitality for his birthplace. Leo graciously admitted that his host had fulfilled his boast, for Riario, with all his extravagance, had never attempted a scene like this.

The tapestries were sent to the Vatican on the morrow, but, in displaying them and returning publicly the Medici jewels, we had over-shot the mark, for the Pope's self-love was wounded by the exposition of the straits to which he must have been reduced, to have accounted for their having been even temporarily in Chigi's possession, and another banker received the patronage which our friend had coveted.

On Bernardo Dovizio, however, this feast made an immense impression, and when Chigi invited him to bring his niece to dine more intimately at his villa, he accepted the invitation with an alacrity which gave color to Agostino's hopes.

Chigi had no intention that Imperia should either preside on this occasion or suspect what he was planning. He had asked a sister-in-law to do the honours of his villa for the day, and had requested me to escort Imperia to the Pope's villa of Magliana, where he had secured her an invitation to sing for a party of sport-loving cardinals whom Leo had asked to enjoy his favourite pastime of hunting.

"And see to it, my dear Bazzi," Agostino had said to me, "that you on no account bring her back until late at night, for Maria Dovizio must not know that Imperia is an inmate of my house."

As in duty bound I secretly took counsel with Imperia, discussing, as we fancied, every phase of the situation.

Chigi, over-confident in the superiority of his own attractions, had not at first deemed it necessary to send Raphael away. It is possible that he even thought that Maria would be shocked at seeing her betrothed apparently domiciled under the same roof with Margherita, and glorifying her charms with such over-appreciation, while Raphael, surprised by Maria's sudden appearance as a willing and familiar guest, would accept the desired construction as to her relations with his patron, and that

thus the estrangement between these unhappy lovers would become irremediable.

Imperia admitted that if neither of them were previously warned, and, if no opportunity were afforded them to converse together alone, appearances would be much against Raphael, and Chigi's plot would have a fair chance of succeeding. "Especially," she added, "if Maria Dovizio has any conversation with Margherita will Raphael's chance of placating her be lost, for a woman who loves can not fail to recognise the same affection in another, and Margherita's infatuation is so evident that the blind might see it."

"Then," said I, "our first concern must be to spirit Margherita away, else Maria in her injured pride may accept Agostino."

"'Tis the first step," Imperia replied. "Leave it to me; think you I have not long since foreseen and provided for such an emergency?"

As she spoke there was a look in her set face which frightened me. "I will ask Margherita's father to send for her for the day," I said, uneasy, I knew not why.

"Leave her to me, I tell you," Imperia commanded hastily. "If Raphael and Maria Dovizio are to be reconciled Margherita must drop out of his life—not for one day but for ever."

I liked this still less, though I laughed and reminded her how she herself had said that, when they once understood each other, Margherita would be no more to either of them than a lay-figure on which to hang draperies.

Imperia smiled bitterly. "I may have thought so once, I know better now."

"There is another way to foil Agostino," I suggested. "He will show the Dovizios my painting of the *Marriage of Alexander and Roxana*, in his own room. Leave such of your jewels on his dressing-case as will prove to Maria that you have recently occupied the apartment—that necklace which she admired so greatly at Cetinale. She would recognise it at once."

Imperia shook her head contemptuously. "Agostino would gather up all such equivocal objects before he showed her the room," she said.

"Then, since we cannot hinder Maria Dovizio from accepting this invitation, would you dare to return earlier than you are expected, and converse with her before she leaves? We might explain to Chigi afterward that we had miscalculated the time, or that our appearance was in some other way unpremeditated."

"He would never forgive me," she said slowly; "nevertheless, if I do not succeed in removing Margherita, I shall return in time to pull the strings of my puppets, for Agostino shall never marry another woman."

I well remember the last evening which we spent together. The air was sultry, and through the arches of the loggia occasional flashes of lightning made fiery crevices in the black heavens. Imperia paced uneasily to and fro.

"We shall have a storm," she said. "I have a mind not to go to Magliana."

Chigi turned pale and rose and walked beside her. He even attempted to put his arm about her waist, but she repulsed him with a savage scowl.

"Do not pretend that you care for me, Agostino," she said angrily; "I will believe it only on one condition, that you accompany me to Magliana."

"I have told you it is impossible, Imperia. Bazzi is an amusing fellow, a hundred times more entertaining than I."

"I am tired of Bazzi. He is an insufferable idiot. I will not go unless you escort me, Agostino."

"Then Raphael shall take you. His Holiness will be delighted to welcome him, as he desires him to plan some decorations for the villa; and you cannot, my Imperia, call Raphael an idiot."

It was Imperia's turn to blanch as Raphael came forward and courteously asked the honour of her company.

But she quickly recovered herself, "Raphael is too charming," she said guilefully, "and were it not that his heart is given to the beautiful Margherita I might be tempted to angle for it."

"Ah!" exclaimed Chigi, well pleased, "that is good news. Margherita is a rare prize,

and I am glad to know that the unimpressionable Raphael at last really loves."

The eyes of Imperia and Chigi were intently fixed on Raphael's face, striving to read his true feelings. He felt and resented the scrutiny.

"I doubt if the man lives who has not loved," he said, flushing. "Perhaps it is because I love so deeply that I cannot speak of it."

Imperia softened for an instant, and, taking a lute, sang, *Quant'e bella giovinezza*.[4] But the pent-up passion that possessed her this evening woke again in the line, *Che si fugge tuttavia*, and she ended suddenly with a dry choking sob.

An embarrassing silence fell upon us all, broken finally by Imperia. "A little honesty might clear the atmosphere," she said to Raphael; "besides what need is there of such secrecy when we have all guessed the truth. No, you shall not escort me to Magliana. I will be no man's second choice, not even yours, Agostino," and so saying she ungraciously departed from us.

"She is in a devil of a humour," Chigi said to me, uneasily, when Raphael had bidden us good-night. "What can have angered her? Is it possible that she suspects that her reign is over?"

"She suspects nothing," I assured him, truthfully; in my heart I added, "but she knows everything."

"But will she go?" Chigi asked, anxiously; "that is the immediate question. I cannot put her out by force."

"You will never have to do that," I replied. "She will go, never fear. Leave her to herself, her mood will have changed by morning. There is only one thing to be relied upon in women, and that is their inconstancy, not alone to men but to any fixed idea."

In spite of the flippancy with which I had striven to beguile Chigi, I was vaguely but none the less genuinely troubled. Unable to sleep, I strolled toward dawn in the garden. A lamp burned in the tiny room assigned to Margherita, and to my surprise there flitted across the window the shadow of Imperia. What business could she have there at such an hour? Certain expressions, to which I had given no weight at the time of their utterance, came back to me with sinister significance, and especially her declaration that Margherita must disappear, "not for one day, but for ever." I continued my watch until a gust of rain drove me into the house, and I fell asleep to dream that an oubliette lined with the blades of scythes (such as I knew existed in certain old Roman houses) had at Imperia's touch yawned beneath the couch of Margherita; and that the innocent barrier to Raphael's reconciliation with Maria had indeed "dropped from his life."

But I awoke at Chigi's cheery halloo to find that the storms of the previous evening had cleared. Imperia had expressed her readiness to spend the day at Magliana, and my host desired me to select horses for the excursion.

I never saw her gayer than on that day, and when I looked askance as she jested with his Holiness and flirted with Riario, daring him to give a supper in her honour in his new palace, she pressed my foot beneath the table and looked me smilingly in the face, as though striving to assure me that all was well.

But she would not comply with Leo's request for his father's canzone, *Quant e bella*, which she had sung with such effect the previous evening. She left the gay company while they were all clamoring for more, and insisted that I should urge the horses to the utmost as we dashed back to Rome.

Our common anxiety to know the outcome of Maria Dovizio's visit to Chigi's villa, together with her great longing for sympathy in this crisis of her life, so wrought with the favouring opportunity of that wild drive that Imperia granted me such a revelation of her inmost soul as I believe no other man can boast, and I knew her that night as God knew her.

She had sought Margherita the night before a criminal at heart, for she had determined to sacrifice the girl. Imperia possessed a house in Rome. It was on her lips to tell Margherita that Raphael, who had met with an accident, was lying there at the point of death, and had sent for her to come to him. She had already instructed her servants, and had Margherita once entered that house its doors would never again have been opened for her.

But Imperia's guardian angel was kind. Before the words could be uttered

Margherita had poured out her heart in gratitude to the woman whom she believed to be her benefactress. While the girl spoke, Imperia strove to steel herself, repeating mentally the round of cruel reasoning which had been the Ixion's wheel on which her tortured brain had unceasingly revolved:

"If Margherita speaks to Maria Dovizio, Maria will never be reconciled with Raphael. Unless Maria weds Raphael she will surely marry Chigi. Either Margherita or I must perish. Which shall it be?"

But gradually this fiend's chatter grew less insistent and Imperia heard instead Margherita's impassioned protestations. She was happy, blissfully happy, and owed it all to the disinterested kindness of her patroness; for though Raphael had always loved her he had been bound by a hateful engagement to a cold, proud woman, who had cast him aside for a wealthier suitor. Her memory had rankled in the mind of both, poisoning their happiness, for Margherita well realised that she was herself but a peasant, not to be compared in birth and breeding to this high lady. Until lately she had not deemed herself worthy to mate with so exalted a personage as her lover. But since she had known Imperia she had comprehended how such a miracle might be. "For," said she, "you are just like me, and all of the Signor Chigi's wealth and glory does not crush or humiliate you, because when two people really love each other it makes them equal, and neither genius nor riches nor anything else in all the world is worthy of being compared to the love of a true woman."

That shaft went home. The thought of being classed with this single-hearted girl who had sacrificed everything to a great love so humiliated and touched the heart of the venal courtesan that in spite of all she had at stake, she could not prevail upon herself to do Margherita this great wrong. So, finding that she knew not who the great lady was to whom Raphael was betrothed, Imperia told her of Maria Dovizio's expected visit, as of that of an old friend who had been interested in her as a child at Cetinale, and bade her if opportunity offered repeat to Maria the story exactly as she had just told it, for it would surely be to her advantage to do so.

When Imperia told me this I cried out, "But it will kill Maria, and you forget that Raphael is there and will not permit her thus to speak."

"Nay, my friend," Imperia answered. "Raphael is not there, for Agostino, on reflection, wisely decided not to risk the meeting, and gave him a holiday this morning to work in his own house. Never fear that Chigi will not leave Maria Dovizio alone with Margherita, or that her revelations will have any such deadly effect. Agostino is an adept in consolation, and Maria must long since have divined the truth."

My heart beat in a tumult of conflicting emotions. For an instant a wild, unreasoning hope overpowered all the rest. "Imperia," I exclaimed, "you shall not lose Agostino. I will surrender my chances with Maria to no man but Raphael. If in truth he has ceased to love her,—then, for all you think me mad in saying so, we may both, may all be happy yet."

Villa Madama

But such joyous ending to lovers' woes is found only in the fictions of romancers. Certes I have often thought I could design a fairer web than that the fates weave for us.

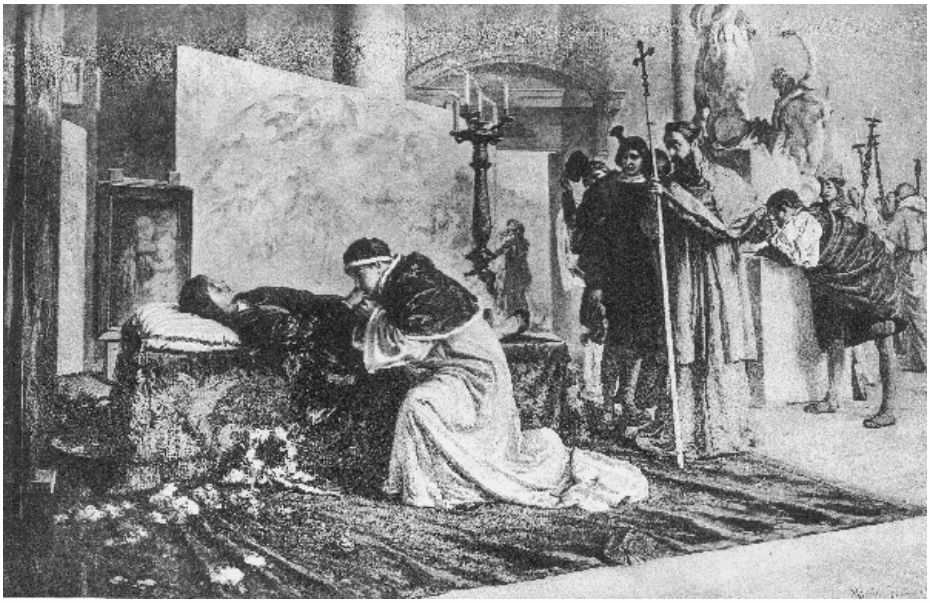
Even as I spoke Imperia caught my arm and I drew rein, for we were nearing the gateway of Chigi's villa. A carriage was leaving the grounds, and as it passed us we saw Maria Dovizio lying in a swoon in her uncle's arms. Chigi was not with them, for she had left his house apparently indifferent to all that she had seen or heard within it, and had succumbed only when beyond his view.

"Poor child," said Imperia, "you are not wounded so deeply as you fancy. No, do not drive in, Giovanni, I have learned all I wished to know. In spite of her present despair Maria will enter those gates ere long a happy bride; but I shall never knock at them again. The end would have come soon in any event, for Agostino had ceased to love me, but he shall never boast that he cast me out."

I took her to her own house, and when Chigi learned that she had not returned with me he but shrugged his shoulders, for she had rightly divined his heart. I never saw her again, but I heard much, for Rome still rings with wild tales of her notoriously evil life. A nature hers that had much of good in it I bear witness, though sadly she mistook her way. She mistook it even when she tried to do a kindness to Margherita. Shame and heart-break was the guerdon which that poor child received in return for her great devotion.

As for me, the glimpse I had caught of Maria's death-struck face so rankled in my soul through the long watches of that sleepless night that on the morrow, in anguished contrition, I confessed all that miserable story to Raphael.

When he knew how cruelly he had misjudged her he was smitten with such remorse that he could never forgive himself or take joy in life. For though he went to her at once and she forgave him freely, nay, strove to comfort him by protesting there was naught to forgive, she had suffered overmuch to endure the great joy of their reconciliation. Prattling of love and happiness and smiling still when she no longer had strength to utter his name, she peacefully died within his arms.



Pope Leo X. at Raphael's Bier
From the painting by Pietro Michis. Permission of Franz Hanfstaengl

It was Raphael's grief rather than, as reported, a fever taken in superintending archæological excavations which truly caused his death on his thirty-seventh birthday, upon that Good Friday which neither you nor I, my Giulio, can ever forget.

Margherita told me that in his delirium he knew her not, but kissed her hands, calling her "Maria" and begging her forgiveness. To the poor girl he left by will ample support; but, by the same testament, he was buried by the side of Maria Dovizio, beneath whose name he caused to be chiselled the inscription, "The affianced wife of Raphael Santi, whom death deprived of a happy marriage."

CHAPTER III

A CELLINI CASKET

INTERLUDE

The trellis that once shut the forest trees
From the fair flowers, all torn and broken is,
Though still the lily's scent is on the breeze,
And the rose clasps the broken images.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

NEGLECTED but not ruinous, its marbles mossy, its once unrivalled garden invaded by sweet wild-flower banditti which run riot among the gentle roses, its fountains dry, their cracks and crannies the homes of basking lizards, its charming loggia trodden only by enthusiasts for whom every spot touched by the genius of Raphael is a shrine of pilgrimage—the Villa Madama, though appealing in its desertion, is not a melancholy solitude.

Detail of Vault in Villa Madama—Stucchi by Giovanni da Udine

The imagination is intoxicated as by some heady wine as one gazes outward upon the dazzling panorama which originally determined the site of the loggia; and when, fatigued by the flashing sunlight, our eyes turn to the interior they are soothed by the subtler beauties of the half-effaced frescoes, the floral arabesques which Giovanni da Udine lavished upon the spandrils, the pouting *putti* in Giulio Romano's frieze of cherub faces, carrying out a scheme of decoration which could have been designed by no other than Raphael. We are certain as we recognise in a more delicate line, or exquisite touch recalling the arabesques of the Vatican loggia, that just here the great impresario must have caught palette and brushes from the hand of his pupil with, "*Me perdone Giovanino mio*, let me frolic a while with these fairy creatures and show them to you as I saw them in my childhood dancing in the swaying vines that garlanded the pergolas of Urbino." And so they revel here, myths of the childhood of the race, monstrous creatures, half beast, half human; centaurs, fauns, tritons, mermaids, sphinxes, lamias, their grotesquerie no longer repulsive, for it is a foil to the utmost elegance and sumptuousness of Renaissance art, their multiplicity never wearying, because they are marshalled by the greatest master in decorative design that the world has known. They lurk in the convolutions of exquisite *rinceaux*, uncoiling themselves from the scrolls of acanthus foliage, where sport also more delicate hybrid flowers;—women, whose beautiful bodies rise like anthers from the calices of impossible blossoms, whose arms are coiling tendrils and whose limbs melt into the curves of exuberant leafage unknown to the botanist.

But the charm which holds the visitor who penetrates this delicious solitude is due not alone to the sense of sight. A haunting suggestiveness breathes from these surroundings, like the perfume exhaled when one unlocks a long-closed sandal-wood casket, once the depository of dainty feminine trifles. It needs not the name of the villa to tell us that a lady, sitting in this loggia, once duplicated Da Udine's traceries in her embroidery, gathered roses in the garden, and looked longingly toward Rome while awaiting the coming of her princely lover, and many a visitor has been piqued by the ignorance of the custodian of the villa to search history for this mysterious Madama.

Margaret of Austria, Duchess of Parma, 1586
From an old engraving

Margaret of Austria, daughter of an Emperor, wife of the reputed son of one Pope and of the grandson of another, Grand Duchess of Tuscany, and Duchess of Parma, quartered the imperial eagle upon the balls of the Medici and the lilies of the Farnese. That the bar sinister was conspicuous upon her escutcheon mattered little in the age in which she lived, for the Emperor Charles V. acknowledged and advanced the interests of his illegitimate daughter with the same lack of embarrassment shown by the popes in the favouritism of their "nephews."

A doubtful advantage this, but one with far-reaching consequences, for when Margaret was twelve years of age, Charles conquered Rome and the child's connection with Italy and the Villa Madama had its beginning.

The villa had been built by Raphael for Pope Clement VII., while he was yet only Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, as a pleasure casino to which he could retreat from the cares imposed upon him by his cousin, Pope Leo X. Later when as successor to the tiara he found that not the least burden in the heavy legacy bequeathed him was that of the guardianship of the Medici family, it became the resort of his Florentine relatives on their quieter visits to Rome and the home of a mysterious child, Alessandro, of whom the Pope announced himself the guardian.

When Lorenzo II., (grandson of the Magnificent) died, leaving but one legitimate child, Catherine de' Medici, the future Queen of France, Clement imposed Alessandro upon Florence as the natural son of Duke Lorenzo.

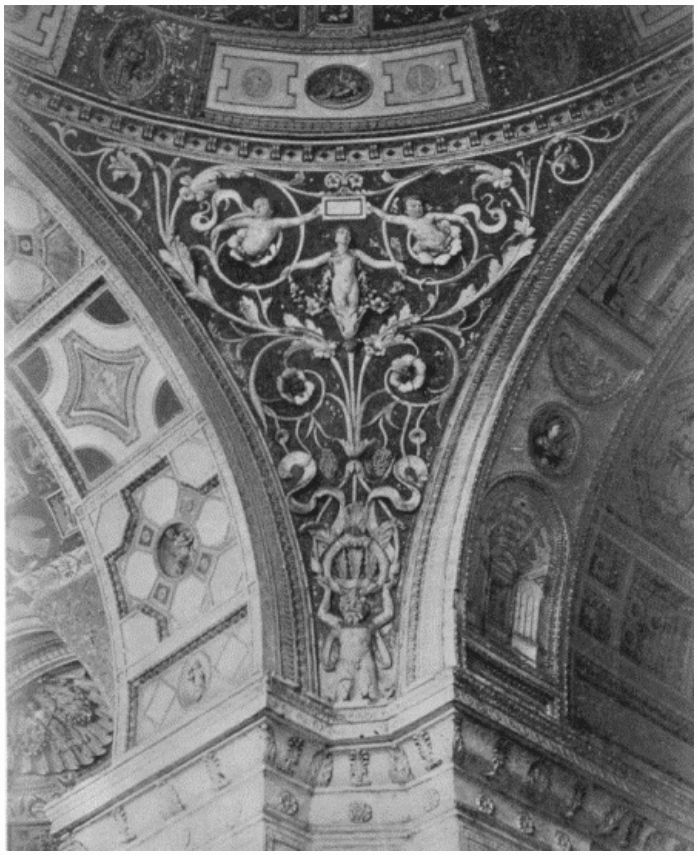
There lacked not shrugging of shoulders at this imputed parentage and Florence revolted against receiving a bastard and a mulatto as its sovereign.

But trouble was brewing both for Florence and the Pope. Charles V. had determined to make himself master of Italy; his forces closed around Rome, and Clement, fleeing through the underground passage from the Vatican, shut himself up in the castle of St. Angelo, and from it beheld the horrors of the sack of the city.

From its parapets, too, he witnessed the occupation of his cherished villa by Bourbon's savage soldiery.

Benvenuto Cellini relates (with his characteristic self-laudation) his prowess in killing the Constable de Bourbon and in defending the castle of St. Angelo, and although his perspective is slightly forced from his habit of placing his own colossal figure in the foreground, no chronicle gives a more vivid account of these stirring

events.



Stucchi by Giovanni da Udine
Villa Madama

What a picture he might have painted for us of the meeting of the Pope and the Emperor after the pacification; when Clement crowned his late adversary and Charles, reinstating Duke Alessandro over Florence, betrothed his beautiful daughter Margaret to that base-born reprobate!

Cellini might also have told us much of the after-life of the Duchess, for he knew her well, and mentions her with admiration in his autobiography. He served Alessandro too in Florence, and boasts of the intimacy which he enjoyed in the ducal household.

There was no one living at that period so well qualified as he to relate the inner history of that tragical marriage and of the romance which effaced its memory and lingers still like an elusive perfume in her exquisite villa.

Judge, lenient reader, if Cellini had told that last story, would not its main *facts* have corresponded with those embodied in the following pages, though the tamer phrasing and more conventional attitude of the writer compared with the audacity of his racier chronicle

"Are as moonlight unto sunlight,
And as water unto wine."

THE ADVENTURE OF THE CASKET

BEING CERTAIN PAGES NOT INCLUDED IN THE AUTO-BIOGRAPHY OF ITS MAKER

I

It will be remembered by those who have read my published memoirs that in the year 1535, while I was in Florence in the service of Duke Alessandro de' Medici, I

received orders from his excellency to execute a little *coffre* in gold to hold his own portrait, a medallion which I had previously modelled from life and cast in relievo.

That I dismissed so lightly masterpieces of which I had such reason to be proud was due to the fact that certain personages of exalted station and of choleric temper, quick and able to revenge any imputation upon their honour were concerned in the adventures of the casket, so that I deemed it prudent during their lifetime to withhold a recital which I trust my present reader may find of a diverting nature.

This casket was conceded by all connoisseurs in such matters to be the most admirable work of its kind hitherto produced. It was crowned by a statuette of Hercules, with other most exquisite figurines at the four corners, set upon feet of crouching sphinxes, half women and half panthers, and was further enriched by reliefs of laughing boys holding garlands, by grotesque masks and foliages of the most graceful and ingenious design that could possibly be conceived.

I had been to infinite pains, as was but fitting since the Duke proposed to present it to his betrothed, Margaret Duchess of Parma, daughter of the Emperor Charles the Fifth, to whom he was to be married at Naples on the return of her father from his glorious expedition against the Turkish Corsairs. This marriage had been arranged for his "nephew" by Pope Clement VII. on his pacification with the Emperor after the taking of Rome, but its consummation had been hitherto delayed on account of the tender age of the bride. Now, however, she was upon her way to meet her father. Therefore the Duke requested me to serve as his messenger in presenting these gifts, whose excellencies I of any person in the world was most competent to explain and extol.

Instructed that the Duchess Margaret would rest upon her journey at the villa which Raphael had built for the Pope upon the slopes of Monte Mario, and which Clement had bestowed upon her as a part of her dowry, I repaired thither before entering the gates of Rome.

I had been told by the Duke to ask upon my arrival not for the Duchess but for Monna Afra, who had been installed as housekeeper of the villa by the Pope when he was as yet only young Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, and his personal affairs were not submitted to the glare which surrounds the tiara.

Whatever these may have been, Monna Afra, though once a Moorish slave, and of dark complexion and uncertain temper, was not without a certain savage beauty, or would have been but for the marks of tattooing between her eyes, and, though well advanced in years, carried herself erect with a dignity worthy of royal descent.

She was dressed in the Moorish fashion, with a profusion of necklaces of linked sequins of uncut precious stones and of large turquoises, some of them I could judge of great value, though clumsily set. These necklaces depended from beneath her gaily striped head-cloth upon her forehead and also covered her bosom. Her dark blue robe was girdled by a golden belt of curious workmanship, and she wore bangles upon her ankles with bracelets of cheap blue glass upon her arms. Her hair, braided in a multitude of fine plaits, was jet black and heavily perfumed. She wore but one ear-ring, a hoop of gold in which twinkled a great diamond.

I had a letter for her from the Duke, and as it has never been my practice to deliver a missive of whose contents I am ignorant, lest I might be deputed to give orders for my own execution, I had taken the precaution to open it (having first made an impression of the seal so that I could reseal it beyond possibility of detection), but all to no avail for this letter was written in Arabic, of which language I have no knowledge. I was in twenty minds to destroy it, professing that I had lost it *en route*, but having calculated that honesty was the more gainful part to play, I put my trust in my patron saint and boldly presented it. By so doing I came into possession of an important secret, for on reading the letter Monna Afra exclaimed: "My son informs me that you are an unprincipled rogue whose life he holds in his hands, on account of certain murders which you have committed, and that therefore I need not fear to trust you with our private affairs."

The opening words of this ungracious speech caused my spirit to leap within me, for Duke Alessandro far from confiding to me or to any one else the secret that he was the child of a mulattress, and in all probability the bastard of the Pope, had persistently maintained that he was the legitimatised son and rightful heir of the last Duke of Florence, and his mother a princess whose name would in time be divulged, and this notwithstanding that his dark complexion proclaimed him of Oriental race.

I dissimulated my exultation, swore loyalty to my patron's honoured mother, and showed her the portrait of her son, with which she was greatly pleased.

"You shall give this to the Duchess, later," she declared, taking the casket from me, "but first I desire you to copy the medallion for me, and to say nothing of this commission."

The wish to possess the likeness of her son seemed so natural to a mother and so flattering to me that I readily consented to oblige her, being the more content to do so that I found myself extremely well lodged and nourished in one of the dependencies of the villa, with the suite of noble attendants appointed to wait upon the Duchess.

Among these I have cause to remember with the utmost vividness a beautiful page, the grandson of Cardinal Farnese, who waited upon Margaret as her train-bearer. This boy's name was Ottavio, and I was drawn to him from the first for his character matched the exceeding loveliness of his lineaments.

Monna Afra from some strange whim had desired me to copy the Duke's portrait upon glass, and thinking possibly that I might break the slip, had given me two of precisely the same size. On one of these I was impelled to paint for myself the miniature of this adorable child in the court costume of white satin doublet and white silk hose which he was to wear at the wedding of the Duchess. To this circumstance was due a mischance, which while it seemed to work me ill at the time was in the end productive of good.

Though but a child in years the soul of the page, Ottavio Farnese, was well-nigh ravished from his body with love for the Duchess, who but six years older than himself was still but a slip of a girl. Often as I saw these two children pelting each other with roses and playing many childish games I wished that by some enchantment I might keep them thus forever, for my heart revolted at the thought that this exquisite creature was soon to be sacrificed to a brutal profligate twice her own age.

"Certes," I said one day to Ottavio, "it is a great pity that you are not some ten years older, then would I devote myself to your service and it should go hard ere the daughter of Charles V. should wed with that swine of an Alessandro de' Medici."

"Is he indeed a hog?" cried the boy, "then will I slay him, for I would gladly give my life for her."

Seeing that so precocious and so pure an affection was beyond the conception of our comrades (though not of the ancients since they figured the love of the boy Cupid for Psyche), I protected Ottavio from their ribaldry, declaring that I would punish with my sword any who made a jest of a devotion which might have drawn tears from the angels.

While the Duchess Margaret was in her way equally charming, she was not of such a heavenly gravity as her little comrade. On the contrary, at this time her spirits overflowed in a bewitching and mischievous wilfulness, which made her the more irresistible. She was conscious that she was soon to be wedded, and this knowledge gave her a sense of importance together with mysterious heart throbbings and perturbations, a wild curiosity to know what manner of man her future husband might be—the coquettishness natural to woman which at times made her rebel at being thus fettered, all the more that it was without her consent, and at others built up an ideal in her imagination which she was ready to fall down and worship.

Seeing her thus curious, Monna Afra had promised Margaret that a necromancer should show her the presentment of her future husband; and upon a certain morning this designing woman sent for me, saying that the slave who ordinarily assisted this magician had suddenly died, and that she desired me to aid him in his magic rites.

She neglected not at the same time to remind me again that I was completely in her power and that if I did not perform all that was demanded of me she would denounce me to the authorities as a murderer. Thus admonished, and believing also that the necromancer was able to work me a mischief, I put my trust in St. Michael, confounder of Satan, and faithfully performed all that I was bidden to do.

Hurrying me into a musician's gallery, which overlooked the chamber in which the incantations were about to take place, the sorcerer showed me a strange instrument, compounded of lenses set in a black box in which burned a small lamp. "Fear not, Benvenuto," he whispered, seeing that I hesitated, "but manipulate this machine as I will now show you, placing from time to time these slips of painted glass in front of the

lamp, and when I shall call upon the name of the arch fiend Beelzebub, be careful to introduce the copy of the portrait of the Duke which you have just made for Monna Afra." He then made some cabalistic signs upon my forehead and bidding me be of stout heart descended to the main floor of the room, which was but dimly lighted by the flames of a brazier.

I could see, however, that around the light were grouped the Duchess Margaret, Monna Afra and Ottavio, who suspecting some design against his mistress, had insisted on accompanying her. Around these three the necromancer now traced upon the floor a magic circle; entering it and directing Margaret to keep her eyes fixed on the wall opposite to the little gallery where I stood, he invoked with a loud voice the demons Soracil, Sathiel, and Ammon dwellers in the moon, bidding them appear with all their legions.

As I had previously witnessed a similar conjuration by which another necromancer had filled the tiers of the Colosseum with innumerable legions of devils, the horrible fear which I had experienced on that occasion returned in so lively a manner that my hands trembled so that I could scarcely perform the rites assigned to me. I had hardly introduced the first slip of glass when Ottavio cried out that the house was on fire and endeavoured to drag the Duchess from the circle, but the necromancer held him firmly and commanded him on his life not to stir as the demons were gathering in force.

Having placed the next slip of glass in its place I myself perceived them, horrid creatures of gigantic stature clutching at their victims. Thus the ceremony proceeded, the enchanter uttering strange sentences in the Hebrew language, while Monna Afra shrieked and howled in blood-curdling tones.

Ottavio also was well-nigh bereft of his senses with fear, and flinging his arms about the Duchess cried to the fiends to take him to hell, but to spare his beloved lady.

At this point, Margaret, who was strangely unafraid, repeated after the necromancer these words: "I conjure thee, Beelzebub, Prince of Darkness, to reveal to me the likeness of my lord and husband, and renouncing all others I promise to be true to him throughout all eternity."

This was my cue, but fumbling in the casket for the portrait of Duke Alessandro I inadvertently introduced into the throat of the infernal machine not that bit of glass but the one on which I had painted the likeness of Ottavio.

Seeing the beautiful face of the lad gleaming like that of an angel between the rifts of the smoke of hell, there was not one of us who for the instant doubted that the apparition was miraculous.

Monna Afra ceased her diabolical bellowing, the necromancer was speechless with surprise, only Ottavio found his voice, and crying, "It is I, it is I!" fainted from stress of emotion.

Comprehending immediately that I would be held responsible for the miscarriage of the prodigy I hastily made my escape from the villa, nor did I, until long thereafter, meet with any of the parties concerned in this adventure. The augury in which I had assisted seemed false for the marriage of Margaret to Duke Alessandro took place, as had been planned, on the arrival of the Emperor at Naples. Though Charles was greeted with acclamations as the champion of the Church against the infidel, he having put to flight Hayraddin, admiral of the Sultan, and taken the city of Tunis, thus liberating thousands of Christian captives,—yet in the midst of the festivities there lacked not those who saw a certain inconsistency in the wedding of his sweet daughter to a man notorious for his wickedness and of the very race which he professed to hold in such abhorrence.

Duke Alessandro after his marriage refrained not one whit from his evil ways, but rather exceeded his former profligacy, so that all Florence was scandalised thereby and pitied his gentle Duchess. I mind me now, however, that to my astonishment there was one who took another view of the matter, for Lorenzino de' Medici affirmed that Margaret was possessed of that dauntless courage which one sees sometimes in the tamers of lions and other savage beasts; that Alessandro was a mean-spirited creature cowed by his child wife; and that one had but to note the haughty poise of her head and the hang-dog sullenness which he maintained in her presence to guess the truth. Though I abhorred the Duke, yet as he had made me master of the mint it was necessary that I should have commerce with him, and on the first occasion upon which I presented myself being made to wait in an ante-chamber, I overheard a remarkable

conversation which caused me to credit the opinion of Lorenzino. The door was ajar between the room in which I sat and the next in which the Duke and Duchess had just risen from breakfast.

What he had said to her I know not, but his face was one malignity as he leaned toward her across the small table. She faced his snake's eyes, her own dark with an intensity which should have warned him, and half beneath her breath, as though she told him of some danger with which she had nothing to do, as one might have said, "Provoke not that dog, or you will inevitably be bitten,"—she very quietly uttered these words:

"Lay so much as your finger upon me and I will kill you."

"And what is to hinder my killing you first, my little tigress?" he hissed.

I had gripped my sword in answer to that question, but there was no need, for she blazed forth at him, the very daughter of her father.

"The Emperor!" she cried triumphantly, and there she had him; for though Charles had sold her like a slave and lifted no finger to avenge the indignity which she suffered, yet Alessandro well knew that he would be answerable for her life. As she left the room the Duke turned upon his heel, and catching sight of me cried out angrily that I was well come, for he was on the point of arresting me for feloniously making away with the casket and portrait which he had bidden me take to his consort.

I told him truly that I had left the casket in the possession of his mother. With that he flew into a rage, demanding who had dared to say that this vile hag was in anyway related to him.

I made answer that Monna Afra had herself told me that this was the fact, whereupon he swore that he would kill her for spreading such a rumour, and offered me a large sum to undertake her execution for him. When I respectfully declined this office he replied: "As you please, but if you hold not your tongue concerning this matter I will find effectual means to silence you."

Then reflecting doubtless that I was not a man to be governed by threats but more likely to be moved to generous deeds by appreciation of my talents, he admitted that his wife had indeed had the casket in her possession after I left Villa Madama, and had not missed it until her chests were unpacked at Naples, and that his true reason for choosing me to regain and restore it to her was that I was the best fitted of all his courtiers for so difficult an undertaking.

I replied that the opportunity to serve the Duchess would be the greatest favour and honour which he could confer upon me,—and with that he showed me the key of the casket which until now had never quitted Margaret's chatelaine, desiring me to duplicate it for him, with this difference that the handle was to be ornamented by a crown of thorns.

When I objected that the metal points would inevitably pierce the hand of the Duchess when she attempted to unlock the casket, he replied that he did not design the key for his wife, and bade me obey orders without foolish comment.

As I am an expert in forging metals I soon made a little key with which the Duke was delighted. Taking it into his cabinet he returned presently with a little box on which were inscribed certain Arabic characters.

"This box," said he, "contains the key which you have just fabricated with an order to Monna Afra to deliver the casket into your hands."

"Since I am to bring away the casket," I replied, "for what purpose do you send this key? Is it, perchance, that Monna Afra may retain for herself any of the contents of the *coffre*?"

"I have already reproached you"—the Duke answered with a most malignant expression—"for giving vent to vain imaginings. If you cannot refrain from thinking, at least keep silence, and implicitly carry out my instructions.

"After delivering this package wait a little, while Monna Afra goes to fetch the casket; should she tarry follow her and, no matter what you may see or surmise, make no outcry but hasten from the villa failing not to bring the casket with you. The Duchess tells me that while at the villa she kept it in a hiding-place constructed by the Pope for his jewels, which opens by pressing a certain ball upon one of the Medicean shields with which the villa is so profusely ornamented. But, on reflection, I see no

reason for giving you access to our family treasure-chest. Monna Afra will not have placed the casket there, since she herself showed the Duchess the secret receptacle, and it would be the first place in which she would search for it; and if, indeed, it is hidden there it is perfectly safe."

Thus commissioned I betook myself again to Rome; but being welcomed by old acquaintances, and finding an accumulation of important orders awaiting my attention, I naturally thought that the Duke's business might wait upon my own, and indeed might have clean forgotten it but for the following circumstance.

I had gone fowling one day with a friend in the marshes near the villa of Magliana, in the neighbourhood of Ostia. Toward nightfall (as I have elsewhere related), happening from a little hill to look in the direction of Florence, I saw an extraordinary phenomenon, namely, a heavenly body in the shape of a Turkish scimitar, its blade directed toward the city. Whereat I exclaimed loudly, "We shall certainly hear that some great event has occurred at Florence."

Even as I spoke a stranger wrapped in a long cloak who at a little distance from us was attentively observing this appearance, asked me what I supposed the portent might signify.

"Nothing less," I replied confidently, giving vent to the first thought which came into my mind, "than the assassination of Duke Alessandro." With that he uttered an exclamation in Arabic, and hurried in the direction of the Tiber. We had ridden but a short distance when some peasants rushed toward us with frantic gestures, crying out that a ship rigged after the manner of the Turkish corsairs was moored in the river.

This gave us such a fright that we clapped spurs to our horses and rode with the utmost speed to Rome. But our fears having somewhat abated, we made no report of the alarm upon our arrival, realising that we had cut no great figure in the adventure.

The next day, my thoughts being still upon the Duke, I resolved to execute his orders and so rode out to the Villa Madama. As I approached what was my surprise to see descending its terraces the same man who had accosted me near Magliana.

Monna Afra stood in the loggia watching him, her hand, lifted to her eyes to protect them from the rays of the setting sun. I told her that I had come from the Duke and on what errand, and presented the packet which he had given me.

She read it attentively, and without making any objection or inquiry, instantly brought the casket. But as she was about to unlock it something awoke her suspicions, and examining the key more attentively she thrust it before my eyes exclaiming, "Dog of a Christian, you have attempted to poison me!"

It needed but a glance to show her fears well founded, for the handle of the key once of shining copper was corroded to a virulent green, so that it resembled a bit of antique bronze, and I comprehended that her villain of a son had dipped the sharp-pointed crown of thorns in some deadly acid, hoping that in exercising some force in turning the lock she would lacerate her hand, and that he would thus compass her death.

As I remained speechless she took my condition as an evidence of guilt, and seizing a torch which hung in a metal *torchère*, rushed upon the terrace waving it to and fro like a fury. Though I lacked not the wit to perceive that this was a signal of some sort, yet remembering the Duke's orders by all means to secure the casket, I did not immediately address myself to flight, but strove to wrest it from her by force. She, however, opposed me in this design with all her strength, and throwing it aside fell upon me with a most ungentle embrace, throttling me and burying her nails in my neck.

While we struggled thus I was aware of trampling feet and saw the loggia suddenly filled by a horde of barbarous pirates, refugee Moorish cut-throats, who had conceived the daring design of making a descent upon the outskirts of Rome to plunder its rich villas, and first that of Chigi, in revenge for the chastisement received at the hands of the Emperor.

For the moment my only thought was one of thankfulness for my release from this hell-cat, but as I stood with my arms pinioned Monna Afra brought forward a large sack and, as I understood from her expressive gestures, demanded that I should be sewn up therein and cast into the Tiber.

Though he had thrown aside the cloak in which he had previously disguised, I

recognised the man whom I had already twice seen in the gaudily accoutred officer whom Afra now addressed as Hayraddin.

He spoke to her very earnestly, and I could see that what he said caused her the greatest consternation, for she tore her hair, howled and scratched her own face as vehemently as she had formerly maltreated mine.

Shaking her by the arm he continued to admonish her, until picking up the casket she retired into the interior of the villa. Then turning to me he addressed me in good Italian in these words:

"Most noble Signor: You cannot fail to have understood that my sister desired me to kill you, and that I could readily have done so; but I have explained to her that you are a great astrologer, for from the appearance of the heavens you announced to me yesterday the assassination of her son which news has not yet reached Rome—and has but this moment been told to me by a party of my men who intercepted the messenger at the Ponte Molle.

"In deference to your supernatural knowledge I spare your life, and shall leave you here bound and gagged, where in good time you will doubtless be discovered. This news of the death of my nephew has effected more than all my arguments and entreaties, for my sister has no further desire to remain in this accursed land, but will return with me to Africa."

Scarcely had he concluded when Monna Afra entered, heavily veiled and carrying an immense bundle. This one of the pirates took from her, and supported by two others she followed her brother and I saw her no more.

It was two full days, during which I neither ate nor drank, before I was released from my miserable plight, but even so I counted myself fortunate to have escaped with my life.

II

"Ye mariners of Spain
  Bend stoutly to your oars
And bring my love again,
  For he lies among the Moors."

Old Spanish Song.

Foreseeing after the death of Duke Alessandro that Florence would long remain in a disordered condition, I deemed it a proper season to accept the overtures of his majesty, Francis I., King of the French, to enter into his service in France.

This patronage I owed solely to my own fame and not, as has been asserted, to the favour of his daughter-in-law, Catherine de' Medici, for that princess had no love for her supposed half-brother Alessandro, or for his Florentine familiars.

Though I could never have been accessory to such vile work as to stab an unarmed and unsuspecting man, yet often as I thought of Alessandro's satyr leer, and the loathing bravely coupled with defiance which I had seen leap in answer to it in the face of his child Duchess, I thanked God that Lorenzino had no such squeamish conscience.

And yet,—as in the virgin purity of the orange-blossom, the voluptuous perfume yearningly foretells the luscious, perfect fruit, and the blush of the peach-bloom shows the flower coyly but triumphantly conscious that it will one day ripen into mouth-watering deliciousness,—so even then there were hints and prophecies in Margaret's budding womanliness that the time was approaching when she would not only awaken love but would herself know the joy of loving.

The time and the man were nearer than I thought.

It was a matter of but six years subsequent to our first meeting that, chancing to be again in Rome, I next encountered Ottavio Farnese.

He was no longer the pretty page who had served the Duchess at the Villa Madama, but had grown into a tall, handsome youth, with the first down of manhood upon his lip. Though much lighter in weight than myself and his rapier as slender as a child's toy, he had been well taught in fencing, as I learned when meeting him by chance in front of St. Peter's church, he, to my utter surprise, fell upon me crying out that I was a scurvy knave unfit to live.

As I am not the man to swallow insults of this sort we slashed at one another without further ceremony until the Papal guards, rushing from the Vatican, separated us. Recognising Ottavio as the grandson of the Pope (for Cardinal Farnese had on the death of Clement VI. succeeded to the tiara), they demanded why we fought. I replied that I had not the least idea, but Ottavio declared that it was to force me to confess what I had done with the casket which I had been commissioned to bring to the Duchess Margaret at Florence.

Laughing a little at his own zeal, but with all due deference I told him how the casket had been carried away by the Moors, on the evening when I repaired to Villa Madama to fetch it, and I had the happiness to convince him of the truth of my statement.

Dismissing the guards he strolled with me in the most amicable manner, informing me of many events which had happened during my absence in France.

The first in importance to himself was the fact that he was more madly than ever in love with the Duchess, and that she having experienced the brutality of one husband had no mind to venture another, and had announced her firm intention to remain a widow for the rest of her life.

In spite of this he had told her of his love, but she had treated him as a child and made sport of his passion.

"I shall die of her disdain," he said to me, "for my love is beyond my power to conquer."

Taking him by the hand and perceiving that he was in a fever, and that unless some hope was extended to him he must lose either his life or his reason, I counselled him to keep a stout heart. "For," said I, "though you are young it is a fault which will lessen as years go by, and the Emperor surely will not look upon his daughter's repugnance to marriage with approval. Rumour hath it that he is on his way to punish, for a second time, the Moorish pirates who are back in their old nest at Tunis. When he visits Rome you should persuade the Pope to intercede with him in your behalf."

"As if I had not already thought of that!" Ottavio replied. "I have freely opened my heart to my grandfather, and he has negotiated with the Emperor, who is as favourable to an alliance with a Farnese Pope as he was to a similar compact with the Medici. Charles could force his daughter to accept me, as he compelled her to marry Alessandro; but I will not win her in that way, and she despises me, doubtless, for what she considers my pusillanimity.

"When I pleaded with her but yesterday bidding her set me any task to accomplish as a proof of my love—she laughed scornfully, saying that she had no lack of pages to fetch and carry unless it were to demand of Benvenuto Cellini the casket which he had forgotten to return to her.

"Then, though I knew that you, Benvenuto, were accounted a desperate man, I swore to her that I would not enter her presence again until I had fulfilled her behest. Yea, and I will fulfil it, for I will sail with the Emperor on this expedition to Tunis and will find the hag Afra and wrest it from her."

"Your determination," I replied, "is a good one, and, as the adventure appeals to me, I will go with you. I have already met Hayraddin, commander of the Corsairs and brother of Monna Afra, who should know the whereabouts of the casket, and I may be able to aid you in obtaining it."

As the affair turned out, though Ottavio did indeed sail for Africa with the Emperor, I was not allowed to accompany him, for his father, feigning to believe that the casket, together with certain valuable jewels stolen from Pope Clement, was in my possession, or at least hidden in some spot nearer to Rome than Tunis, caused me to be imprisoned in the castle of St. Angelo, until such time as I should make restitution.

He did this, moreover, without informing his son of my arrest, so that Ottavio departed believing that I had wilfully failed of my promise to go with him. But I was not alone in misfortune, for the Emperor far from achieving victories similar to those which crowned his previous expedition, met with terrible storms which scattered the ships of his fleet and wrecked many of them upon the coast of Africa, where the savage barbarians, descending upon the drowning mariners, massacred them in cold blood.

Word was brought back to Rome that this was the fate both of the Emperor and of Ottavio Farnese, and though this proved but an unfounded rumour, the heart of the

gentle Margaret was filled with remorse as well as grief, for having driven so chivalrous a youth and one who loved her so devotedly to his death.

She mourned him most sincerely, wearing widow's weeds in his honour as though she had in reality been his bride. Such is the strange contrariety of a woman's heart that he who living had been the object of her scorn, was now loved with the most vehement passion.

When at last it was known that the Emperor and Ottavio had indeed been rescued and were returning to Italy, but that the latter was dangerously ill, her transports of alternate joy and foreboding were most piteous to behold.

I was a witness to them, for at this time by twisting my sheets into a rope I had most marvellously escaped from the battlements of St. Angelo.

As I deemed it prudent to remain for a time in hiding and knew that the Villa Madama was unoccupied, I had repaired thither under cover of the night, and without undressing had slept soundly upon the floor, the house being denuded of furniture.

But in the morning I was awakened by a great clatter of trampling horses and sumpter mules, and springing to my feet and finding myself confronted by the Duchess I gave myself up for lost. This was, however, the most fortunate circumstance which could have happened to me, for on hearing my story she promised me her protection and her intercession with the Pope. She told me also that she had come with all this train of servants and household stuff to put the villa in order for the reception of her betrothed husband, Ottavio Farnese, as a more salubrious residence than her palace at Rome, and more conducive to his rapid recovery.

And hither, shortly after, he was borne in a litter and I beheld their rapturous meeting, and certes the spectacle of so great joy went far toward repaying me for all the misfortunes which I had suffered.

The young Duke, though very weak, extended his hand to me with a smile, saying that I was ever Benvenuto (welcome), and reminding me how in that very spot I had assisted at incantations which had foretold that he would one day be the husband of the Duchess, which prognostication was now so miraculously fulfilled. "I have," he added, "but one regret—that I come to her forsworn, for I promised ere claiming her as my wife to recover the casket."

"That promise, my Lord," I made haste to reply, "you shall keep, for I have been more fortunate in my quest than your excellency."

I then showed him the secret hiding-place constructed by Pope Clement in the wall; for, while prowling in the villa, I had remembered what Duke Alessandro had said of it, and had not failed to press each one of the Medici balls, so frequently employed in the decoration of the villa, until I lighted upon the ingenious spring which disclosed the recess, and within it a package marked with the name of the Duchess.

The wrapper had mouldered away with dampness and discovered the casket with the poisoned key still in the lock, having been so left by that wicked Afra with the express design of revenging herself upon the innocent Margaret for the death of her abominable son, and perhaps also upon Margaret's father for the misfortunes which he had occasioned her race.

The Duchess being called, evinced the greatest joy and would have fallen into the trap and have unlocked the casket at once, had I not first discovered the key and sent for a pair of pincers with which I turned it. While waiting the arrival of the pincers she asked her consort if he had any idea why she set such store upon the casket.

"Doubtless," he replied with a frown, "because it contains the portrait of your husband, who, with all his faults, was at least a brave man."

"You have rightly guessed," she answered, "the bravest of the brave and the only man whom I have ever loved."

I marvelled to hear her thus speak, until the lid being opened, we discovered, not my medal of Alessandro de' Medici, for that Margaret had long ago given to his mother as an inconsiderate trifle; but the likeness of the pretty page, Ottavio, which I had painted at their first acquaintance; and which, in despite all contrariety of womanly coquetry, had remained as ineffaceably imprinted upon her heart.

CHAPTER IV

FLOWER O' THE PEACH

Now for a tale illustrative
That shall delight my passion for romance,
Embodying hints authentic of some theme
. . . . . .
Or incident that to my knowledge came
When sojourning abroad, the background true;
Like to some faded tapestry retouched
With the seductive broidery-work of fancy.

ANON—altered.

I

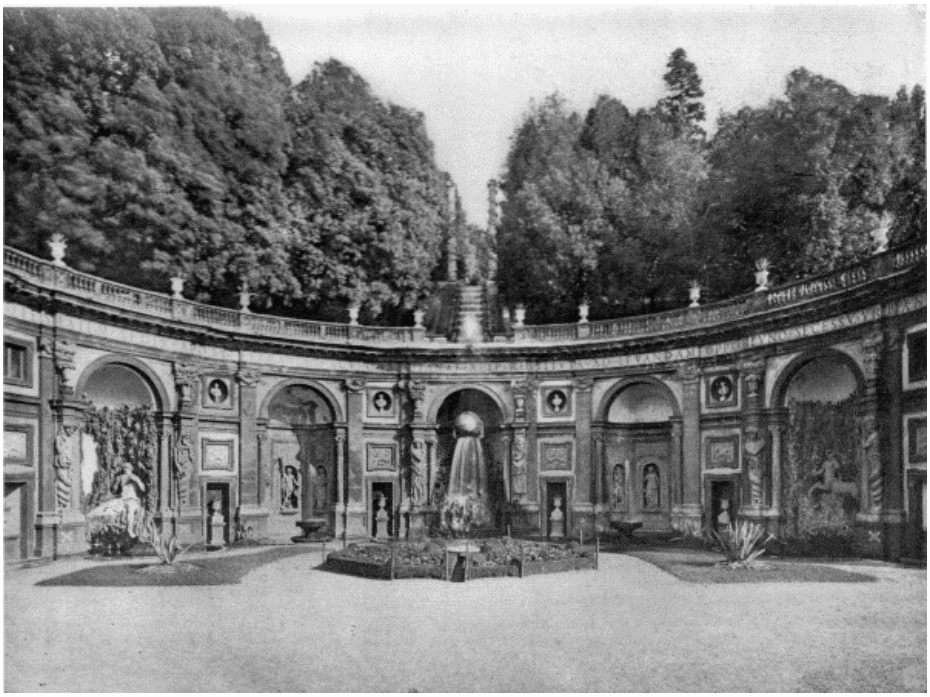
LET the trovere ease her conscience at the outset—the tale about to be recorded is *over* true.

Even as there was more truth than called for in the testimony of that ingenious witness who, being adjured by the judge to speak the truth, replied: "Of a surety, your honor, that will I, the truth, the whole truth, and—a little more."

But the little more which I shall give you is peradventure the truest part of my tale; for, though you will find it not in the chronicles of such historiographers as give their quills solely to statecraft and wars, yet it lies like a pressed flower between the musty leaves of the *novellini* of Franco Sacchetti and of Ser Giovanni Fiorentino, who relate with great particularity the artifice by which the head of the house of the Aldobrandini won his bride.

Let who will carp that in combining matter from various sources I have followed the example of those unscrupulous antiquaries who, discovering an antique statue, straightway replace its missing parts by others lying near at hand, or, more criminal still, complete it according to the whims of their own fancy.

To that accusation needs must that I plead at the outset *mea culpa*, advancing only that the original torso as well as the legs and arms which I have made free to assemble are still preserved, properly ticketed, in the museum of history, while for him who cavils with the authenticity of this "restoration" the buried palaces of the ancient world patiently await exhumation to yield to each body its own particular members, and to each excavator his own treasure trove.



Villa Aldobrandini, Frascati. The Grand Cascade and Fountain of Atlas *Alinari*

Let thus much suffice for apology—now to our legend.

In the Court of the Cascade of that most magnificent of the Frascati villas, namely that of the Aldobrandini, whoso lists may see to-day two fountains; the greater, figuring the demigod Atlas, well-nigh crushed under the weight of our terrestrial globe, is niched conspicuously to the fore of the grand terrace; but the other is in a hidden pleasance, and is but a lop-sided vase, considered to have settled thus awry from the natural subsidence of the soil rather than to have been so placed by design. Nevertheless, our legend will have this to have been done a purpose; and there are no acts in all the annals of that illustrious house more chivalrous or magnanimous than those supposed to be commemorated by this fountain of Atlas and its fellow of the Spilling Cup.

And first of Atlas Aldobrandino, lord of that fair estate and many others in that dim time centuries before the building of the villa. Atlas was he named not at his baptism, but half in admiration, half in derision by his mates, for his burliness of body and his inordinate greediness of all kinds, for he coveted, say they, the entire earth, clutched at a mighty part thereof, and what he seized upheld manfully.

Beside his Italian possessions he was lord of the whole of Venisi in Southern France adjoining fair Provence, and though a bachelor of upwards of seventy-one winters found himself mightily distraught with love for the fair daughter of his neighbour, the figures of whose age exactly reversed his own.

Many lords, counts, and barons were sighing suitors for her regard, and when Aldobrandino, prefacing his request with lavish gifts of steeds, falcons, and hounds, besought her hand of the great Count of Provence, her father, the latter, not wishing to offend him, replied:

"I would willingly give her to you, were it not that it might seem strange to the multitude of young knights eighteen to twenty years of age now in pursuit of her, lords of Baux, of Toulouse, of Perpignan, and vavasours of the great Emperor beyond the Rhone, who might all join together and fall upon me. It is my one desire to live at peace with my neighbours and to this end I have had to fight many hard battles. Moreover, the girl herself may have her eye set upon some one of those fresher sparks who are continually fluttering about her."

Upper Cascade, Villa Aldobrandini *Alinari*

"Friend," returned Aldobrandino, "be not anxious as to the event, for I will devise a method of arranging the affair amicably with our young friends."

We are informed that the enamoured Aldobrandino slept not a wink that night, but concocted a wileful scheme which he confided to his friend.

"Do you announce a tournament at which whoever desires the honour of your daughter's hand, and is of a rank and wealth sufficient to warrant such pretension, shall have cordial welcome to fight, and in God's name let her be the prize of the victor."

This proposition appealed to the lord of Provence, for it seemed a fair one to which none of his warlike neighbours could object. Moreover, it was even generous, coming as it did from Aldobrandino, who, though he had been a doughty knight in his day, could now scarcely sit his saddle for corpulency or aim a straight lance-thrust with his shaking arm.

The lists were made ready at Arles, heralds sent into all countries near and far, and the tournament given out for the first of May following.

But Aldobrandino was more wily than appeared. He had no over-confidence in his own prowess, and he sent immediately to the King of France, with whom he was closely allied, begging him to lend him to act as his champion for this occasion his most doughty knight, the most invincible that could be met with in all feats of arms. In consideration of his esteem for Aldobrandino the King sent him his favourite cavalier Ricciardo (of whom much more hereafter), who, arriving at the castle of the aged lover thus reported himself:

"I am sent," quoth he, "by my royal master to act in whatever capacity may be most agreeable to you. Give your orders, therefore; it is my devoir to execute them manfully."

"Then hear me," explained Aldobrandino. "It is my wish that you should carry all before you at this tournament until I ride into the field, when I will engage you, and you must suffer yourself to be vanquished, so that I may remain the victor of the day."

Thus far have we followed with exact circumstantiality the relation of the Italian writers before mentioned, to which also we shall later return; but let us, for the sake of novelty in the telling of an old story, for a little space change our view-point and give the play as it was acted before the eyes of the fair lady who was herself its heroine.

Sancie was her name, or, if you will, Sanchia, third of the four fair daughters of Raymond Berenger, Count of Provence, who had the singular fortune to marry each of the four to a king.

Perilous seemed this honour to this future father-in-law of monarchs, as he admitted to his friend, Romeo de Villeneuve, what time he ceded to St. Louis of France the strong castle of Tarascon as the dowry of his daughter Marguerite. But Villeneuve very shrewdly consoled him. "For," quoth he, "let not this great expense trouble you. If you marry your eldest high the mere consideration of that alliance will get the others husbands at less cost."

The event approved his sagacity and also the prediction of a soothsayer, to whom the four sisters had applied to know the rank of their future husbands, for, requested to draw at venture from a pack of cards, Marguerite straightway drew the king of swords, Eleanor the king of money, Sancie the king of goblets, and Beatrice the king of clubs.[5]

The witch expounded this to mean that Marguerite should wed the knightliest king in all the world and in all ages (which indeed came to pass in the person of St. Louis); that Eleanor should in her king of coins gain the monarch of the wealthiest of all realms, namely, England; that Beatrice should have the misfortune to mate with a hard-hitting savage, but still a king—a forecast fulfilled in Charles of Anjou, brother of St. Louis, who won his kingdom of the two Sicilies by as hard and as cruel fighting as ever dinted the armour or soiled the fame of a knight; and that, finally, Sancie, the third in order of birth, but last to find a lover, should of her own free will choose for her husband a king of good fellows, whose kingdom was but that of cups.

This prophecy, I say, had been more than half fulfilled. The two elder daughters were queens; the youngest was besought and contracted, when their father, fearing perchance that the prediction would be carried out in the case of his third and best-loved, set himself against fate and called a halt in its proceedings.

It was unfitting, he declared, that Beatrice should be married before her elder sister Sancie, and Charles of Anjou must perforce hold his amorous desires in leash until his prospective sister-in-law was disposed of.

This at first sight seemed no such difficult matter, for while the others had each been meted one lover, on Sancie fortune had bestowed a full half dozen. But though their numbers flattered the vanity and pleased the coquetry of the lady, the quality of no one of them was satisfactory to the father.

He had now an appetite for kings. Counts, barons, princes even would not suit his palate, and as no monarch or scion of royalty had as yet applied for Sancie's hand it struck his humour that a tournament such as Aldobrandino proposed, well advertised in every court of Europe, might draw some king, or at least an adventurous princeling, to the lists, as indeed was proved by the sequel.

The queenly sisters of Sancie took up the project with great enthusiasm. Queen Eleanor, consort of Henry III. of England, was visiting her sister of France, and together they arranged every detail of the tournament, of which King Louis was to be the judge.

The hopes of Beatrice jumped also with this plan as one which would remove Sancie from her own path to true love, and of all the four daughters of Raymond, Sancie was the only one who looked upon the scheme with any dubiety.

But her older sisters, on their arrival at their father's capital city of Arles, reassured her, explaining that though there would be a great show of fair dealing yet they had plotted so cleverly that Sancie would take her own pick from this rich strawberry plot of lovers.

"It is my husband's privilege," expounded Queen Marguerite, "before ever the fighting begins, to bar out any knight as the procession files before him in the grand entrée of the lists. You shall sit beside him and indicate any whom you wish disallowed. Moreover, you can at any moment whisper in Louis's ear and he will throw every advantage possible in the way of your champion."

"Nevertheless," continued Queen Eleanor, "since it is possible that the knight you favour may be notoriously inept in arms, you shall have resource to another trial of skill—namely that of minstrelsy. Here (like my predecessor of the same name, Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine) I will be judge.

"From the knights who have previously taken part in the tournament you yourself shall winnow out a half dozen, and shall tell me secretly to which of these I am to award the prize. Now confess, can anything be fairer? Is there a possibility of your

true love failing, if so be he but enter the contest?"

But Sancie hung her head. "I have no true love," she said, "I am absolutely heart-free."

"So much the better," cried the Queen of France, "and this shall be announced at the outset. The tournament also shall be delayed a week after the time set, to give you an opportunity to meet the contestants and to know your own mind."

But the Queen of England caught Sancie's cheeks between her two hands.

"Listen little sister," she said softly, "I have brought with me from England the very prince for you, my husband's brother, Richard, Earl of Cornwall[6]; well worthy he to bear the name of his great uncle, Cœur de Lion. 'King of Good Fellows' he is dubbed by his friends, for he is loved by all who know him."

"King of Good Fellows," repeated Sancie softly; "tell me more of him, sweet sister. Is he as valiant in arms as he is lovable, as fortunate as he is deserving?"

"Accomplished is he in all that becomes a knight," replied Eleanor, "but fortunate so far is he not. Always when he stands on the verge of success he yields his advantage to another, holding that love, even that of an adversary, is the dearest prize of all."

"Would he so yield me, think you?" questioned Sancie.

"Nay, not if he knew you," replied Queen Eleanor; "therefore to your instant acquaintance, I have bidden him this afternoon to a game of ball in the pleasance of the castle."

King Louis heard this conversation and it irked him, for though he had assured the sisters that Richard would take part in the tournament, he had not confided to them that he would do so in behalf of Prince Aldobrandino. The pretensions of this aged lover had greatly amused the ladies. They counted so surely on his discomfiture that even Sancie, who abhorred him, had not thought it worth while to ask King Louis to bar him from the contest.

Richard also had given his word to play but the part of an understudy in this drama before he had seen Sancie, else never would he have consented to the compact. King Louis had indeed explained it to him before sending him to Aldobrandino, and Richard had demanded carelessly: "Of what sort is the maiden?" The King had answered: "All of the daughters of Raymond Berenger are fair, and Sancie is next to my Marguerite, who is fairest fair."

Then Richard smiled, for he remembered that when he had questioned his brother Henry, of England, what time he went to claim his bride, of her beauty, he had answered: "All of the daughters of Raymond Berenger are fair, but my Eleanor is fairest, and the next in beauty is Sancie."

"Where such difference of opinion exists," thought Richard, "it were well to leave the matter to an umpire," and he straightway submitted the question to Charles of Anjou.

"Nay, they are both wrong," confidently declared that prince; "my Beatrice is fairest, but Sancie is not far beneath her."

Then Richard laughed to himself: "Truly if the girl ranks but second when compared with each of these her sisters, whose beauty I esteem not at all, she is not worth the winning on my own behalf; and I am safe in adventuring for the joy of the mere adventure."

But when Aldobrandino spake to him of her it was in other wise. "Consider well," he said, "ere you undertake this business, for should the beauty of Sancie drive you to such madness as to play me false then of a surety I will kill you. Not in vain am I dubbed Atlas, for all things upon earth which I desire I bear away upon my shoulders, and I have sworn by the five wounds of God that she and she alone shall sit as princess in my palace."

"'Tis a great oath," said Richard, "but you shall not be forsworn by me, and verily I marvel that you have set your heart upon her if the opinion of her brothers-in-law be credible." And with that he told the several answers given to his questions.

Aldobrandino glowered upon him and grunted this reply: "You mind me of a *stornello* sung by our peasants:

"'Flower o' the peach,
Flowers for all fancies, his own love for each.'

"And verily," he added, "it is well that it is so, else should I have had for rivals Louis and Henry and Charles, and perchance you also. The flower o' the peach suits her well; she is but a homely little bloom o' the kitchen garden beside her statelier rose and lily sisters. But, look you, what use have I for such useless ornaments as your waxy-pale lilies, your flaunting and fragile roses? What fruit bear they, I ask? Why, pips and briars. Whereas the peach is a stocky tree, prolific and profitable to its owner, for to its unadmired and modest blossom succeedeth a toothsome fruitage. Therefore say I the flower o' the peach for me. For, hist, Ricciardo, I am past the age when one goes maying for flowers only. Women have had no great power over me, and a bachelor I should die but that I have regard for what shall happen after me, and a natural desire for the continuance of my race upon their old estates. It is not so much a wife that I seek as a mother for my children. I would see many and goodly sons about me, strong of body, lusty in fight, such as only a wholesome and sturdy woman can bear and rear. If she have wit enough to rule them it is enough for me; and as for beauty, the less the better in the eyes of other men for her whom my descendants shall claim with pride as mother of the Aldobrandini."

II

THE ORDEAL

One maiden trimly girt
Bore in her gleaming upheld skirt
Fair silken balls sewed round with gold;
Which when the others did behold
Men cast their mantles unto earth,
And maids within their raiment's girth
Drew up their gown skirts, loosening here
Some button on their bosoms dear
Or slender wrists, then making tight
The laces round their ankles light;
For folk were wont within that land
To cast the ball from hand to hand,
Dancing meanwhile full orderly.
Lovely to look on was the sway
Of the slim maidens neath the ball
As they swung back to note its fall
With dainty balanced feet; and fair
The bright out-flowing, golden hair,
As swiftly yet in measured wise
One maid ran forth to gain the prize;
Eyes glittered and young cheeks glowed bright
And gold-shod feet, round limb and light,
Gleamed from beneath the girded gown
That, unrebuked, untouched was thrown
Hither and thither by the breeze;
Shrill laughter smote the thick-leaved trees,
Till they, for very breathlessness,
With rest the trodden daisies bless.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

Cold and calculating, nay coarse also seemed the motives of Aldobrandino to Richard as he pondered them. "Not so," thought he, "would I set about the choosing of my wife—as it were the purchase of a brood-mare." Still more his soul revolted at this low animalism when that afternoon he for the first time beheld sweet Sancie playing at ball with her sisters in the pleasance of the palace of Aries.

The game was set to music, the measured beating of a tambour with the light chiming of silver bells. Some said that Marguerite was most regal; so stately she moved to the rhythm of the dance, that one might have fancied that the glorious statue of the Venus of Arles had descended from her ancient shrine to tread a measure with her maidens. But Eleanor danced with more vivacity and passion. You would have thought her of Spanish blood as she leapt and whirled, catching the ball with the lithe ferocity of a panther. For Beatrice, Richard had no eyes, for as he watched Sancie, he knew what her three kingly brothers-in-law had meant when each could name only his own heart's dearest as her superior. He saw, too, why Aldobrandino had likened her to

a peach-blossom, for her complexion had that even delicate flush, not white and red in spots, but roseate everywhere, like the heart of a conch shell or the breast of a pink curlew.

Abounding health spake in her buoyant step, but she was fine as well as strong. The rounded contours of her cheeks and shoulders were soft as those of a babe, and Richard had seen naught in all his life so exquisite as her dimpling smile. Would you know with more particularity how she appeared to him, look you straightway at the sweet maid in the foreground of that *Coronation of the Virgin* which Fra Lippo Lippi painted; and from the framing of wayward little curls that make their escape from a veil of silver tissue, a tangle withal to mesh a man's heart in, from that face, I say (though the painter-monk had ne'er the felicity to see her), Sancie's round eyes will search your soul and will remain in your memory for evermore.

You will not wonder then that Richard blessed God in his heart for making a thing so fair, and stood as one in amaze until the ball with which she was playing fell at his feet.

Needs must then that he return it to her and join in the game, for this was the custom when one of the players dropped out, as had Beatrice from weariness.

So he played, but he saw not the ball, only her who sped it, and making many faults the game was adjudged to her.

Face of Young Girl in the Coronation of the Virgin
By Fra Filippo Lippi Permission of Alinari

Then they walked together, others of the company following in twos and threes at a discreet distance, in that *allée* which still retains its ancient name, Les Alyscamps (Champs Elysées—Elysian Fields), where 'neath the taller trees the oleanders shot in long curves bursting in pink fire, like rockets, above their heads. Here, seated upon one of those carven tombs which now make benches for lovers in that enchanting spot, she told him old legends of St. Trophime, how he and his fellows sculptured about the portal of his abbey descend from their niches and keep here the eve of Toussaint. "You will see them," she said, "when you go to hang your shield in the cloister, where it must be displayed, if so be you fight in this foolish joust. Truly sorry and shamed am I that so many gallant knights must run the risk of wounds and death for little me."

"'Tis a small venture for so great a prize," said Richard.

"Then, as you fight, let it be your best, for—" but here she paused and ended her

sentence differently from her first intention—"for I would not have you hurt," and her face grew yet rosier.

Richard cursed his fate that he might not fight his best, but his cursing was in his heart, what he said was: "The fortunes of such a joust are very fickle and it must needs happen that many a good knight will fight his doughtiest and yet not succeed. If I am among that number, sweet lady, I pray you set not my mischance down to lack of will, for in no tournament that I have ever entered had I so great desire to win."

She looked no higher than the Plantagenet leopards gold-embroidered upon the breast of his doublet. "Since, to spare the knights the mortification of public discomfiture, my father hath decreed that they fight incognito (their true names being known only to the *roi d'armes* who passes upon their qualifications), will you not tell me the device which you have chosen?"

"Choose my device for me," he said, "and I will cause it to be blazoned on my shield and embroidered on my pennant."

"It has been foretold," she answered pensively, "that I shall wed the King of Cups. Therefore, if you honestly desire to win choose that emblem."

"My cup runneth over," he murmured—and their lips met.

Ere they parted there was heard a sound of laughter, as it were the crackling of light flame, for there was no mirth in the sound, and Aldobrandino stood before them regarding the pair with a derisive leer. "There is an old proverb which it were well you should both remember," he said. "If I mistake not it runneth in this wise, 'There is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip.' It were meet that the cup you blazon should be a spilling one."

"Better spilling than swilling," cried Richard, his eyes aflame, and Sancie affrighted ran away.

"I forgive you those stolen sweets for this once," said Aldobrandino, "for you had great provocation. Said I not rightly a peach-blossom? Nay, a peach rather, ripe and luscious. Watered not your mouth in that game of ball when the strain of her deep breathing and the violent turning and twisting of her lithe body burst the lacing of her corsage and half her fair bosom broke covert? What a pillow was that for a bridegroom, eh, Ricciardo?"

"Nay," retorted Richard, "while she repaired that accident I lifted not my eyes above the hem of her robe, that so her rare modesty might take no offence."

"And had you kept them there throughout the game you would have seen much to admire," continued Aldobrandino. "Ah! the pretty little feet, the shapely ankles! But marked you those of her sisters? Cranes and ostriches! storks and sandpipers! And they call themselves not water-fowl but women!"

"Swine!" said Richard to himself, "hog, not another word or I shall burst. And what unspeakable villainy is this that I should have taken service to deliver so pure and precious a maiden into the power of such a beast!"

This feeling grew upon him in the short space of time before the tournament, for he met her daily, and as he marked her,—the flicker of her eyelashes upon her cheeks and the quick in-drawing of breath through her sensitive nostrils when the tales of the trouvères and jests of the jongleurs offended her exquisite modesty—his heart swelled with pain intolerable that so pure a flower should be set up as a prize for the hardest fighter to snuff at. Not so, he made bold to express his mind to Aldobrandino, should such a maid be won.

"How then," snorted the other in astonishment. "What method were fairer, I ask you?"

"What than to appeal to her own heart," Richard made answer, "and that by gentle observance, delicate attentions, and such refinements of self-sacrifice as in their practice might elevate a lover to some worthiness of the honour he courts?"

Aldobrandino sniffed his scorn. "Appeal to her heart in the last resort I grant you, but only thus: Lady, will you have me? An she will *not*, what would your servility gain? An she *will*, it is needless. In either case it is ridiculous. Trust me, a woman sets more store by the man who compels her admiration than by him who sues for it. If he breaks the bones of other men to win her, that is compliment enough and mark you well, Ricciardo, it is all that I demand of you in my service."

So the week sped before the tournament; and Richard loved Sancie more and more, and ever Aldobrandino was at his side taunting him until he burst forth into many a torrent of indignation, whereat the other but laughed and leered, so that Richard loathed and hated him to the death.

At last came the great day, and among the pennons of the challenging knights, which made gay the ancient amphitheatre of Arles where the lists were staked, there fluttered one bearing the device of a golden cup from which ran a stream of silver water. Also when Richard, with visor drawn and all in mail of shining steel, caracoled in the field, he was hailed Knight of the Spilling Cup, and Sancie's hand at that sign trembled so that had it held a beaker her robe would have been well besprinkled.

As the prize of this joust was a peculiar one, so was the manner of its contention. King René had not then formulated his rules for the conduct of a tourney, and the public tournaments at this time were of so savage a character that King Louis held them in reprehension and was determined that this trial of arms, which was but a friendly joust, should be a model of chivalric self-restraint and courtesy. There was much grumbling when the rules were published by the heralds that there was to be no fighting to the death with weapons of war, no sharp steel points to the lances, nor hacking with battle-axes, and though the mace was allowed this bludgeon was shorn of its iron knobs and points.

But when it was known that the King had stricken out the mêlée, or pitched battle of the second day, when all comers gentle and simple were by ancient custom allowed to range themselves in two parties under the banners of the victorious knight and him who stood second, all were of one opinion, namely that Louis had so emasculated the sport of all its zest that now was neither opportunity for young and unknown knights to distinguish themselves or a spectacle sufficiently diverting to keep the ladies from yawning.

Nevertheless the King would not budge from his ruling, and the descendants of the very barbarians for whom Cæsar had built the amphitheatre in order that their savage instincts might be sated came sulkily to their seats ready to deride this gentle passage at arms. But certes they had more thrilling sensations than they had counted upon, more of tingling along the spine and lifting of the hair as knight after knight went down and esquires dragged their masters from the tawny dust clouds that hid the plunging chaos. Tender maids, noble ladies, yea, and strong men felt their hearts stop and their stomachs turn as these pale, blood-bedabbled contestants were carried away, their heads wagging from limp necks, to the pavilion where the leeches provided by Raymond Berenger awaited them. But I do anticipate the order of my relation.

Eight noble knights, lords of neighbouring provinces and some as well of foreign countries, all sumptuously accoutred and mounted on gaily caparisoned steeds, entered the arena in procession, and, having saluted the King and the ladies, took their positions in two companies at either extremity of the lists. For in this wise had it been ordered—that they should tilt in single combat, their adversaries having been previously determined by lot, one couple succeeding another until each knight had fought once.

And after these four trial courses had been run, the four knights adjudged to have won therein the greatest glory must be matched again in two other duels, whereof the two victors might contest in the final combat for the great prize of the tourney.

Hautboys and trumpets sounded shrilly the onset, and the first pair of knights, laying their lances in rest, rushed to the encounter.

It may well be understood that in this series of preliminary single combats, Sancie had eyes alone for that in which Richard figured. Easy was his victory, for charging against young Raymond of Toulouse (seventh of that name) so violent was the shock of his spear against his opponent's shield that both Raymond and his steed rolled upon the ground. Fortunate was that knight to have broken only his thigh, a mischance which Richard strove to mitigate by most assiduous tendance during Raymond's convalescence. But now for the glory of the feat he was apportioned a weightier warrior, Barral des Baux, who had won like renown in the trial contest, having thrust his antagonist out of his saddle in such wise that he dinted the field with the back of his head, and to such effect that thereafter he had no memory either for good or ill, no, not so much as of this astounding adventure or of his sweetheart's face. When Richard met the redoutable Des Baux their lance-heads were planted squarely each

upon the shield of the other, but the polished curving surface offering no purchase both lances slipped, and Barral's splintering and glancing downward was thrust into the haunch of Richard's horse. The creature uttered a piteous, human-like cry which was echoed by Sancie, and Richard hearing that wail and feeling himself sinking so that his feet touched the ground, believed that he had lost the day. But even then a roar echoed around the concave of the amphitheatre: "The cup hath it, the cup! the cup!" and he saw the Lord of Les Baux lying at a little distance with blood trickling upon the sand from the bars of his helmet. For Richard's lance had slipped upward and penetrating between gorget and helmet had pierced and dislocated Barral's jaw. This alone was enough to give Richard his second victory, but there were three added points of humiliation for the Knight of Les Baux, namely: his lance had been broken, he had been unhorsed, and, with maladroitness worthy of the merest tyro, had injured a horse when he had aimed at its rider.

On the other hand Richard was untouched in person, his arms also in good condition, and he could not be said even to have quit his saddle since he remained astride his steed with his feet still in the stirrups.

But Alphonso of Aragon, had also won laurels for the second time, for though his lance had slipped on the shield of his opponent precisely as Richard's had done, it had wrought far greater damage, for, tearing away the visor from the helmet of his antagonist it had blinded and disfigured him for life.

Therefore honours remained equal between these two champions who must now run the final and deciding course.

But Richard's good horse was cruelly maimed and could scarce be gotten from the arena, nor had he thought to have another ready outside the lists. Raymond Berenger sent a page to his own stables for his best horse, but ere he returned the loss was repaired by another, and Richard entered upon a powerful coal black stallion, tricked with scarlet housings. A noise of clapping greeted his entrance for the favourite horse of Aldobrandino had been recognised and it was supposed (though in this they much mistook their man), that by this courtesy he signified his renunciation of any intention to compete.

The heralds also made proclamation that if the knights chose they might fight this last passage at arms with swords or maces, and swords being chosen each spurred toward the other, their good blades flashing in the sunshine and Richard with a sweep of his arm sheared the plume from his adversary's crest. But Alphonso, who missed his proper stroke, dealt him a dirty thrust in the side as he was passing. It pricked through Richard's armour but scratched him only and roused him to such energy that he swung around, clasped Alphonso in his arms, and all on horseback as they were, wrestled with him till he threw him over his charger's crupper to the earth.

Then the King asked Sancie loudly: "Are you content to give your hand to the winner of this contest?" and the herald shouted her answer so that all heard it: "The high and puissant Lady, Sancie, willingly grants her hand as prize to the victor."

But even as he cried, all were aware that the end was not yet, for the *roi d'armes* pricked to the King's balcony and again the herald blew his trumpet and announced that another challenger, delayed from appearing at the first, contested this decision. Having been bidden enter, a burly knight mounted upon a giant percheron rode into the lists, all cased in sable armour and carrying a shield which displayed Atlas supporting the globe.

Then Charles of Anjou, who fought not, but sat by the side of his betrothed, scoffed, "Ho, mountain of flesh, globe of blubber, and colossus of conceit, here is a whale indeed among fishes, a world-bearing monster, who fancieth that all the affairs of this earth rest upon his shoulders. 'Tis a cup which our gallant knight will soon spill for him. Hold fast, fair ladies, for the globe is about to topple from its foundations!"

But, to the astonishment of the speaker and of all present, the knight of Atlas riding full tilt against him of the Spilling Cup, drove him backward, as it seemed, by his sheer weight, so that the barrier crashed behind his horse's haunches, and the rider, letting fall his lance acknowledged himself vanquished.

Only Richard himself knew what that submission cost him. For while their spears were crossed, the head of Aldobrandino's tapping his opponent's shield, it was with a weak and wavering touch; while Richard's had found a joint in the armour of the knight of Atlas, and had he not generously and dexterously withdrawn his lance,

Aldobrandino by the very force of his onset, would have transpierced himself upon it.

For the moment he had his adversary in his power, and even as he withheld the spear he cried to Aldobrandino, "What hinders me from rolling you in the dust and myself winning that prize inestimable?"

Aldobrandino, knowing well in what emergency he stood, replied calmly, "But one thing hinders—your word as a belted knight," and at that answer Richard's head drooped and he sank to earth as one sore wounded.

But the spectators knew naught of this byplay. Hearing not the words, they put their own construction on the pantomime. Judge then what was their surprise, what the vexation of the two Queens and the despair of the fair Sancie, when the knight of Atlas, raising his visor, displayed the features of Aldobrandino.

King Louis announced him victor, though it was noted that he had never done anything with so ill a grace, and indeed the good King's conscience smote him so sorely, knowing himself a partner in the trick, that he could never have made the ruling but that he hoped it would be reversed in the poetical contest yet to come.

III

THE "FLORAL GAMES"

O for a draught of vintage that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth.

KEATS.

The tournament of wits seemed to give, Richard one more chance to win the prize he coveted; for this purpose it was originally instituted, and it seemed to the luckless knight himself that here at last he had fair play, since he was under no obligation to Aldobrandino to defer to him in this contention, nor did he believe that Aldobrandino's talents were superior to his own. The only other knight who had registered for this contest was Barral des Baux, and this in despite of his bandaged visage, for though his hurt permitted him not either to sing or to speak, yet by good fortune he could write, having been instructed by the monks of Mont Majour, and being violently in love with the fair Sancie, he would bate no effort to win her. So though all the nine who had taken part in the passage-at-arms were eligible, there were but three competitors, for five had been so desperately wounded that they could not stand, and Alphonso of Aragon so shamed and furious that he refused to take part.

But when his friends congratulated Richard that this was so, and especially that Raymond of Toulouse was out of the reckoning (for he of all the nine was the only troubadour of repute and the one likely to be a formidable antagonist) though Richard's heart at first leapt at their news, he liked it the less as he gave it more consideration. For he had it on his conscience that he was responsible for Raymond's incapacitation, and he wished not to win a victory on such terms. Therefore he went to his wounded rival, tended and encouraged him, and in the end brought him to the contest in a litter, thereby gravely jeopardising his own chance of success. Richard, never at any time a glib jingler of rhymes, was in sorry case, for now that he had most need of his wits, his passion instead of sharpening them seemed to have removed them utterly. If he had but known it, he had a good friend in Queen Eleanor, who was determined that he should win, and she fancied that she had hit upon a scheme which would aid him.

Angry was she that such an accomplished poet as Raymond of Toulouse must be admitted to the contest. "But, at all events," she told her sisters, "that renowned minstrel shall bring no polished work of long study to match against the untutored outpourings of my favourite's heart. Already have I ordained, with my assistant judges, that since some one of the contestants may be tempted to present a poem not his own, plagiarism shall be counted the one unpardonable crime, and, to guard against it, we demand that no verses of any sort be brought to the games, but that the competitors improvise on the instant upon one and the same theme to be given out after their assembling."

This proposal pleased her three sisters. "They shall recite or sing to us, 'poesies on the flowers we wear,'" said Queen Marguerite, "and shall thus rank and compare our own qualifications for esteem. Clever will he be who can do this without offending any

of us. But let us each beware of imparting to any one this information."

Even while she thus spoke Marguerite's right eyelid, the one nearest to Queen Eleanor, quivered ever so slightly, and her foot pressed Sancie's. The kindly plotter counted that the girl would straightway convey this news to Richard, and she, poor child, was sorely tempted to do so. But she knew instinctively that he would refuse to profit by such advantage, therefore she told him not so much as the flower which she would herself wear, though she had chosen a spray of blossoming peach because he had once said it was his favourite, and because in her heart of hearts she hoped that rhymes concerning these sweet blooms might be already in his mind. But Richard, suspecting nothing of this, came to the Floral Games empty headed and as ignorant as the others as to the programme; and when he saw the brilliant and distinguished company waiting to pass verdict upon his poor verse he was filled with confusion. At the right of Queen Eleanor, sat the troubadour Sordello, the friend of Charles of Anjou who might easily have vanquished all present in the framing of *coblas*, *sirenas*, *sirventes* and all kinds of poems, as well as in the ruder feats which may become a knight; but he for love of his fair Cunizza had disdained the prize of the present contest, and had come solely to assist the Queen in her decision. Also in the raised arbour by the side of Eleanor sat her uncle Boniface of Savoy, whom the King of England had made Archbishop of Canterbury. His grace was said to have no little skill in the framing of love sonnets, though chants and canticles would have better beseemed a churchman.

The pleasance was all abloom with flowers, for the month was May, but the ladies in their gauzy robes of delicate rainbow hues were lovelier far than the favourites of Flora.

Eleanor having announced the terms of the contest, she and her three sisters displayed the flowers which they had chosen as themes for the controversy, and the challengers drew lots for order of precedence, with the result that Barral des Baux came first, Aldobrandino second, Raymond of Toulouse third, and Richard last.

Barral had composed and committed to memory a *sirvente* or song of battle which he proposed to write out, paper and quill being permitted him in deference to his broken jaw. Great was his discomfiture to find that it fitted not to the theme prescribed, but he cut his cloth to the new pattern to the best of his ability. He retained the most effective portions of his poem, its high-sounding phrases, and picturesque descriptions of marshalling knights, the very category of whose arms, plumed helms, hauberks, blazoned shields, flaunting pennons, inlaid gauntlets, cross-hiked swords, golden spurs, and caparisoned steeds was in itself a pageant. True he gave these champions as a motive for their deeds of high emprise the demonstration of the supremacy of the differing and rival charms of the four sisters as typified by the flowers they affected; but he implied too plainly that those of the peach-bloom were alone worthy of such contention. Himself he figured as her accepted knight, hacking, slaying, scaling fortresses, pillaging, burning, putting to torture or ransoming prisoners, and scorning with brutal insults her sisters' flowers. This *sirvente* which was apparently composed during a brief interval during which the jongleurs amused the company, was read in a sonorous voice by Archbishop Boniface. But had Barral's desire been to antagonise all the daughters of Raymond Berenger he could not better have succeeded, and when the Archbishop took his seat a glance at the face of Queen Eleanor told des Baux that he had lost the prize.

Aldobrandino was no more fortunate. He cast his poem in the form of a *serena* or night song, and spoke sadly and sentimentally of the evening of old age, dusky and drear, and of that night of death which he saw approaching. Strangely enough, he made no plea for present happiness, but begged the flowers, or their ladies, to drop tears upon his grave when he declared that he would sleep content.

Though chanted in all earnestness this grave-yard ditty chimed not in with the joyous temper of the company. There was sly nudging and smiling, a snicker from an ill-mannered page, and the only sighs were those of relief when he ended.

It was now the opportunity of Raymond of Toulouse. Besides being an accomplished technician in all forms of writing he was a man of shrewd and lively apprehension, and his wound had by no means injured his wits. As he lay upon the litter engaging the sympathy of the ladies and the leniency of the judges he had divined rightly the reason of the discomforture of each of his rivals. He saw that Aldobrandino had made shipwreck by reason of his indifference to the charms of all, and des Baux on account

of his zeal for one at the expense of the others, for not a single protestation of esteem, not a compliment even had any one of Sancie's sisters received, and this in face of the well known fact that all were beautiful and eager for appreciation.

In avoiding the conspicuous lapses of his predecessors Raymond with all his guile fell into another pitfall. He lauded the Rose, the Daisy, the Garland of Vine Leaves worn by Eleanor, Marguerite, and Beatrice in three canzonets so perfect in form, so exquisite in diction that they rivalled the ditties of Thibault of Champagne, who was hitherto accounted as having written "the most delightful and most melodious canzonets that at any time were heard."

But in doing this he exhausted all terms of endearment and admiration which he could command, and when he attempted to celebrate the Peach Blossom he could only repeat utterances already made, so that his conclusion was an anticlimax, bad in art and unfortunately giving the impression that he was more enamoured of Sancie's sisters than of herself.

The insincerity of his graceful verse was apparent to all. Sordello and Boniface who had nodded their appreciation at the conclusion of the first, second, and third canzonets, scowled and coughed at the fourth, and though there was applause sufficient to gratify this poet's vanity it misled him as to the impression which he had made upon his judges.

Richard knew not that Raymond had over-shot his mark; it seemed to him that he had surely won, and that it was useless for him to offer his halting verses, save as a tribute of genuine feeling. Such they were, and honesty even in literature and courtship is some whiles best policy. But one thought had sunk itself in his distracted brain since noting what flower his beloved carried, how that Sancie was Flower o' the Peach and be the others what they might she was the flower of all flowers to him. He had no knowledge of the complicated metres with which Provençal troubadours played so deftly, but he had been in Italy and had marked how the peasants bandied back and forth their bright *stornelli* as though the quick play were that of ball, the thought striking the fancy and deftly handled as it leapt from one to the other of the players.

Therefore he modestly announced that he would strive to imitate in the *langue d'oc* certain of these *stornelli a fiore* trusting that their rudeness and brevity might be forgiven.[7]

Queen Eleanor was crowned with roses and was throned beneath a canopy of those royal flowers. To her Richard, accompanying himself upon the lute, addressed his first *stornello*:

"Flower o' the Briar—
Though high on her trellis the Rose o' the Briar,
Sits supreme o'er the garden my heart clambers higher."

"How may that be," laughed Eleanor, "if I am 'supreme o'er the garden?' 'Tis enough for me; but I see not how you can o'ertop that compliment. Let me hear what you have to say to my sister of France."

Marguerite, as befitting her name, wore daisies, and squaring his shoulders Richard sang lustily,

"Flower o' the Marguerite;
Queen of the garden, fair Reine Marguerite,
If my heart were not captive 't would lie at your feet."

"'Tis Beatrice then who holds your heart in thrall?" bantered the queen, for she was malicious enough to plunge him in further difficulty. Here also was a coil for Beatrice was jealous of Sancie's beauty, and her lover, Charles of Anjou, sat beside her quick to resent any aspersion upon his mistress.

Beatrice, like a bacchante, had bound her brows with vine leaves one of which Charles now broke off and handed to the competing minstrel. With a gallant bow and a smile which atoned for the quizzical reservation, Richard sang,

"Flower o' the Vine;
For you, merry Charles, the chaplet of vine
'T is a guerdon all envy, so pray grant me mine."

Laughter resounded from every side of the pleasance mingled with cries, "Your flower! Name your favourite flower."

Then Richard knelt before Sancie, who hid her face behind the blossoms which so well matched her blushes, and sang from his heart:

"Flower o' the Peach,
Flower o' the Peach, dearest Flower o' the Peach,
A flower for each fancy—his own love for each."

Brief was the consultation between the judges. Queen Eleanor descended from her throne and amid clappings and bravoes gave Richard the stalk of lilies which had served her for sceptre and was now his palm of victory.

The Floral Games
From the painting by Jacques Wagrez.
Permission of Braun,
Clement & Co.

Ere he could take it from her hand, however, with a snort and bellow like that of a bull, my lord Aldobrandino faced the Queen.

"Gramercy," he cried, "shall so fair a prize be won foully by false plagiarism?"

"What charge is this you make," demanded Queen Eleanor.

"That yon traitor stole from me that songlet of the peach, and though he has trussed it out of countenance with gawds of his own invention still the root of the matter is mine."

"What answer you to this accusation, Richard?" asked the Queen.

"That he speaks truly," Richard replied, "mine is indeed a spilling cup."

The queen was loth to give judgment against her favourite and there was wrangling between her advisors as to what amount of theft were admissible in literature, but their opinion was stricter than I pray yours may be, most gentle reader, and they gave their verdict, "The prize is to Prince Aldobrandino."

At that verdict Sancie fainted in the arms of Queen Marguerite, and Richard hid his face in his hands, crying, "I cannot bear it."

Then Prince Aldobrandino spoke and they saw how they had misjudged the man.

"You cannot bear this disappointment, say you, Ricciardo? Look you at the device upon my shield, Atlas, and the motto, *Sustino omnes*. I can bear all things, even such loss as this, and, since I see well that the lady loves me not, of my own motive yield I

the prize to you, Ricciardo, who well deserve what you have truly won."

"Nay," cried Richard, for admiration of so great magnanimity fired his emulation, and he would not be outdone. "Nay, my lord, the judgment of this court cannot be thus lightly set aside. 'The prize' it has decreed, 'must be to Prince Aldobrandino.' Thy oath also that the Lady Sancie shall be mother of the Aldobrandini is registered in heaven."

"I would forfeit neither prize nor oath," replied Aldobrandino, "but there is a scripture on which I have pondered much of late—'Who knoweth,' quoth the wise man, 'who shall reign after thee, and whether thy son shall be a fool?' So might he well be if he resembled me, and against such ill-chancing will I now be assured. A son after my own heart do I find in thee, Ricciardo, for I have probed and proved thee, taking the measure of thy mind until I know thee clean of soul as thou art strong of body. I go in fulfilment of a secret vow, neither recently nor lightly made, to end my days with the brotherhood of St. Benedict, but first I do adopt thee son, and heir to all my estates. Let the judgment of this court stand and the prize be to Prince Aldobrandino for henceforth that is thy name and title."

The good man could not be swerved from this resolution. The lawyers drew up the act of relinquishment, Archbishop Boniface blessed the happy pair, who spent their honeymoon in their villa at Frascati, and from thence was Richard called by election to be King of the Romans. It was an honour which he held not long, nor did children of his continue the line of the Aldobrandini. Too careless was he of his own advantage when it ran counter to the desires of another; but in the magnificent Frascati villa, where he made such short tarrying, you may still find Richard's fountain not far from that of Atlas.

To his estates in Cornwall he shortly returned; and testimony to his character corroborative of this story, and as credible as that of the Italian authorities we have quoted (Sacchetti and Ser Giovanni), you may read in the ballad of

ERL RICHARD, KING OF GOOD FELLOWS.

"His wine was for others' sipping,
For lightly he gave it up,
There's slipping 'twixt pouring and lipping
And his was a spilling cup.

"But ne'er for the lost good liquor
Was Richard heard to sigh.
'I shall not bicker so friends grow thicker,
And the cup of love hold I.'

"So in praise of that loser willing
They carved his cup awry,—
Spilling——but aye re-filling
To witness if I lie!"

Villa d'Este, at Tivoli—Present Statei *Alinari*

CHAPTER V

WITH TASSO AT VILLA D'ESTE

His weary heart awhile to soothe
He wove all into verses smooth.
. . . . . .
for soothly he
Was deemed a craft-master to be
In those most noble days of old,
Whose lays were e'en as kingly gold
To our thin brass or drossy lead;
Well, e'en so all the tale is said
How twain grew one and came to bliss?
Woe's me, an idle dream it is!

WILLIAM MORRIS.

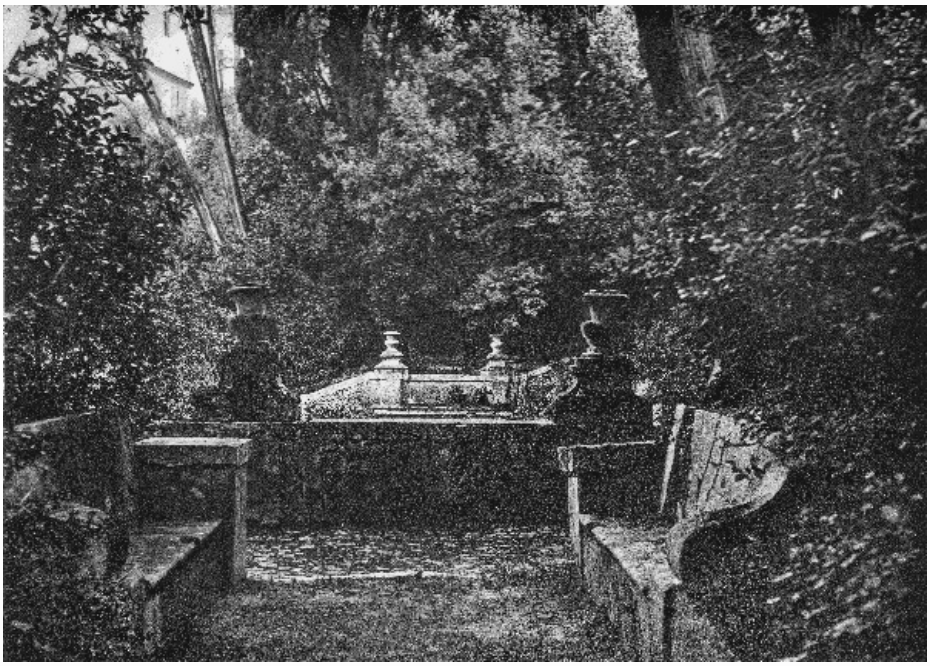
SUPREME above all the enchanted gardens of Italy, both in the bewildering beauty of its sensuous charm and in the potency of its appeal to the imagination, stands the Villa d'Este at Tivoli.

It is a hillside villa, a succession of terraces forming a stairway of flowers between the palace and the lower garden, where

"Cypress and fig tree and orange in tier upon tier still repeated,
Rose-garden on garden upheaved in balconies step to the sky."

But it is also a superb water-staircase, for the river Anio, turned from its course by a gigantic feat of engineering, leaps in a magnificent cascade, laughs in the spray of a thousand fountain jets, and makes the bosquets which shadow the regal staircase a haunt of the water nymphs as well as of the Dryads. You fancy, as your unwary foot presses the concealed springs that it is the white hands of mischievous Naiads which dash the water in your face, a pensive melancholy settles upon you with the mysterious dusk, and you are startled by Undine's "short, quick sobs," and are loth to believe that the plaintive sounds with which the air pulses are but the dropping of rills in and out of the shadowy pools.

The pompous hydraulic organ no longer thunders its "full-mouthed diapason," but the nightingales fill the long summer nights with their surges of wild rhapsodies. Both the eye and the ear of the artist receive refreshment and stimulus here. The garden is a bath of verdancy and coolness even upon the most torrid day. The very light which filters through the dense foliage is tinged with green. The marbles are velvety and moist with moss, and the maidenhair fern drips lush and dank. Here Liszt drew inspiration from the harmonies of water notes blended with the chiming of distant bells, and Watteau showed in the many studies which he made in the garden how potent was its influence in investing his *fêtes champêtres* with the grace of the idyl.



In the Garden of Villa d'Este
From a photograph by Mr. Charles S. Platt

That its appeal was no less powerful to a poet, the "craft-master" of his day, it is our purpose later to show.

Many minor poets also have felt and, with more or less success, have interpreted its wondrous charm—Story perhaps best of all.

"What peace and quiet in this villa sleep!
Here let us pause nor chase for pleasure on,
Nothing can be more exquisite than this.
See how the old house lifts its face of light
Against the pallid olives that between
Throng up the hill. Look down this vista's shade
Of dark square-shaven ilexes where sports
The fountain's, thin white thread and blows away.
And mark! along the terraced balustrade
Two contadini stopping in the shade
With copper vases poised upon their heads,
How their red jackets tell against the green!
Old, all is old,—what charm there is in age!

Do you believe this villa when 'twas new
Was half so beautiful as now it seems?
Look at these balustrades of travertine—
Had they the charm when fresh and shapely carved
As now that they are stained and graved with time
And mossed with lichens, every grim old mask
That grins upon their pillars bearded o'er
With waving sprays of slender maidenhair?
Ah, no! I cannot think it; things of art
Snatch nature's graces from the hand of Time."

But it is the view afforded by the double arcade of loggias and by every window of the palace façade which was the crowning glory of the villa. The amethystine Sabine Hills and the immense Campagna encircle the Eternal City, from whose mists the dome of Saint Peter's seems to rise a buoyant, iridescent bubble.

It was Pirro Ligorio (architect also of the exquisite Villa Pia) who in 1545 accomplished the miracle of converting the savage cliff into a staircase of enchantment. Nature had given the villa its marvellous site and genius availed itself of all the resources of art and wealth to effect the wonder.

Cardinal Ippolito's orders to Ligorio were: "Surpass the work of Vignola in the villas of Caprarola and Lante. Restore the glory of Tivoli in the Augustan age."

Hydraulic Organ, Villa d'Este

Excavations in the neighbourhood were daily bringing to light masterpieces of classical sculpture, and for the "statues which whiten the shadow" of Villa d'Este, Ligorio was given carte blanche to despoil the gardens of Hadrian's palace. To-day only a long procession of broken pedestals bears witness to statues of emperors, gods, and goddesses long since removed to different museums.

The exodus began immediately upon the succession of Ippolito's nephew, Cardinal Luigi d'Este, who came to his inheritance deeply in debt; but that spendthrift prelate retained sixty statues, some of which are seen in the etching made by Piranesi, and it was not until 1745 that these were purchased by Cardinal Albani.

The creator of this paradise, Cardinal Ippolito d'Este II., son of Lucrezia Borgia, was, like his villa, a refined product of the later Renaissance and must not be confounded with his uncle, Cardinal Ippolito d'Este I.

This first Cardinal Ippolito was a man of very different fibre, as may be seen from a single incident. Sent to Rome as his brother's envoy, on the occasion of Duke Alphonso's marriage, he fell in love with a pretty cousin of Lucrezia Borgia who accompanied the bride on her wedding journey to Ferrara.

Unfortunately the coquettish girl praised the beautiful eyes of Giulio d'Este, the Cardinal's younger brother, whereupon this prince of the Church hired assassins who waylaid his brother and tore out his offending eyes.

The Duke banished Ippolito temporarily, but Giulio brooded over the injury and conspired to depose Alphonso and place another brother, Don Ferrante, on the throne. For this act both Ferrante and Giulio were condemned to be imprisoned for life. Ferrante died in confinement but Giulio, after fifty-three years spent in a dungeon of the castle, was finally released.

It might have been expected that the blending of d'Este brutality with the unscrupulous Borgia craft would have given as a result only a more refined cruelty; but if this was the case Cardinal Ippolito II. completely deceived his contemporaries and has left the reputation (through the pen of his panegyrist Mureto) of the utmost affable condescension and magnificent patronage of men of genius. He was himself a dilettante; and it was his ambition to pose as the most cultured and brilliant of the great cardinals of his day. Ippolito I. had been a boon companion of Leo X. in his hunting parties at the Villa La Magliana, but it was not as a "*cacciator signorile*" or "sporting gentleman" that Ippolito II. wished to eclipse the then illustrious representative of the house of Medici, Cardinal Ferdinando, who was attempting to rival him in his magnificent villa on the Pincian hill.

Villa d'Este in 1740
From an etching by Piranesi

It does not seem to have occurred to Mureto that both of these men were looking forward to the papacy, and desired to emulate in their own pontificates that of Leo X. Each piece of sculpture acquired for their villas, every literary man attached to their service was a step toward that end. Ippolito II. was as keen a hunter of genius as his uncle had been of deer or boar; and having once bagged his game, as capable of availing himself without scruple of his trophies as Ippolito I. of tearing the antlers from a dying stag.

The princely Cardinal entertained on one occasion a house party of two hundred and fifty guests in his palatial villa, and established here a veritable court. The grandiose frescoes of Zuccari, Tempesta, Muziano, and Vasari still celebrate the glories of his family under the guise of the heroes of mythology garlanded by troops and bevies of cupids, "*una copiosa quantita di Amorini*." But the gods and demigods banquet all alone on the ceiling of the great hall where they once looked down upon the revels of the Cardinal's convives—noble or distinguished men all of them in their day, although the one name that comes to us of all who shared Ippolito's lavish hospitality and that sheds most glory upon his proud house is that of a poet, by turns patronised as a dependent, ungratefully neglected, and cruelly wronged.

The visitor is shown with pride the room so whimsically decorated with singing birds, where Tasso wrote his *Amyntas*, and the Fountain of Nature in the lower garden where the pastoral was presented with musical accompaniment before a distinguished

audience.

That Leonora d'Este was among those who listened, and indeed had been her uncle's guest and Tasso's good and evil fate during the months which he spent at Villa d'Este, is the only conclusion possible for the thoughtful reader of the poem; and the idyl composed under such circumstances leads inevitably to the tragedy (enacted at that other villa) of Belriguardo, of which Goethe has given us so truthful and so masterly a transcription.

Cardinal Ippolito, as his portraits make him known to us, has none of the sensuality which stamped the face of his grandfather Pope Alexander Borgia, or the heaviness of jaw expressing the stubborness and brutality of the earlier D'Estes; on the contrary, every line of the slight figure is expressive of refinement, the delicate red-stockinged feet are as shapely as a woman's, the expressive, almost transparent hands might be those of an artist as they finger caressingly his collection of intaglios and luxuriate in the smoothness of jades and ivory carvings. His excessive pallor and thinness would give an expression of asceticism, almost of spirituality to the intellectual face were it not in a measure contradicted by the craft in the close-set, slanting eyes, which with the pointed, fulvous beard suggest a possibility of foxy cunning, and inspire in the beholder an uncomfortable, haunting feeling of distrust even when the Cardinal's manner is most condescending and cajoling.

So, robed in filmy lace over rosy velvet, we may see him in imagination tripping daintily down his monumental staircase, his train islanding his figure as in some ensanguined pool and slipping after him adown the steps like the drip of some trail of blood which strangely leaves no stain upon the white marble.

But his face is wreathed with smiles, for he genuinely loves his two beautiful nieces, Lucrezia, Duchess of Urbino, and the gentle Leonora, who are his guests, and he loves his villa, whose beauties he is pointing out to them.

"You do not see the garden at its best," he cavils. "Wait till the roses garland the balustrades. It is too early yet to enjoy Tivoli; the frost may have left the ground but it lingers still in the pavements of this great palace. The halls are damp as vaults; we would have done well, my nieces, to have remained another month in Rome. Not till the middle of May will society desert the city for its *villeggiatura*. What do you say, Leonora, shall we confess that we have made a mistake and return?"

"Dear uncle, as you say, it is only the palace which, in spite of its braziers, retains the winter chill. Here in the garden the air is balmy, and the Judas trees are all a crimson mist. See how the green is creeping, like an inundation through the russets of last year's grasses. In another fortnight all this magical change will have been wrought, and those who come later will have missed the fairy spectacle."

"Spectacle! ah! that reminds me," replied the Cardinal; "while Nature is shifting the scenes we must prepare the *scenario*. Confess that I have provided a worthy theatre, one which should suggest to a poet a worthy theme. There, alas! is my great lack—I have no poet. How wastefully on those who need them not are the most precious gifts bestowed! My uncle and godfather, Cardinal Ippolito—the saints rest his soul!—was a dull-brained barbarian and yet he had attached to his service that pearl of poets Ariosto, whom he had neither the intelligence to appreciate nor the justice to reward. What think you was Ariosto's meed for dedicating to his patron the *Orlando Furioso*? He was made governor of that nest of bandits, the mountain district of Garfagnana, and it in open insurrection against the Duke of Ferrara. A pretty post for a scholar and a poet! But to it he went, and conquered the brigands, proving himself as expert in the use of the sword as in that of the pen.

"We produce no such men now. Bernardo Tasso, to whom I gave employment when he was exiled from Naples, and who wandered freely in this garden, felt not its charm, for he was but a third-rate poet, and even he is dead. Who in our day can interpret the poetry which I feel here but cannot express? And with but so little more of endowment I might have done it, for after all is not the inner ear, the second sight, the major part of genius?

"Listen, and tell me what you hear. Only the musical plash of the fountains and the sonorous undertone of the organ, like the distant roar of surf upon the beach? Ah, me! ah, me! how materialistic you are, my children. Your old uncle hears in these myriad-voiced fountains the musical instruments which Boccaccio gave to the Satyrs; 'cymbals, pipes, and whistling reeds,' and the song of the nymphs. Did you note that startled cry? It is the Oread Arethusa flying from the river-god Alpheus. He is

imprisoned in the organ, where he is mightily bellowing, and whence he will presently burst forth. But Arethusa will slip away (coquette that she is), under ground and under sea to her Sicilian home; for fable and stream sing eternally the same story, *Mulier hominis confusio est*.

"Tell me, my niece, have we in all Italy a poet who can voice such a theme?"

"Yes, uncle," the Duchess of Urbino interposed, "Bernardo Tasso's little son heard and understood the song of the fountains when he played here in his childhood. He told me that he believed a *folletto* or tricksy spirit talked with him here and promised him that if he came again he would find here both love and fame. He can interpret your songs for you, for he has grown a man, and is a greater poet than his father."

"And meantime," added Leonora, "he has absorbed all that the universities of Bologna and Padua can give him, and has written a romantic poem, the *Rinaldo*, on the exploits of one of our ancestors, that mythical old peer of Charlemagne, which he has dedicated to our house. It is in recognition of this tribute that our brother Luigi has made him his secretary."

"And Luigi is at the French Court intriguing with the Queen Mother, Catherine de' Medici. Torquato is doubtless with him," replied the Cardinal. "I ask you of what good to tantalise me with impossible suggestions? He had the eyes of a poet, that lad, and he might have served my turn."

"He may still serve you, Uncle Ippolito, for he has quarrelled with Luigi, and is in Rome."

"And wherefore in Rome? To curry favour with Cardinal de' Medici?"

"Possibly, for Tasso is writing a great epic on the taking of Jerusalem by Godfrey of Bouillon and his crusaders."

"'Tis no epic that I wish, but a pastoral—a mere trifle. Yet not so fast. A poem such as you describe, if it were indeed a work of genius, might rouse Christendom to another crusade, a life-work worthy of the next Pope. Lucrezia, the boy must not submit his poem to Cardinal de' Medici. Can you summon him to me, and will he come instantly?"

"If Leonora calls him," the Duchess replied, "he will come."

Cardinal Ippolito lifted his eyebrows almost imperceptibly and darted a keen, sidelong glance at Leonora. She had not heard her sister's last remark, the name of Torquato Tasso had obliterated the present and she was gazing dreamily at the rainbow-tinted dome of St. Peter's.

"Leonora," the Cardinal said softly, "have you heard what Lucrezia was saying, that this young poet has written an epic? If I could see it I might be able to help him in his career, perhaps give him fame."

"O Uncle, will you? How good you are! I will write him at once."

"My dear, I am not good, or disinterested. I am a selfish, an ambitious old man. This festival, given ostensibly for the entertainment of my friends and to introduce my charming nieces, is a part of my deep, ulterior motives. Come, I will confess the machinations of my wicked old heart. Why not, since my ambitions are for you as well as for myself? Nay, Leonora, never flush and tremble, I have no wish to buy my own advancement by selling you to some degenerate prince. Matchmaking is not my kind of diplomacy. I have seen enough in our own family of magnificence won through the martyrdom of women. Your mother, Renée of France, though a king's daughter, brought with her a dowry of unhappiness. My own mother, innocent though she was, bequeathed to us the shameful legacy of the Borgias' deeds and instincts. You may be happy, Lucrezia, with your Duke of Urbino. I ask no confidences, but I am glad that I am not responsible for your marriage.

"You, at least, Leonora, shall live your own life wedded or unwedded as you like. I shall be so great that I can ennoble whom I will, and you, beloved child, shall be the power behind the throne to advise me on whom to shower my benefits."

Lucrezia clapped her hands softly. "Bravo, dear Uncle, I have guessed this ambition, have I not? Cardinal de' Medici is already spoken of as the Pope's successor. But the Medici balls have been carved too often over St. Peter's chair, and you are minded to blazon in their place the d'Este eagle. You need not answer for I know that I am right."

The Cardinal smiled mysteriously. "Too shrewd, my niece, too shrewd by half. How your woman's intuition leaps over intervening obstacles. Never a whisper of this guess

at my aims. Remember, it is but your own surmise and that I have never breathed such an aspiration. The immediate object of my solicitude is to secure a charming play worthy of the setting of Villa d'Este breathing the spirit of Ovid and Anacreon, one which will make the old Greek gods live again in these delicious haunts and will redound to the reputation of your uncle's taste in literature."

"How magnanimous you are," cried Leonora, "to disclaim your principal motive, that of helping Tasso! He shall come, and he will give you the most beautiful idyl that was ever written."

And who shall say that Tasso did not make good the promise of his patroness? In the *Amyntas* we have the development of a theme which is the inevitable product of such a temperament in such a situation, and to the poem itself we will now look for a record of what transpired at Villa d'Este during the writing and the presentation of the pastoral.

To us it is true that the archaic quality, the pseudo-classicism of this pastoral seems at first artificial. "It has only so much of rustic nature as suits a graceful urban fancy." Arcadia is a no man's land, so far from our desires that we cannot picture it even in imagination; but to one who knows how sincere was the enthusiasm of the Renaissance for Greek ideals as well as for modes of expression, how classicism had come to be understood as a synonym for perfection in form whether in literature or the plastic arts,—all the pretty imagery of the Golden Age and its demigods becomes as natural a poetic rendering of sincere feeling as the equally formal restrictions of the measure of the sonnet or the rules which govern the composition of a concerto. Having once learned its technique genius and passion were unconscious of their limitations, but flowed with as true and spontaneous an impulse within these formal bounds as waters in their marble fountains and conduits.

"All the melodies that had been growing through two centuries in Italy [says Symonds] are concentrated in the songs of the *Amyntas* and the *Pastor Fido*. The idyllic voluptuousness which permeated literature and art steeps their pictures in a golden glow. While we recognise in both these poems—the one perfumed and delicate like flowers of spring, the other sculptured in pure forms of classic grace—evident signs of a civilisation sinking to decay, we are bound to confess that to this goal the Italian genius had been steadily advancing. They complete and close the Renaissance."

But the living quality in the *Amyntas* which makes it a thousand-fold more real to us than the Elizabethan masques is not its perfectness of form but the stamp which it bears of being the expression of personal experience and longing but thinly veiled in poetic imagery. Reading the poem at Villa d'Este we read between the lines and recognise the *scena* of the pastoral and the love which inspired its plot.

In spite of the changes wrought by time we discover the origin of each descriptive passage. This rocky reservoir whose shadowy surface seems to mirror reflections of mysterious faces is surely—

"Dian's pool
Where the great plane's cool shade to cooler waves
Invites the huntress nymphs."

Its encircling laurel thickets might mask to-day strange woodland deities like the Satyr of the play who while Sylvia bathed

"Crouched lynx-eyed among the thick-set shrubs."

The description of the tumultuous pursuit of this Satyr calls up so vividly the Polyphemus in the *Triumph of Galatea* that we are convinced that Tasso must have been influenced by Raphael's great painting in the Farnesina.

"Not all am I
A despicable thing,..."

He makes the Satyr say;

"This ruddy russet front, these shoulders huge,
These nervy bull-thewed arms, this silky breast,
And these my velvet thighs are manhood's mould robust.
Ill favoured I? Not so!"

As one listens to the delirious nightingales in the dim, green-arched *allées*, one forgets the trysting trees in other Italian gardens and is sure that only here could Daphne have drawn her argument for love from their caresses.

"*Daphne:*

The gentle, jocund spring,
Smiling and wantoning,
Makes all things amorous.
Thou only thus,
Untamed wild creature, wilder than the rest,
Deniest love the harbourage of thy breast.
List to yon nightingale
Singing within the vale
'I love, love, love.'
With what renewed embracement vine clasps vine,
Fir blends its boughs with fir, and pine with pine.
Beneath the rugged bark
May'st thou mute inward sighings mark,
And wilt thou graceless be
Less than a vine or tree—
To keep thyself unloving, loverless?
Bend, bend thy stubborn heart
Fool that thou art."

But the physical peculiarity which actually identifies Villa d'Este as the locale of the poem is its cliff, the "sheer crag" from whence Amyntas leaps in his despair.

"Now did he lead me where the cloven steep
Among the rocks and solitary crags
Looms pathless and breaks sheer above a vale.
There paused we, and I, peering far below,
Shuddered, drew from the brink.
. . . . . .
'Sylvia, I come, I follow!' So he cried:
Then headlong leaped,—and left me turned to stone."

There are other poems of Tasso's which refer to his residence at Villa d'Este, and infer Leonora's presence at that time. We may cite in particular the canzone to Leonora at her uncle's villa, beginning "*Al nobil colle ove in antichi marmi*":

"To the romantic hills where free
To thine enchanted eyes
Works of Greek art in statuary
Of antique marbles rise,
My thought, fair Leonora, roves,
And with it to their gloomy groves
Fast bears me as it flies.
For far from thee, in crowds unblest,
My fluttering heart but ill can rest.

"There to the rock, cascade, and grove,
On mosses dropt with dew,
Like one who thinks and sighs of love
The livelong summer through,
Oft would I dictate glorious things
Of heroes to the Tuscan strings
On my sweet lyre anew,
And to the brooks and trees around
Ippolito's high name resound."

This poem would seem to imply that a part of the *Jerusalem* was written here, possibly the episode of Sophronia and Olindo, so dear to Tasso himself that though it was not an integral part of the epic he dared the Inquisition rather than comply with the demands of the censor that it should be stricken out. The description of Sophronia is admitted to have been intended to denote Leonora:

"Amongst them in the city lived a maid
The flower of virgins in her perfect prime,
Supremely beautiful! but that she made
Never her care, or beauty only weighed
In worth with virtue; and her worth acquired

A deeper charm from blooming in the shade,
Lovers she shunned, nor loved to be admired,
But from their praises turned to live a life retired."

Equally applicable to Tasso is that of Olindo, the lover who—

"Feared much, hoped little, and in nought presumed.
He could not or he durst not speak, but doomed
To voiceless thought his passion."

But during those "livelong summer days" the poet's passion was not utterly voiceless. The *Amyntas* is throughout a continual and unequivocal expression, and he daringly in the very prelude makes the god of love, who explains the scheme of the play, declare—

"For wheresoe'er I am, there I am Love,
No less in shepherds' than in heroes' hearts,
The *unequal lot grows equal* at my will,
My chiefest vaunt, my miracle is this."

Openly and repeatedly Tasso asserts that while he is not indifferent to literary distinction it is not the chief end which he has in view in writing the *Amyntas.*

"Deem not" (he says) "that all Love's bliss
At last is but a breath
Of fame that followeth.

Love's meed is love, it wooeth, *winneth* this.
Nathless the lover steadfast to his end
Hath laud ofttimes and maketh Fame his friend."

Goethe makes Tasso confide this double aim to Leonora and her reply shows that he did indeed win the meed he sought. "For what" the poet asks her "is more deserving to survive and silently to last for centuries than the confession of a noble love, confided modestly to gentle song?"

We follow step by step that wooing, finding it in the exquisite apostrophe to the golden age—which concludes:

"Then let us live as erst kind Nature's thralls
And let us love—since hearts
No truce of time may know, and youth departs:
Ay! let us love: suns sink but sink to soar—
On us, our brief day o'er,
Night falls and sleep descends for evermore."

Here again Goethe discovers the personal note, transcribing the poem unscrupulously from its setting in the *Amyntas* and making Leonora reply with didactic coldness to Tasso's appeal—

"*Tasso:*
The golden age, ah! whither is it flown,
For which in secret every heart repines?
When every bird winging the limpid air
And every living thing o'er hill and dale
Proclaimed to man, What pleases is allowed.
"*Princess*:
My friend, the golden age hath passed away.
Shall I confess to thee my secret thoughts?
The golden age, wherewith the bard is wont
Our spirits to beguile, that lovely prime,
Existed in the past no more than now;
Still meet congenial spirits and enhance
Each other's pleasures in this beauteous world;
But in the motto change one single word
And say my friend,—What's fitting is allowed."

Perhaps Leonora did speak thus in the open discussion which followed the reading of the poem as in that at the Court of Urbino when Cardinal Bembo, distraught by his own rhapsody on love, stood silent as one transported, and the lady Emilia to recall him to himself shook him playfully, crying, "Have a care, Pietro, lest in this mood your

soul should be separated from your body."

And the gay Cardinal replied: "Madam, this would not be the first miracle which Love hath wrought in me."

Certainly, Tasso's wooing, even at Villa d'Este, was not always a happy one. In the following stanzas he tells of temporary despairs, but he hints also of a great hope at his darkest moment:

"By what dim ways at last Love leadeth man
Unto his joy and sets him 'mid the bliss
Of his heart's heaven of love—then when he most
Thinketh him sunk in an abyss of bale;
O blest Amyntas—from thy fate
I augur for mine own, that so may she,
That fair untender maid, who in a smile
Of pity sheaths the steel of heartlessness,
So may she with true pity heal the hurt
Wherewith feigned pity pierced me to the heart."

In another beautiful passage it is not hope which he sings but rapture:

"Let him who serveth Love
Divine it in his heart, though scarce may he
Divine or give it voice."

What was the boon which gave Tasso so much bliss? Perchance no greater than the one he celebrates in the exquisite lines:

Stava Madonna ad un balcon soletta.

"My lady at a balcony alone
One day was standing, when I chanced to stretch
My arm on hers; pardon I begged, if so
I had offended her; she sweetly answered,
'Not by the placing of thy arm hast thou
Displeased me aught, but by withdrawing it
Do I remain offended!' O fond words!
Dear little love words, short but sweet, and courteous!
Courteous as sweet, affectionate as courteous!
If it were true and certain what I heard,
I shall be always seeking not to offend thee,
Repeating the great bliss: but my sweet life,
By all my eagerness therein remember—
Where there is no offence, there must be
No visiting of vengeance!"

It must have been early in their acquaintance that such gratitude was poured forth for so slight a favour. There are balconies at Villa d'Este, balustraded terraces where now the contorted stems of giant vines wrestle with the carved pillarets and rend them relentlessly from their copings where at intervals the bayonet-leaved aloes keep sentinel like the bravi of Cardinal Ippolito I., their long green knives unsheathed and ready for any deed of horror. Here, unconscious of spying eyes, Leonora may have leant apparently absorbed in that glorious view, and Tasso's hand have stolen furtively to her own.

But was there no other guerdon for his long service than this shy avowal—no other bliss before that long horror of imprisonment and real or imputed madness which ended only after Leonora's death? Only the Duke Alphonso and those who so basely read the poet's private papers can reply.

Cardinal Ippolito must have guessed to what end the pastoral of Villa d'Este was tending; but whether his sympathy was real or feigned for his own uses we cannot know.

Villa d'Este—Terrace Staircase *Alinari*

He never attained his ambition, for death suddenly claimed him before the aged Pope whom he had hoped to succeed. Tasso's tragedy culminated, as Goethe tells us, at another villa, that of Belriguardo. The pastoral of Villa d'Este ends in a chorus or envoy expressive of that tremulous hope which flutters so deliciously in every line of the exquisite poem:

"I know not if the bitterness
That, serving long, long yearning, one hath borne
In tears and all forlorn,
May wholly turn to sweet, and Love requite
All sorrows with delight.
But if this be and pain
That bringeth joy enricheth often gain;
I ask thee not, O Love,
To give me gain thy common gains above.
. . . . . .
If gentle dear disdains
And dulcet coy defeats
And strifes fond lovers use
To fire their hearts—but close with love's long truce."

NOTE.—The selections from the *Amyntas* quoted in this article have been selected from the admirable metrical translation of Mr. R. Whitmore.

CHAPTER VI

MONDRAGONE

"'TIS a grave responsibility to play the dragon to a pretty woman."

This was the assertion with which Celio Benvoglio, private secretary of her Highness, Princess Pauline Bonaparte Borghese, invariably prefaced the following story, and had I a like knack in telling it, you would admit the demonstration of that proposition. By dragon you will understand that his Excellency, Prince Camillo Borghese, signified a guardian and protector. To constitute Celio Malespini a spy and reporter was no more in the thought of the Prince than it could have been in Celio's performance. He was young, and as chivalric an admirer of the Princess as he was loyal in his devotion to her husband. Had he discovered anything equivocal in her conduct, wild horses could not have torn her secret from him, and it is possible that the Prince counted upon this when he said:

"Celio, the Princess is very young and impulsive; that she is a foreigner and therefore inexperienced in our strict etiquette will not excuse her slightest mistake in the eyes of our severe Roman dames, who would be prejudiced against the sister of Napoleon were she as circumspect as the Madonna. Her beauty has already made them envious, her wit and light-heartedness is considered levity. They will delight in wagging their tongues maliciously on the least shadow of suspicion. In appointing you secretary to the Princess I place you in a position where you will be able to guard her from the appearance of evil. Understand well that I have no fear of its reality, but where there are windows overlooking one's garden the neighbours may see more than the owner, more even than actually occurs."

"Have no fear, my lord," the young secretary rashly promised. "You know the Tuscan proverb in regard to avoiding the suspicion of fruit stealing. Ah, well, no visitor shall be allowed to tie his shoestrings among your strawberries or to use his handkerchief under your plum tree."

So the Prince went away to Florence and Celio found that he had more than he had bargained for. Not that Pauline Bonaparte committed actual indiscretions; but she was wild for admiration, loved dress, and knew how to dress well, setting off her marvellous beauty with that combination of style and taste that the French call *chic*, which the heavier intellects of the Roman modistes with all their pretence to fashion can never attain, and which the imperious Roman matrons could never forgive.

One of these, hoping to rob this audacious rival of the advantage of Parisian modishness, gave a fête in which the guests were requested to appear in classical costume, whose severe simplicity she fancied would be more becoming to the plenitude of her own Juno-like charms than to the slight figure of the French girl. But the Princess vanquished her hostess for she came as a Bacchante in a robe of her own designing, bordered with vine leaves embroidered in gold and belted beneath the breasts with a golden girdle. A mantle of panther's fur swept from her shoulders, her arms and her bust were laden with heavy necklaces and bracelets taken from some Etruscan tomb, and she waved a golden thyrsus. Her entrance illuminated the ball-room and the character which she represented gave her authority for giving free vent to her natural vivacity and dancing with the utmost grace and abandon. Her victory over the male part of the assembly was complete for they saw no one else that evening.

They were wrong who supposed that her beauty was enhanced by dress; on the contrary it was limited by the clothing which it adorned. The sculptor Canova proved this in his portrait statue of her as Venus Victorious, and then her detractors, affecting to be greatly scandalised, changed their tune and declared that it was false that the Princess was too fond of dress, that on the contrary a greater regard for it would have been more decent.

The young secretary was not a little troubled by the caprice of his patroness to thus display her beauty to the world. "But why not, my Celio?" she had argued. "The Prince, my husband, has bestowed upon me a great title for which I feel my obligation to his noble family, and I shall pay it with interest, for I shall leave the Borgheses this incomparable statue, and the glory of having possessed one Princess whose beauty cannot be denied or equalled."

Why Prince Borghese should have deputed this dragon service to another instead of undertaking it himself, is a question which I cannot answer. Some misunderstanding doubtless there was, or two people who loved each other would never have agreed that it was better to live apart, but the Prince carried a sore and longing heart with him to Florence, and it may be that the Princess was no happier, though she had more

bravado.

"I will come when you send for me and not before," her husband said to her, "and I trust you understand the motives which underlie my self-banishment."

"I am grateful to them at least," was her equivocal retort. "Has your Highness any preference as to my residence during your absence?"

"None," he replied sadly, "but I shall be happier if you do not make choice of your Neapolitan villa."

She flashed at him indignantly, "You wish to estrange me from my family, from my sister Caroline."

"I have only the highest respect for her Majesty, the Queen of Naples," he replied; "her devotion to her husband is undoubted. I could wish—" and here the Prince paused.

"That I were more like her," the Princess finished his sentence.

"I never said so, Pauline," he said impulsively, "or wished that you were like any other than yourself."

His last words should have softened her, but, pained and indignant at his desertion, she hardly heeded them; how was she to know that Camillo Borghese was, under his cold exterior, very honestly in love with his wife and just now cruelly tortured with jealousy of her brother-in-law, the dare-devil Murat? For the latter was as unscrupulous as he was handsome, as Napoleon was to find to his cost, though in recognition of his services as a dashing leader of cavalry he had rewarded him with the hand of his sister Caroline and the crown of Naples.

Hitherto the Princess had not even remarked the bold admiration of her brother-in-law, and after the departure of her husband she wept and sulked for days, when suddenly an event of great political importance, which was also of deep personal interest to herself, threw into the background every other consideration.

Napoleon's abdication and the treaty of Fontainebleau came upon his friends with the shock of an earthquake. Especially to his sister Pauline it was as though the foundations of the earth were tottering. He had been the Providence of all his family, dividing the nations between them; but Pauline had been his favourite, he had loved her sincerely, and she had responded with the utmost devotion.

"I will go to him in his trouble," she declared, and though her secretary could not see how her presence could aid the deposed Emperor, he could not but approve her generous impulse.

She met her brother at Hyères near the frontier of France, from which point he embarked for the Island of Elba. The allies had granted him the lordship of the island, with an income to support a pseudo court; but the framers of that treaty, and Napoleon himself, knew well that its terms were a farce and his kingdom in reality a prison.

What transpired between the Princess and her brother in that brief interview Celio did not know. Each passed from it calmed and cheerful. There was a kindlier look in the Emperor's face, a more assured elasticity in his step as the English sailors who transported him to his exile shouted their, "Better luck next time"; and sparks were lighted in the eyes of the Princess which every one who saw her noted, though none guessed what hidden fires of resolve fed their flashes.

Fountain in Gardens of the Villa Borghese *Alinari*

They called her that season the Firefly, and many misinterpreted her illy suppressed excitement and the scrutiny of those lambent eyes sending out their flame signals in search of answering lights. Even her secretary did not know that the dark shadows which ringed them were not due to the balls and other frivolities in which she was so conspicuous; but to complicated and dangerous schemes which robbed her of sleep at night, and were never forgotten as she danced and chatted and coquetted while the most astute diplomats laid their hearts and their secrets at her feet.

She received strange visitors too at the magnificent Villa Borghese, just outside the Porta del Popolo, wild-eyed agitators and suspects who had never before been permitted to enter those aristocratic gates. The first had come disguised in a marble-cutter's blouse as an assistant of Canova; but he had dropped a word which the noble model understood, and the fire signals had flashed between them. After the sculptor had left the casino his assistant tarried, and Celio, dismissed by his mistress but lingering at the threshold, heard fragments of the man's talk: "Liberty, united Italy, and death to the Austrians."

Later, when he attempted to warn the Princess that if the man were not a maniac he was more dangerous, she asked him bluntly if her husband had constituted him her dragon, and thereafter in half contemptuous banter she gave him the nickname of "Mondragone."

It was the name also of another villa belonging to the Borghese, the most sightly of all the boldly seated summer resorts of the nobility at beautiful Frascati. Not one of these commands a view comparable to the one from its terrace of the Pope's Chimneys, so named from the strange monumental constructions which are so conspicuous that, with a glass, they are plainly visible from Rome.

So when the Princess announced, "I love Mondragone," her secretary did not flatter himself that the equivocal utterance bore any reference to himself. Had he also had the wit to perceive that if she indeed cared for the villa or for any other object at this time, it was only for some service which it might render her brother, his duties as dragon would have occasioned him far less of mental anguish.

Celio was writing one day in a room adjoining the apartment which Canova had used as his studio in the casino of Villa Borghese, when he was startled by a heavy step in the room which he had supposed unoccupied. Throwing aside the portière he instantly recognised from report the imposing figure which confronted him. On a lesser man so

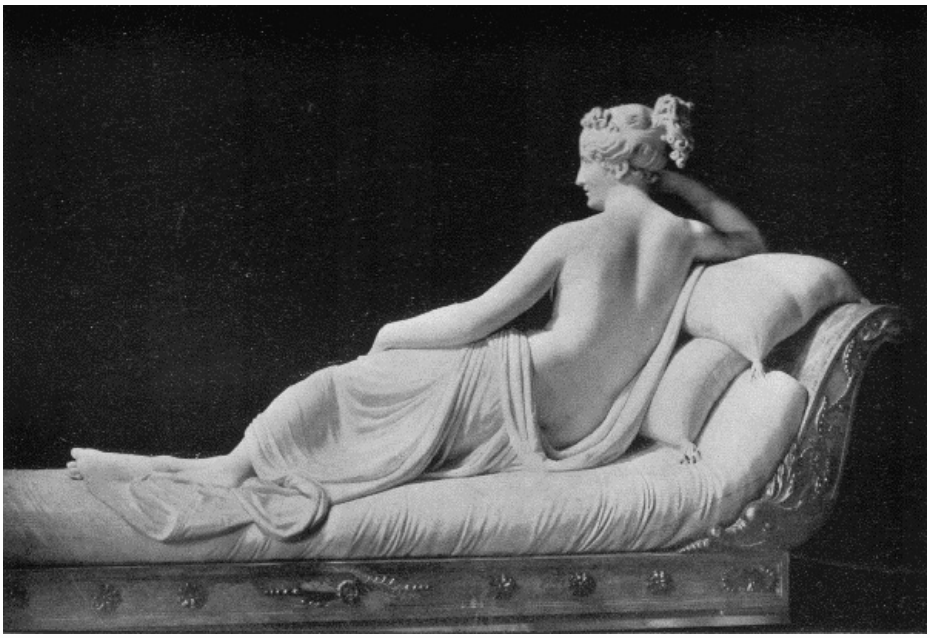
gorgeous a costume as the one which now dazzled the astonished eyes of the secretary would have suggested the mountebank; but there was something regal as well as Oriental in Joachim Murat's appearance, and the barbarous colour extravagances of his dress became him like those of a sultan.

His curling hair, black and long, fell upon a green velvet cloak heavily embroidered with gold which hung from his shoulders displaying a sky-blue frogged tunic, whose breast was covered with jewelled crosses and beribboned decorations. The crimson breeches which met the high boots of yellow morocco were braided with gold in the Polish fashion and fitted closely his shapely thighs, but the tarnished and battered cavalry sabre clanking at his side occasioned him no inconvenience, and it needed but a glance at the broken plumes of the ruby-clasped aigrette which decorated a shabby wide-brimmed hat to convince the beholder that this was no gala costume but the habitual garb of a soldier. He was spurred and played nonchalantly with his riding-whip as he returned Celio's questioning glance with a smile, half arrogant, half familiar. Wheeling upon his heel without deigning any explanation of his presence, he returned to his contemplation of the portrait statue of the Princess, and the young secretary's blood boiled as he saw that the expression of contemptuous familiarity on the sensual face had been elicited not by his insignificant self but by the masterpiece of Canova.

"A fair portrait doubtless," he said indifferently, "for I recognise certain points of resemblance to her sister, whose perfections, however, the Princess Borghese cannot hope to emulate."

"Pardon me, sir," stammered the secretary in tones which he vainly strove to render icy,—"but this is the Villa Borghese and not a public museum."

The intruder looked down with amused bonhommie. "I am an acquaintance of the Prince," he vouchsafed, "and have been invited by him to view his art collections."



Pauline Bonaparte, Princess Borghese
Portrait statue by Canova at Villa Borghese
Alinari

Celio bridled with increased importance. "Prince Borghese's specimens of antique sculpture are in the palazzo where, if the Signor will announce himself, he will doubtless be accorded the privilege of seeing them. This palazzita is the private boudoir of the Princess."

"So much the better," the other laughed. "But when she commanded that statue she doubtless contemplated the possibility of its being admired by other eyes than her own. No insult is intended, my young popinjay. It is all in the family. Restrain your indignation and inform the Princess that the King of Naples is waiting here in obedience to her appointment."

The secretary was not pleased with this message, and he liked still less the manner in which it was received, for the Princess hurried to meet her brother-in-law and allowed him to salute her gallantly upon both cheeks, and to address her as "Paulette."

Celio, excused from attendance, had no opportunity, though he stood sentinel in the loggia, to overhear their conversation. Finally the Princess summoned him. "Order my carriage," she commanded, "and the caleche, and ask the attendance of my first lady-in-waiting. Tell Maurice to arrange a lunch-hamper quickly. His Majesty insists he must set out this afternoon for Naples. We will accompany him as far as Mondragone and picnic there."

So they dashed away on the road to Frascati, the Princess lolling alone in her open carriage, for Murat had declined the seat beside her, though he kept his horse recklessly near her wheels, Celio following with the maid of honour and the lunch basket in the caleche, and one of Murat's orderlies (the other had been dispatched to order his suite to meet him at Mondragone) bringing up the rear.

At the wildest and steepest part of the road the party halted, and the Princess alighting announced her intention of taking a short cut across the hills while the carriages followed the more circuitous driveway. Murat threw his reins to his orderly, and Celio, true to his self-constituted duties as dragon, left the maid of honour dozing in the caleche and followed his mistress. She had brought a tall staff, knotted with a tri-colour ribbon, which she used as an alpenstock, springing lightly over the steep boulders, while the athletic Murat kept pace with the easy swinging stride of a mountaineer. Suddenly Celio saw him catch the Princess by the arm and both stood as though instantaneously frozen. Then, as the secretary came panting up, Murat handed the Princess to him, and taking a few steps forward and apparently addressing the landscape, for Celio saw no one said in a voice of calm but inflexible authority: "Lay down your gun, and come from behind that rock."

To Celio's astonishment a villainous appearing brigand advanced and knelt at Murat's feet.

"Why did you not shoot me when I was at the lower turn of the road, my friend?" Murat demanded; "you had the better opportunity then, for I had not discovered you, and I was for several minutes within your range."

"True, your Majesty," replied the bandit, "but I said to myself, 'that is too magnificent a figure of a man to kill, even though he is a king.'"

Murat laughed. "I will return the compliment," he said, writing rapidly on a card. "You have too much discrimination and obey orders too well to be a brigand. I wonder now if you have heard of a secret organisation called the Carbonari? I thought so" (replying by an almost imperceptible gesture to a signal made by the bandit); "you see you have made a mistake, for I also am a member of the order. All in time, my good fellow, and you shall use your rifle against the Austrians. Take this to the recruiting office of the Neapolitan army at Castel di Rocca. Never fear, it is no trap. This young man will read it for you." And the secretary read: "Give this brave fellow a place in the Corps of Calabrian Sharpshooters, and assure Captain Castiglione that he can be relied upon for expert guerilla service. Giacomo Rè."

The man went away trembling with emotion but Murat called to him: "Come back, you have forgotten your gun," and stood carelessly regarding the view with his back turned while the would-be assassin regained possession of his weapon.

The Princess clapped her hands. "I understand now," she said, "why you bore a charmed life when you came dashing out of the smoke of the battle-field, sweeping within a few feet of the muzzles of the enemy's guns. It needed not the command of the Czar that you were not to be fired upon,—the gunners could no more have done so than this poor outlaw. I comprehend also how you have managed to augment the roll of your army, which on your accession included but fifty thousand names, to its present list of seventy-five thousand, and at the same time have so marvellously reduced the number of brigands in your kingdom."

"Partly in this way," he acknowledged, lightly, "but the Austrian officers would be surprised to know how many of my best disciplined soldiers have had the advantage of their drilling."

"Deserters?" the Princess asked.

"And whole companies in Northern Italy waiting for the first symptoms of a war with Italy to desert en masse."

When the party reached Mondragone the custodian, surprised at their coming (for the villa had been long unoccupied), unbarred the shutters and let the light into the

dusty salons.

"It is roomy enough for a barracks," Murat remarked as he wandered through suite after suite of the great tenantless rooms.

"I forbid you so to use it," the Princess jested, "though you may occupy Mondragone yourself when you lay siege to Rome."

"It would not be a bad headquarters," he said as they came out upon the terrace. "Imagine a semaphore in the place of those monstrous and absurd columns—what are they, by the way? One could waft signals from Rome to Calabria and from the Adriatic to the Tirrenian."

That was an exaggeration, of course, but Mondragone would have been a good station in such a signal service.

"Those absurd columns," the Princess replied, "might themselves serve as semaphores. They are chimneys, colossal enough to serve a foundry, though they do duty to simple kitchens, those which prepared the excellent dinners with which Pope Paul V. entertained his guests. When the smoke rises from that one I can see the cloudy column from my windows at Rome."

"And I could see it far on the road from Naples," he mused, and then the two wandered away from their watching dragon and leaning on the balustrade with their faces toward the magnificent view earnestly discussed projects which had nothing to do with that unrivalled panorama.

Celio was in torment. What was Murat saying in that low, guarded voice, while his hand clenched and crushed the roses that swarmed over the balustrade and scattered their petals to the wind? Why did the Princess's colour come and go as she listened, her cheek much too near his passionate lips?

Since there was no way of overhearing this equivocal conversation, it must at all hazards be interrupted, and Celio prematurely announced the *al fresco* supper. Here, while he fluttered behind them in a pretence of service, he heard both too much for his peace of mind and too little for his complete enlightenment.

At first the talk was of family matters, chiefly of Napoleon at Elba, with whom Pauline begged her brother-in-law to be reconciled, for this was in the summer of 1814, when Murat, foreseeing that Napoleon's star had set, had signed a treaty with the allies.

"One would think I had done enough for your brother," he said, moodily. "I left my kingdom to lead the cavalry of the *grande armée* in the Russian campaign. I gained his victories and I commanded the *escadron sacrée* which protected his person in the retreat, and what is my reward?"

"What is your present position?" the Princess asked.

"I am your brother-in-law," Murat replied, "but, as I wrote Napoleon, I conferred as much honour as I received when I married your sister, and, as for my kingship, the Emperor wished only a devoted servant whom he could command, and he has discovered his mistake."

The eyes of Pauline Bonaparte shot fire while the other spoke. "You are very stupid to talk in this way to me, Joachim," she said, commanding herself in time. "You needed Napoleon—you need him now, for your scheme will never succeed unless he supports you. It is your good fortune that he needs you enough to forgive your defection. The family stands or falls together, *mon ami*."

"Evidently your mother does not think so," Murat replied, with pique. "I have just brought Madame Mère a present of eight fine carriage-horses. She declined them with thanks, and would not see me when I called on her in Rome. As for my loving brother-in-law, your noble husband——"

"Why should you mind Camillo's sulks since I do not? He and Madame Mère have such amusing ideas. It was not so much Caroline's correspondence with your 'dear Metternich' which offended them and my brother, too. They have never forgotten that little affair of the silver lemon squeezer. Ah, *mon ami*! you had had too much champagne when you brewed that bowl of punch at the officers' dinner."

"I never said that it was the Empress who taught me the recipe and gave me the lemon squeezer," he retorted, flushing.

"Oh! no; nor told you that oranges and not lemons were used with Jamaica rum in the islands; nor why pretty creoles were like lemons."

"Do you mean to provoke me?" Murat exclaimed, rising quickly.

"No, *mon ami*, though I shared in that suspicion, too, for they called me a creole on my return from San Domingo."

Murat's jaw fell. "Do you mean that your husband thought I meant *you*?" he asked.

"Prince Borghese is too polite a man to voice such a suspicion, and I am too clever a woman to show that I have guessed it, but that is reason enough why I cannot accept my sister's invitation to take possession of the entrancing Neapolitan villa which you so kindly offer me."

"You are like your mother. You refuse my peace-offerings; you will not visit us?"

"Peace-offerings, yes; but make me some offerings of war, that fine army, for instance; and, by the way, if you will give me a yacht instead of the villa I may consent to be your guest. Meantime we understand each other. I will give immediate orders to my people that no fire is on any account to be lighted in the Pope's kitchens, as the chimneys are unsafe. Should I perceive a column of smoke rising from them I shall know that you are here, and I will come to you. If, on the other hand, I hear that you are in this vicinity on the business of which we spoke, I shall make Mondragone my residence; and should you perceive my smoke signal——"

"Then," he interrupted, speaking very low, but so distinctly that Celio's heart froze as he listened—"then, Paulette, be the danger what it may, heaven nor hell shall keep me from you."

They parted in the most commonplace manner, the Princess returning to Rome after the conclusion of the repast, but, though she appeared to sleep all the way, Celio marked when she alighted that her face, illuminated by the strong glare that blazed from the open door of the villa, was haggard as from long vigils.

Deeply distressed, the poor dragon spent a sleepless night, but towards morning an inspiration came to him. He saw his way to saving his lady without arousing the suspicions of her husband. She had forbidden the use of the Pope's chimneys to the guardian of the villa, plainly that they should serve solely as signals between herself and Murat. But the reason which she had given for their disuse, that they were unsafe, furnished the secretary with his pretext, and he wrote his master urging that they should be taken down.

Before the Prince had time to reply the event which he had dreaded took place. The Princess, in direct opposition to her husband's parting request, announced her determination to visit her sister at Naples. It was not in her secretary's province to remonstrate, and he was soon to gain a point of view from which the inexplicable behaviour of his mistress presented a very different aspect.

Arrived at Naples the Princess and her suite were met by Queen Caroline and installed in a charming villa near the city, and on the succeeding day the entire household were taken by the King and Queen for a short cruise in the royal yacht.

Outside the island of Ischia the party landed, and climbing to a ruined tower which commanded an extensive prospect, they plainly discerned in a hidden cove a little craft flying a flag unfamiliar at that time to Celio Benvoglio, a striped red and white pennon studded with golden bees. It was the ensign chosen by Napoleon while lord of Elba, and displayed by the six swift sailing pinnaces which made up the Emperor's little navy.

Pauline now informed her suite that she was about to pay a visit to her brother, which for important reasons must not for the present be suspected. Her maids of honour must therefore return to her Neapolitan villa, and, to keep up the fiction of her presence, announce on the morrow that the Princess had succumbed to an attack of fever. The Court physician would pay daily visits as would the King and Queen, but no others would be admitted to the secret.

With feminine fondness for intrigue the three maids of honour entered into the plan, while Celio, relieved from his tormenting suspicions accompanied his mistress to Elba.

Here, admitted to her conferences with her brother as he fulfilled new and arduous duties in the transcription of dispatches, he comprehended that the secret alliance between the Princess and Murat had been purely political, and with what tact she had

won him to reconciliation and co-operation with Napoleon.

The Emperor's plans were more audacious and far-reaching than ever. In their scope the movement for the independence and unification of Italy was but a subordinate detail. Pauline knew that her brother was developing a great *coup d'état*, that he would presently escape from Elba and seize again the reins of power, and it was she who had first perceived and who now explained to him how the undercurrent of events in Italy might become a factor in his scheme.

Agitators had been busy in every part of the peninsula firing patriot hearts to throw off the domination of the three foreign powers which held them enslaved. The King of Naples by naturalising himself as an Italian, and compelling his French soldiers to do so, had been permitted to take part in the plot. It is possible that the revolutionists, who saw the immense advantage of the services of so able a general as Murat, intended to repudiate him after they had gained their ends. But at that time they flattered him with the hope of becoming the king as well as the deliverer of all Italy.

As Celio Benvoglio toiled over his papers he was amazed at the imagination of his mistress which had first discerned the possibility of making the cause of Italian liberty serve her brother's ambitious imperialism, and the marvellous finesse with which she had vanquished Murat's gascon envy and resentment and made him once more a tool in the hand of the Emperor. Still more he admired Napoleon's acumen and resource as he saw order coming out of chaos and all things working together for the success of his stupendous undertaking. The Emperor had planned to first secure Paris, and then, proclaiming the independence of Italy, to make common cause with her against Austria and at the head of the united French and Italian armies, one hundred thousand strong, march by way of the Julian Alps upon Vienna.

As the impressionable secretary traced the burning proclamation which Napoleon dictated to his old soldiers, he doubted not that it would fire the heart of every veteran and the great enterprise seemed infallible.

"Take again the eagles you followed at Ulm, Austerlitz, Jena, and Montmirail," pleaded their adored commander. "Range yourselves under the banners of your old chief. Victory shall march with every step. In your old age you shall say with pride, I also was one of that great army which twice entered the walls of Vienna, took Rome, Berlin, Madrid, and Moscow, and which delivered Paris from domestic treason and the occupation of strangers."

What wonder that, carried away by the immensity and daring of the conquest of the continent, the happiness of one longing heart should have seemed a very insignificant thing, and that Celio should have quite forgotten that his master, Camillo Borghese, was waiting for some reassuring word from him, that he had heard of the Princess's reckless removal to Naples, and was distracted between anger at her flagrant disregard of his wishes, suspicion of what such heartlessness might mean, and acute distress on learning of her illness? The Prince could not, on account of personal reasons, present himself at the Court of the King of Naples, but he had written repeatedly to Celio Benvoglio and these letters the first maid of honour, finding no opportunity to forward to Elba, had judged best to retain at Naples unopened until the return of the secretary.

So the days flew for the Princess and dragged for her husband, until at midnight on the twenty-seventh of February, 1815, Napoleon with his handful of devoted soldiers embarked for France, and his sister returned to Naples with instructions for Murat. Then the Neapolitan villa was suddenly vacated and the seven carriages of the Princess took up their line of march for Rome.

She had found awaiting her at Naples letters in which her husband passionately besought her to return; and, while her face flushed as she realised the motives which he attributed to Murat, her heart swelled with triumph that he believed in her in spite of all.

"He loves me!" she murmured to herself unguardedly, in the presence of her secretary.

"Then give me leave to write him," the young man cried, impulsively, "that I may relieve his anxiety. Let me bid him join you at Rome. Think, dearest madam, what he must suffer."

But at that word the Princess frowned. "And do you think I have not suffered?" she cried. "I am glad that he is jealous, since it proves that he can love. Nevertheless I

would gladly summon him if I could. But do you not see, Celio, that he must not be implicated in our plots? If we fail, he must be known to have had no letters from me. I forbid you to communicate with him until I give you permission. Camillo is too honest to make a good conspirator. If I can wait, cannot you? The game may not be worth the candle, but I will play it to the end."

The little cavalcade paused at Mondragone, for the Princess had decided to spend a few weeks at her Frascati villa. Here, to her indignation, she found engineers preparing to take down the Pope's chimneys.

"On whose authority do you presume to do a thing so outrageous?" she demanded, and they showed her the order of Prince Borghese.

"Delay the execution of these instructions until such time as they are repeated," she commanded. "I have decided to take up my residence here for the present, and cannot be disturbed by repairs and alterations."

When the men were gone she faced her secretary in consternation. "Who can have incited Camillo to such a resolution?" she demanded, and the consciousness of guilt in his face was a sufficient answer.

"It was you, dear lady, who put the idea into my head," he stammered; "you said the chimneys were cracked and might set fire to the villa."

"Spy and traitor," she hissed, "you tried to make it impossible for me to communicate with Murat. It is your idiotic suspicions that have roused Camillo's jealousy."

"You have said that you were glad of that jealousy," Celio ventured; and the Princess laughed bitterly, then softening, said: "I do believe you thought yourself acting for my good, oh, foolish little dragon. Confess, my poor boy, that Pauline Borghese has the wit to take care of herself."

Very humbly Celio confessed that this was evident, but his troubles were by no means over. A fortnight later Italy was electrified by the startling rumour that the King of Naples had declared war with Austria and was marching toward Lombardy.

The Princess was struck with consternation, for she knew that Napoleon could not so soon have perfected his arrangements for making a junction with Murat. Though she entertained no one it was noticed by her neighbours that the Pope's chimneys smoked continually, as though the most elaborate banquets were in preparation and one night the expected guest arrived.

Murat had intended to give Rome a wide berth, stealing around it by the Abruzzi. But his left wing had scouts on the western slopes of the Sabine Mountains and were instructed to keep a lookout for the smoke signal from Mondragone, and he had ridden across the mountains for a day and half a night to answer her summons.

She gave him food and a fresh horse, but she sent him back to the Castello Borghese at Monte Compatri for his lodging, with many reproaches and gloomy prophecies for his mad precipitation in anticipating the *mot d'ordre* of Napoleon.

Theirs was no loving tryst, but a stormy altercation, for Murat defended his act and refused her entreaties, which were rather in the nature of commands, to go back to Naples and wait for advice from his general.

"Why should I put myself under his orders?" he demanded. "Austria has taken alarm and is pouring its forces into Lombardy. If I do not secure Milan at once it will be too late and the opportunity will be lost. Who knows when Napoleon will think of us? They say he is at Paris preparing to meet the allies in Belgium. Our little rendezvous for the excursion to Vienna is apparently forgotten. He has other matters to attend to. Well, so have I. I am weary of governing for him. When I am King of Italy I will rule according to the ideas of Joachim Murat."

"You would never have been a King in name but for him," she replied hotly, "you are not fit to rule. You are a good soldier, Joachim, but you need your master."

So they parted in bitterness, and Celio, who was present at their interview, rejoiced that such was the manner of their parting, and prayed that they might never meet again, but that prayer was not to be answered.

The Princess returned to Rome and soon received information of the fulfilment of her prophecy. For a few days Murat held Bologna, then the Austrians swooped down upon him and he met them gallantly, but disastrously, near Modena. Reverse followed reverse and at Tolentino his mad campaign of six weeks ended in total defeat. His

army fled in all directions, and a refugee brought word that Murat, scorning surrender, had fallen sabring desperately to the last.

Pauline received the news, pale but unshaken. "My poor sister," she said, and then quickly, "but she knows her refuge; by this time doubtless she is on her way to Napoleon." Then a great light illumined her face. "The revolution has failed, my work is done. I can now write to Camillo."

She was writing when a messenger entered with a letter from her husband. "He is coming, Celio," she cried joyfully. "He will be here in an hour. He writes that in disaster and grief his place is at my side, and he could not wait my summons. Oh, Celio, was there ever such magnanimity?"

As she rang to give orders for her husband's reception, her third maid of honour, Pippa Serbonella, a waspish, deceitful creature whom Celio had never liked, flung wide the curtain of the window and cried: "Eccellentissima, look,—the chimneys of Mondragone!"

It was true, from one of them rose a thin waving scarf of smoke, fluttering and beckoning in the light wind. The Princess caught the arm of her secretary. "Joachim is not dead!" she cried; "he is there and I must go to him."

"Not now, not now, dearest lady," pleaded the young man. "Your husband is coming. Think what that means."

"Yes, yes, I know," she gasped, wringing her hands, "but I cannot desert my brother-in-law in his extremity. I led him into this, Celio. I promised to come when he called. I must keep my promise. Stay you, and say what you will to Camillo. I will be back this evening."

With many a misgiving the wretched dragon saw her drive away, and a little later confronted the eager face of Prince Borghese.

"My wife?" he questioned, and Celio could only stammer, "She has gone out for a drive; she will be back presently."

"Did she not receive my letter?" and the Prince had his answer, for it lay with broken seal upon her escritoire.

"Did she go to meet me? Have we missed each other?" he asked.

"Not so, your Highness," Pippa Serbonella interpolated, "the Princess had another appointment," and again with significant finger and hateful smile she pointed to the smoke signal. The Prince stood transfixed, and Celio understood from their two faces that the girl had given unsolicited full reports of that correspondence written in the air. "Oh! you women, you women!" he groaned, and "I will strangle you, traitress," he whispered as she passed him.

But the Prince had other occupation for him at that moment. "Now tell the whole truth," he commanded sternly, and the secretary told it, exulting that against her will the malicious maid-of-honour must confirm his statement that while the Princess had been supposed to be at Naples she was really with Napoleon at Elba.

A look of relief smoothed Borghese's forehead for an instant. "I never doubted my wife," he declared proudly, "nevertheless the King of Naples has certain explanations to make to me. Celio there was in that cabinet a case of pistols which the Emperor gave me."

"The Princess took them with her this morning," Pippa vouchsafed officiously.

"Ah!" the Prince drew in his breath. "It is of no consequence," he added. "General Murat will require but one and will doubtless lend me the other. Quick, Celio, our horses. The Princess has only an hour the start of us. We will overtake them at Mondragone."

They passed her in fact at Frascati where they saw her carriage standing unharnessed before the inn. "She is resting," said the Prince, "we will not disturb her until after our business at Mondragone is finished."

At the gate an astonished servant took their horses, and as the Prince walked through the shady cypress avenue his brain cooled and he formed a resolution differing from the one that had brought him to the villa. Upon the fountain terrace they saw the man they had come to seek. Not the galliard of his last visit, but a hunted refugee, his gaudy hussar uniform soiled and torn, the ballas ruby which had buckled

his aigrette shot from his hat, and a tiny rill of blood trickling from his matted hair upon the golden bees that ornamented the sky-blue velvet tunic. Stretched prone upon a marble bench, sleeping the sleep of utter exhaustion, his sword-arm beneath his head, the other trailing relaxed upon the ground, he was entirely at the mercy of the man who looked down upon his haggard face.

The Prince studied it for a moment in silence, then, with finger on lip, drew Celio into the loggia. "Let him rest," he whispered, "time enough when he awakes."

Ere that happened footsteps were heard and the voice of the Princess calling, "Joachim, where are you?"

Murat sprang up instantly.

"Paulette, is it you?"

"It is I. O mon Dieu; how you have changed! but we heard you were killed. Thank God, that is not true."

"I am beaten, which is worse," he said bitterly. "You were right, you see, quite right, all is lost—why do you not say 'I told you so'?"

"No," she exclaimed, "all is not lost. Go at once to Napoleon, confess your error, and atone for it."

"He will never forgive me," Murat replied; "and why should he, with his army of three hundred thousand men and an Imperial Guard of forty thousand chosen veterans? What have I to offer him? My troops have deserted me. I have nothing to fight with and nothing for which to fight."

"My brother needs you," the Princess insisted. "He may have soldiers enough, but he knows there is no such leader of cavalry in all the world as you, and he is about to engage in a crucial struggle with Wellington. You have your marvellous leadership to offer. You say you have nothing to fight for. Think of your honour, and of Caroline."

"Ah! I had forgotten her, poor child. I will do as you say, Paulette. You have the brains of your family in your little head. Perhaps that is the reason the good God made Caroline more attractive. Well, one more fight for her sake, and she shall thank you for it. I shall get to Naples in some way, then by sea to Marseilles, and then to Napoleon."

"Good!" cried the Princess. "Did you find your horse in the stables? I gave orders to have him well cared for until you claimed him. I have brought a disguise and arms and money. Now, off with you, for I can waste no more time. Ah! how much we have already wasted, Joachim, in this mad pursuit of ambition, when only love was worth the while. My sister will rejoice to retire with you to private life and to know of my happiness, for Camillo is waiting for me at Rome, and all the cruel misunderstanding is over!"

Thus ended Celio Benvoglio's dragon-service, for the Prince, forced either to overhear or interrupt the foregoing conversation, had fortunately chosen the former alternative. And here, perchance, should the story end, for the after-history of Joachim Murat is a tragical addendum to that happy dénouement.

Pauline overestimated her brother's magnanimity, Napoleon coldly refused the profferred services of his brother-in-law, confessing afterwards that this implacability lost him the battle of Waterloo, for Ney could not equal Murat in his skilful manœuvring of horse.

Murat, desperate, took refuge in Corsica, where he raised a little band of two hundred and fifty men, and landed near Naples, believing that his old troops would rally to his standard. Indifferent, or perhaps unable to help him, they abandoned him to his fate.

He faced his executioners with unbandaged eyes and himself gave the order to fire.

According to the account of an eye-witness, he first kissed the miniature of his wife, which he carried within the case of his watch, and with the request, "Spare my face," directed the aim of the soldiers to his breast.

Their firmness did not equal his own, and he was obliged to twice give the command before it was obeyed.

CHAPTER VII

THE ADVENTURE OF THE KNIGHT OF THE BRANDISHED LANCE

I

THE QUEST

ROBERT DEVREUX, Earl of Essex, was in one of his worst moods as he strode the deck of his flag-ship in Cadiz Bay on a certain June morning in 1596.

And yet this favourite of Fortune stood then at the summit of his career, having by a brilliant assault taken the city for England, while a letter whose seal he had just broken assured him of the doting infatuation of England's Queen.

It was precisely this letter, as he now explained to his friend, which occasioned his dissatisfaction.

"You will not refuse me, Will," he pleaded, "since I can not undertake the quest, you must go in my stead. These papers contain negotiations of such delicacy that Henry of Navarre dared not send them overland through France, and my word is pledged to him to deliver them personally into the hands of the Grand Duke Ferdinando de' Medici, at his villa in Rome.

"When I met the King at Boulogne, on our first night out, this seemed an easy thing to do, for I had reason to believe that our cruise would extend to Italy. But now in the hour of my victory, when I have sacked Cadiz, I open the Queen's letter (which was not to be read until the accomplishment of that task), and find that, instead of being permitted to proceed, I must first sail at once for England; and all forsooth because of her love and impatience to reward the valour of her favourite! Can such a summons be disregarded? Assuredly not; but my honour and the fate of the Protestant cause in France hang upon your decision.

"Since it means so much," replied the other, "assuredly I will not fail you. But why may I not do this under my own name, as your authorised messenger?"

"Because the Grand Duke expects the Earl of Essex, the accredited deputy of the King of France. The deputy of a deputy would have no prestige with him, and would not even be admitted as guest at the villa. And it is with its lady, mark you, that your true errand lies.

"These negotiations have to do with the marriage of Henry of Navarre to the Grand Duke's niece Marie de' Medici. Ferdinando will make and break treaties as suits his advantage. The lady's heart must be gained, she must be made so ardently to desire this marriage that she will refuse all other suitors. In short you must woo and win her for the King of France. For such a task you have every qualification. You possess a knowledge of the Italian language and the understanding of its temperament and character which comes from sympathy. The Italians will not need to know that you bear the name of Brandilancia to recognise that you are the embodiment of the type of chivalry dreamed of by their poets. Beware, however, of receiving or giving too much love, for report hath it that the heiress of the Medici is surpassingly beautiful."

Brandilancia smiled somewhat bitterly. "You should know," he said, "that my heart is in England and though my love should remain forever unrequited, it can never be given to another."

"An excellent safeguard, in the present business," the Earl replied cheerily, "so here are all objections overcome, and may you have many a merry experience to recount when next we meet in England."

Hand met hand upon that compact, and while one Earl of Essex pursued his homeward course another in a swift sailing pinnace flew eastward bound upon adventures of which the archives of the English Admiralty preserve no record.

As the young adventurer Brandilancia, who was to play the part of the true Essex, rode up the hill crowned by the Villa Medici he was struck by the resemblance of the massive retaining walls to those of some medieval fortress. As such they had served in ancient days, holding the villa safe in their protecting embrace from any uprising of the populace of Rome, while on the side toward the Campagna they had withstood more than one siege of the Goths. But high aloft, near the summit of this cliff of natural rock and hewn stone the inhospitable windowless expanse was broken by a row of arched openings, and silhouetted against the dark void of one of these he caught a glimpse of a face framed in golden hair.

Though so far above him the lady, who had been gazing down the road from sheer ennui, had noticed the graceful figure of the cavalier, and had watched his approach until he halted with upturned face beneath her window. At that instant a little fan opening as it fell, dropped from her hand and fluttered in the light breeze, like a bird with a broken wing, beyond the road and into the ravine at its side.

Instantly Brandilancia sprang from his horse and, vaulting over the low embankment, clambered down the incline. A smiling contadina, who was beating out her linen on the margin of a basin of water, assisted him in his search, but having found the fan she was so curious in regard to its donor that Brandilancia endeavoured to divert her attention by plying her with questions concerning the locality. From her replies he learned that the washing pool was fed from an old aqueduct which passed under the Villa Medici on its way to supply the fountains of Rome.

"See, Signor," she said, pointing out a nail-studded oaken door concealed in the angle of a huge abutment, "they say that if that door were not bolted on the inside one might enter the tunnel which brings the water through the hill from its source miles away. There is a legend, too, that a Roman princess who lived up yonder, centuries ago, betrayed the secret to the barbarians, who came through the tunnel and sacked Rome."

Brandilancia paid little heed to this information, not dreaming that he would one day be indebted to it for escape from the villa which he was now so blithely entering. Climbing back to the roadway he waved the fan above his head and was greeted by a light clapping of hands from the lofty window. Who could the lady be? He would ascertain in time, and until he did so it was pleasant to reflect that some one within the villa was interested in his coming and had wafted him this welcome.

He had need of hospitality for he was faint from the ride from Ostia in the heat of an Italian June. The beautiful gardens glowed in dazzling sunshine which the scintillating jets of the fountains reflected and intensified. The statues seemed to shrink from the blinding light into their niches in the great square-cut hedges, and the tessellated pavement was hot beneath his tread.

Every detail of the antique relievi which the façade of the palace had been designed to display was brought out by the intense illumination. In its lavish ornamentation and elegant proportions the building suggested a carved ivory cabinet, but one rifled of its jewels, for except for the keeper of the gate-lodge, to whom he had tossed his bridle, he had met no guards. The great doorway stood invitingly open, but Brandilancia hesitated to enter and looked about for some means of announcing his presence.

"Is the villa under some enchantment?" he asked himself. "If so some imp or sprite should lurk hereabouts and now make its appearance."

As if in answer to this mental question a peal of elfish laughter greeted his ear,—a mirthless, falsetto cackle, like that of a parrot, and half hidden behind one of the great marble lions in the shade of the loggia he discerned a grotesque little creature, with the figure of a child and a woman's face, old in its expression of slyness and malignity.

Brandilancia started, although he knew that it was the custom of Italian princes to maintain dwarfs in their households. This woman, probably a dependent, was dressed like a princess. Her dress though soiled was of stiff brocade embroidered with gold thread, and the high lace ruff, which made her swarthy complexion darker by contrast with its whiteness, was edged with seed pearls.

"Come in, my lord," she croaked. "The Grand Duke regretted that, obliged to be temporarily in Florence, he could not receive you, but awaiting his return the villa is at

your service, and the Grand Duchess and the Signorina will endeavour to make the time pass pleasantly."

He followed her, wondering as to her position. "How did you know me?" he asked. "You are expected," she replied, "and no one but an Englishman would have called at the hour of the siesta. Shall I show your worship to your own room, or will you await the ladies in the library?" His hand was on the little fan, and he was striving to frame some question whose answer would enlighten him as to the giver, but the dwarf's last word caught his ear, and acted like the scent of spirits upon a man thirsting for drink.

"To the library, by all means," he replied eagerly, and, as the heavy portières were drawn aside, the tiny creature at his side and even the golden-haired woman who had greeted his coming so graciously were for the moment clean forgotten, for he comprehended that one of his dearest hopes, long thwarted but never entirely relinquished, the hidden personal motive which had been the determining factor in his acceptance of this mission, was now about to be realised. The immense room from floor to cornice was walled with books: the writings of the fathers of the church—huge folios hasped in brass and ornamented with priceless illuminations—side by side with pagan literature, Greek manuscripts, and volumes of the Roman classics, while all the new harvest of the Italian Renaissance, in every department then known, had been carefully garnered. But high above the marshalled works of the poets, which his fingers lingeringly caressed as he passed them by, Brandilancia had detected a row of small volumes, and a thrill of triumphant delight shot through his frame as he climbed the step-ladder and with eager fingers plucked them from their niches.

For here were the novelli of Boccaccio, Masaccio, and Bandello, of Giraldi Cinthio and Ser Giovanni Fiorentino and of many another writer of romantic tales of whimsical gaiety, of intrigue, or of tragedy, and Brandilancia was a playwright gifted with a most exceptional genius for adaptation. He had read a few of these tales and had realised that they contained admirable material for dramatisation, but now by a turn of the wheel of Fortune the entire inexhaustible mine of absorbing plot of piquant situation and contrasting characters, slightly sketched but waiting only the touch of genius to spring into life, lay open before him.

With a sigh of supreme satisfaction he sank into the nearest chair and read like one under the influence of some hypnotic spell.

The secretary of the Grand Duke entered the library, shuffled about noisily, coughed, and even addressed him, but the reader was unconscious of his presence.

Curious as to what so enthralled the stranger the man of the ink-horn tiptoed behind him, read the title over his shoulder, and laughed aloud. Brandilancia surprised, laid down the volume and demanded the cause of this demonstration.

"Pardon me, Signor," replied the secretary, "but I could not refrain, your absorption pays me a great compliment for I am the author of that book."

"You, sir?" exclaimed the half incredulous reader.

"I, Celio Malespini, Secretary to his Excellency, the Grand Duke, a man of letters who has tried his quill in sundry other fields, as well."

"Then, Signor Malespini, accept my congratulations, for this story of the company of the Calza of Venice is one of the merriest I have ever read, and makes me eager to see their festival. Have you written other books as entertaining?"

"I have as yet written no others," replied Celio, flattered and wholly won by the stranger's praise, "but since you care for my poor efforts I can lay before your worship those of other authors more worthy of your attention."

From inconspicuous nooks and corners he dragged them forth and piled them before the appreciative Brandilancia, who forgot all else until a servant announced that his hostesses would receive him in the grand salon a half hour before the hour of dining.

Even then he would have turned again to the fascinating volumes had not the valet's added information that the luggage of the Signor was in his room reminded him that dinner in such a house was a function and not simply an opportunity for absorbing the provender necessary to sustain life.

Fortunately, Brandilancia was an accomplished actor as well as writer, and his theatrical experience had taught him to make quick changes not only of costume, but of mental points of view and characteristics, and Essex's wardrobe became him no more than the grace and manner of the gallant young nobleman which he assumed

with equal ease.

The transformation effected within the next hour was even deeper than this, for as his eyes met those of Marie de' Medici he knew that here, either for good or evil, was a woman destined to exert a compelling influence upon his life.

It was not love, he told himself, for he was on his guard against that passion. She did not impress him as beautiful. Her eyes were overbold and searching but cold; but her bearing arrogant at first, softened as the days went by into a frank comradeship, and he discovered that she possessed a cultured and an appreciative mind.

Hitherto Brandilancia had hidden a sensitive heart craving the sympathy that no woman had ever given him, under a gay and sportive exterior which made him a prince of good fellows, a man's man, and a loyal lover of his comrades, though they were far from appreciating his genius and his aims. But every serious conversation held with his young hostess confirmed him in his delusion that he had found a friend capable of understanding him. That she did not as yet wholly do so was the fault of his cursed disguise, which confused her perceptions of his real character with preconceived ideas of Essex. He longed to reveal himself to her, and did so to a greater degree than he realised.

Especially was this the case upon one memorable morning when, piqued that he should spend so much time in the library, she had followed him to that retreat.

She had found him absorbed in Luigi da Porto's novel *La Giulietta*, "a pitiable history that occurred at Verona in the time of Bartolommeo Scala," and she watched him slyly for some minutes amused by his preoccupation before interrupting his feast.

"Ah!" she exclaimed at length in pleased surprise, "you have chanced upon my favourite of all the books in my uncle's library. How many tears have I shed for these poor lovers but chiefly because I knew no Romeo so brave and noble and handsome to tempt me to die for him, or so devoted as to die for me. That was when I was a child of ten, my lord. I have learned since that such love exists only in novels, and have ceased to cry for it."

"You are very cynical, sweet lady," he replied, "and unkind to the novelists, whom I hold in worshipful esteem."

"And I also esteem them. It is precisely because the life they tell of is so different from my own, in which nothing ever happens, that a book-cover is for me a magic door by whose opening I escape out of the unendurable present. Even more than the novels do I love the plays, and to see them acted is better than to read them, best of all it must be to act in one. Ah! that would indeed be like living another life."

"True, dear lady," he answered eagerly, "but there is a form of diversion which to my mind is the most fascinating of all, and that is the writing of a drama, for in so doing we create a little world of our own, and control the destinies of the men and women whom we bring into being."

She shrugged her shoulders. "But I care only to be the author of my own rôle."

"And what," he asked, "would you choose that rôle to be?"

"I would be a Princess beloved by the King of the greatest nation in the world. Beloved, mark you, not bargained for, but sought out personally by the King who should love me for myself alone, a manifestly impossible plot even for a play."

"On the contrary, 't is a good one. Let us collaborate now in the planning of such a scheme. Let us suppose that for political reasons the King could not come in his proper person, but having learned to love you from report, were to seek you out incognito. Let us also imagine him so happy as to win your love. Would you be capable of the devotion which you demand of him?"

"Would I wed such a King whom I had learned to love, though in disguise? Most certainly."

"Ah! dear lady, you wilfully disregard the point I make. Would you wed this true lover, not knowing that he was a King? Let me put it still more strongly. Would you give yourself to the *man* you loved knowing that he was not of royal birth?"

"Ah! that is a different question; but I answer yes, for I am certain that my intuitions are so true that I could never love a man who was not in every sense a King."

He smiled indulgently. "So be it, we will write such a drama and show the world how

true love pierces all disguise, and knowing its own, challenges all dangers."

She listened eagerly, but she attributed an interpretation which he had not intended to his perfectly simple suggestion. Placing her own personality out of the question was impossible for one so absorbed in self as this egoistic young creature. If Henry of Navarre were but like his Ambassador how easy it would be to love him! and suddenly it flashed through her mind that they were indeed one and the same. What other signification could be placed upon this supposititious drama which they were to evolve together?

Intrigue ran in her blood and distorted her perceptions. Transparent frankness was incomprehensible to her, and it appealed to her romantic imagination that the King of France should come like the hero of some wonder-tale disguised as his own envoy extraordinary to see and woo his princess.

Had she confided this wild idea to the experienced Malespini or to her companion, the dwarf Leonora, whose shrewd intellect was out of all proportion to her stunted body, she might easily have been disabused of her error; but with an overweening confidence in the accuracy of her own judgment she determined to weigh every sentence uttered by the man who purported to be the Earl of Essex and draw her own conclusions as to his identity.

To a mind preconvinced, proofs were not wanting. Brandilancia, fancying that the little fan had fallen from the hand of Marie de' Medici by accident, naively offered to return it. Her face clouded. "Then you do not care to keep my first gift?" she pouted.

"Your gift? *May* I then keep it?" he asked delighted.

"In exchange for the ring you wear," she replied, and he laid it in her hand.

She examined with curiosity the device engraved upon the seal, a gauntleted hand holding a lance in rest.

"Essex gave me that ring," he said thoughtlessly, for he was too excited to measure his own words. "I value it, not because I have a right to the arms it bears, but because he thought me a true knight errant eager for any enterprise of honour and gallantry."

"Essex gave it. Then you are not Essex?" she asked smiling.

"'T was but a slip of the tongue," he replied confusedly. "It was the King of France who presented it to me when I joined him with the English auxiliaries at the siege of Rouen. We were much in each other's company, not only in the main business of fighting, but in hawking and hunting in the neighbourhood. It was the enemy's country, and this gave zest to our escapades." He spoke rapidly but he could not distract her attention from his inadvertent admission.

"Yes," she commented thoughtfully, "I have heard that you were friends and comrades in many a wild adventure. Tell me more of the King, since you of all others should know him best."

Neurdein

Henri IV. receiving the portrait of Marie de Medici

"I know, dear lady, that he loves you."

"How can that be since he has never seen me?"

"Love enters the heart through many strange portals, and Henry of Navarre knows you better than you suspect. Your portrait sent him by your uncle is engraved upon his heart. Love gives a mysterious power of second sight, and I doubt not that the King of France sees you at this moment even as I do, and that Marie de' Medici is for him as for me the embodiment of all womanly perfection."

"The Grand Duchess is approaching," she said in a low voice, "and Henry of Navarre is a forbidden topic—talk of anything else—talk of art."

The subject was apropos, for they were in the garden and Ferdinando's collection of masterpieces was all about them, but the Grand Duchess had caught his closing phrase.

"Who is it," she asked drily, "who has the honour of being the embodiment of the Earl of Essex's ideal of womanly perfection?"

"The Medicean Venus," Brandilancia replied unhesitatingly, with a wave of the hand which took in that famous statue and also the lady at his side.

The Grand Duchess sniffed, she was silenced but not deceived, and she remained at her niece's side through the remainder of the afternoon.

As several guests joined them and discussed with great connoisseurship the merits of the sculpture Brandilancia's thoughts wandered to his host. "What manner of man was this Ferdinando de' Medici who had converted his garden pleasance into a museum?"

Mentally reviewing what he had heard of the Grand Duke it seemed that all that was most admirable in the race must focus in its present representative. But Marie de' Medici had let fall a disquieting remark which pointed to another side to his character. "See, your grace," she had said to Brandilancia, "here is a favourite play of mine, *Il Moro di Venezia*, a sad tragedy but it stirs one's blood to read it. Perhaps it stirs mine because it is not long since tragedies like that have been enacted in my own family. Love and jealousy and revenge are a part of our heritage, and at times I long to come into my birthright, for such existence as I now lead is not life."

This half-revelation so impressed Brandilancia that he could not expel it from his mind, and when next alone with the secretary, Malespini, he begged for an explanation.

"Tell me something," he begged, "of the character of the Grand Duke. I do not ask you to divulge private matters, but only such as are public property and with which I would be acquainted were I not so newly arrived in Italy."

Malespini gave him a compassionate glance. "I thought that all the world knew that my master was a child of Satan," he replied coolly. "The Signorina told you truly. He caused the death of his two sisters-in-law, and was responsible for the murder of his own sister, goading her husband the Duke of Bracciano to the act. It is commonly reported also that the Signorina's father, the former Grand Duke of Tuscany, together with his wife, Bianca Capello, were poisoned by Ferdinando, though he made the act appear to be that of the murdered Duchess."

"And what," asked the horrified Brandilancia, "was the motive of this crime?"

"Is it not apparent? Ferdinando de Medici, then a cardinal, had just failed in his candidacy for the pontificate (outwitted by that fox Montalto). If he could not be pope it suited him as well to be Grand Duke of Tuscany."

"If this is true is the Signorina safe in his power?"

"So long as their interests are the same, Signor. And you who are the friend of Henry of Navarre should know that the Grand Duke is anxious to place his niece upon the throne of France. Should she set her will against her uncle's ambition he would scruple at no perfidity or crime. You wonder why I, who am in his service, should tell you this. It is because I am strangely drawn to you. From the moment I saw that you appreciated what I had written, that we spoke the same language, strove after the

same ideals, I was yours heart and soul. They talk of love at first sight, a foolish matter between man and woman, but when two men recognise that they are congenial spirits it is the most natural and inevitable thing in all the world. And so I tell you again, be on your guard for your personal safety. If, however unjustly, any distrust of you should be awakened in the mind of the Grand Duke, if he imagined that the Signorina had learned to care for you, then your life, and hers as well, would not be worth one soldo."

This conversation occasioned the guest of the villa serious thought. It obtruded itself in the very tales of intrigue, passion, and murder which he read to drive it from his mind, those fascinating novelli with their records of bloody hereditary vendettas, of innocent or guilty lovers alike done to death by indiscriminating cruelty.

"Truly," he thought, "in Italy a woman's kiss and that of a poniard go often in such close company that the sweet woman's mouth which lets love in almost touches the red mouth of the wound which lets life out."

Though not so definitely explained, he had felt the presence of danger before; but so long as it threatened himself alone it added a spice of excitement to the adventure; now, however, that he realised what grave consequences the least indiscretion on his part might bring upon Marie de' Medici herself, he determined to be doubly circumspect.

With this intention he held himself aloof from the superb mundane life of the villa, and, retiring to the library, occupied himself in translating and rearranging old plays. But all day as he wrote, though half unconsciously, his thoughts were with his fair hostess, and always at the hour of the siesta of the Grand Duchess Marie de' Medici was with him in person. It was on the second morning of his seclusion that she had tapped at the door and offered her aid in his work; thus converting the very means by which he sought to avoid her into a stratagem for the uninterrupted enjoyment of her society.

Had Brandilancia been more sophisticated, it might have struck him as exceptional that a princess who been brought up in the strictest conventionality should have granted the privilege of such intimate association even to so exalted a personage as the Earl of Essex. He believed her confidence due to girlish innocence, and was more than ever determined to protect her from himself. Leonora was always on guard in the ante-room, and joined them whenever she heard the sound of approaching footsteps. It surprised this world-wise little sentinel that on none of these occasions had the young man appeared to have taken any advantage of his opportunity, and she was irritated by the amused condescension with which he treated her. He could never realise that this grotesque and tiny creature was not an uncanny child, and he had nicknamed her good-humouredly The Owlet, on account of her large round eyes.

"I had not thought the Earl of Essex so blind," she said to him one day when they chanced to be alone.

"My eyes are not fashioned to see in the dark like yours, Owlet," he replied. "Tell me what it is you see."

"Many things, but the plainest of all to me is that whoever you may be you are not the Earl of Essex."

He was off his guard, and his expression confirmed her suspicions. She laughed maliciously, and her face, always sly and old beyond her years, was absolutely repulsive now as it reflected her gloating sense of her advantage.

"Put your mind at rest, my lord," she said, mockingly. "Your secret is safe in my keeping. I do not know your aims, but if you will take me into your confidence you are sure of success. I am only dangerous when I am angered. Why should you not succeed? The Signorina is completely infatuated with you. If we make her believe that you have assumed the character of the Earl of Essex from love of her she will readily forgive you that deceit. Together we can accomplish anything and everything, for you have a winning way with women, and I have brains—yes, more than you give me credit for—and this doll-faced girl shall make our fortunes. When we have sucked the coffers of the Medici dry, take me with you to your own country, and I will be your faithful accomplice there also, for, misshapen and hideous as I am, I love you, my beautiful adventurer; yes, with a devotion of which my mistress is not capable, for she is vain and shallow and selfish. Oh, why did God give her the form of an angel and put my soul in the body of a demon?"

Brandilancia, up to this point speechless with astonishment, had not been able to interrupt her, and the dwarf had climbed to the table, where, perched at his elbow, she had poured her confidences into his ear; but as she drew his face to hers with her small claw-like hands he forgot all considerations of policy in an unconquerable repulsion, and wrenched himself rudely from her.

"Imp!" he exclaimed, "your soul matches your body. You are hideous through and through."

The look which she gave him was full of malignity. "You shall live to learn that the good-will of a devil is better than her ill-will," she said, as she slipped from the table and left the room.

Brandilancia's uneasy compunction which immediately followed his hasty exclamation was soon effaced by the dwarf's apparent forgiveness. "We were both indiscreet," she said to him the following day; "let us forget and be friends."

But Leonora would not forget, and the young man had lost his opportunity of making her his friend.

She immediately carried her doubts to her mistress. "The man is not the Earl of Essex," she asserted. "He is some base impostor, I know not whom, but I will make him declare himself ere long."

Marie de' Medici was silent, but her thoughts were voluble. Since it had pleased her royal lover to come incognito she would betray him to no one nor even allow him to suspect that she had penetrated his disguise, but would flatter the King by feigning that she loved him for himself alone, and would exert every endeavour to make him sincerely her lover.

In spite of the injunction of the Grand Duchess, they often spoke of Henry of Navarre, and Brandilancia in the desire to forward the mission upon which he had been sent, told of Henry's unhappy wedded life, expressing with great frankness his own detestation of the craft and cruelty of Catherine de' Medici and the levity of her daughter Marguerite of Valois.

"You forget," Marie de' Medici had replied, "that they are my kinswomen."

"I forget many things in your presence which I should remember," he had replied. "Sometimes even that I, too, am a married man and, knowing you as I do, I can not blame the King of France that he is seeking, through divorce, freedom from a marriage into which he was half tricked, half forced, and that he is willing to risk salvation for the hope of your love."

That answer pleased her well. She had no doubt now that he loved her, and did not hesitate to assure him in many covert ways that the feeling was reciprocated. Brandilancia would have been blind indeed not to have recognised her admiration, but he believed it merely appreciation of his genius, whereas her mind was too limited to comprehend it. She was in love with the possibility of being a queen upon such easy terms, delighted to find that the necessary husband was no uncouth tyrant but a man of winsome personality whose delicate assiduities were ever present and yet never over passed the restraints of deference.

It would have been difficult for two persons to have more utterly misunderstood each other. Brandilancia had reached the full maturity of his mental powers. His genius had created many charming women, but the ideal for which his lonely heart yearned had only gradually taken shape in his mind, and the heroine which he now gave to literature marked an epoch in his career.

He had found the plot of his drama sketched in part in one of the novelli of Ser Giovanni; but the conception of an aristocratic yet gracious lady gifted with all perfection, with which he replaced the siren of Belmont, was not, as he supposed, a portrait from life of Marie de' Medici. The character sprang directly from his own intense longing, and by some unreasoning reflex action, his mind endowed the woman who happened to be near him with qualities which he created and which she unhappily did not possess.

The idol which he worshipped was absolutely the work of his own hands, for it was not until his imagination had cheated his eyes, and he had begun to look at Marie de' Medici through its flattering lenses that he thought her beautiful. And yet at the age of twenty she possessed very real attractions: a southern blond, not milky-veined, like the pale maidens of the north, but with all the gold of the hot sunshine in her hair, and the

rich blood glowing through her fair skin like flame in an alabaster lamp. Superbly modelled, but lithe and tall, she carried regally the sumptuous opulence with which nature had endowed her, and the soft curve of her shoulders, throat, and bosom had not as yet blossomed into the plethora which Rubens depicted with so gloating a brush. Nor was she precisely the same as when Brandilancia had looked upon these charms unmoved. All arrogance and self-confidence were gone or lay buried under the most appealing of coquetry, a shy tenderness apparently born of irresistible impulse showing itself in little wilful sallies, a glance or touch, seemingly instantly regretted, and followed by alternations of reticence. He admitted her bewitching but had no idea that he was himself bewitched. His was a literary passion. He was a student of life as well as of books, and he had never before had the opportunity of studying such glorious examples of both at close range.

He completed his portrait of his ideal heroine Portia, the noblest that he ever depicted, and found to his surprise that quite another type of woman was forming itself in his mind. Powerful outside influences mingled their impressions with the long-stifled hunger in his heart. He was not in love with his hostess, but he was starving for love, and each book that he read, every object of art that he looked upon, and nature itself was steeped with the charm and passion of Italy. If he tossed aside Boccaccio and his too suggestive *confrères* to seek refreshment in the garden it was only to find himself face to face with the famous statue of the most seductive of all women, she who made Cæsar her slave and Antony her "floor-cloth."

She obtruded herself upon him everywhere, for his very bed

was hanged
With tapestry of silk and silver,
the story
Proud Cleopatra when she met her Roman.

He had read with Marie de' Medici the history of the Egyptian Queen, and had brooded over it until against his will something of the fascination of the "Serpent of Old Nile" invested his comrade, and the name of Antony ever after called up in her memory also the inspired face of her fellow-student in the dangerous science of love.

Realising vaguely the influence which like some mephitic perfume, an opiate of the soul, emanated from the purely literary reconstruction of such a character, he laid it aside for the heart-breaking story of Giulietta, whose very innocence moved him still more profoundly.

It was midsummer, the quivering July heat brought out the pungent scent of the freshly clipped box-hedges, and set the mad flood stirring as in the brief action of the play. During the day the white glare drove the guests of the garden festivals into the shadiest recesses of the cypress labyrinths. The flowers themselves seemed to have vanished from the parterres, or, like the Cereus, bloomed only at night, plainly visible under the luminous sky, when the nightingales vied with the viols of the serenaders.

On such a night as this Brandilancia, who had been reading late, closed his book and, after the departure of the last reveller, stepped upon the terrace to cool his brain heated by inspiration. A kindred restlessness brought Marie de' Medici to her balcony and he recklessly sprang upon a marble bench which almost enabled him to touch her hand.

"Listen, dearest lady," he said, "it is your favourite story, which I have re-written with my own heart's blood."

Enthralled, though only half comprehending, Marie de' Medici listened as he poured forth in impassioned improvisation lines which from that day to this no one who has ever loved has heard untouched. The actor's training gave to the burning words of the poet artistic expression worthy of the most finished theatrical production, and as such they lacked not their due appreciation and applause though from a most undesired audience. A low chuckling and a clapping of hands greeted the close of the recital, and the two successful impersonators of Romeo and Juliet saw to their confusion that the scene had been witnessed by a burly man-at-arms, who now stalked from the shadow of a group of cypresses.

"Bravo!" he cried, "da Groto himself did not act that play so well, when I saw him years since in the Farnese theatre at Parma. But you have taken liberties with the lines and, per Bacco! have improved them. Whoever you may be you are too good an actor for such paltry assistance."

"And I know no one better qualified to pronounce upon a play than Captain Radicofani," replied Marie de' Medici, reappearing from the interior of her chamber whither she had retreated on the appearance of the intruder. "It is odd that you should have chanced so opportunely upon us as we were rehearsing our little comedy. My lord of Essex, permit me to present Captain Tuzio Radicofani, as brave a soldier as ever wielded sword, and one loyally attached to my uncle's service. What news do you bring from the Grand Duke, Captain? Will he soon return to us?"

"The Earl of Essex?" the other repeated in surprise disregarding for the moment Marie de' Medici's questions. "It is rare indeed to find one of Fortune's favourites so variously talented. His Excellency the Grand Duke, though he enumerated both your physical and mental accomplishments with great particularity spoke not of play-acting."

Brandilancia did not relish the shrewd look in the half-closed eyes, nor did he fancy the bullet-shaped close-cropped head with its overweight of occiput and bull-dog jaw, but he replied courteously, "such trifling diversion on the part of an idle man is surely less remarkable than its appreciation by one of action like yourself."

"The Grand Duke would also have been surprised," the soldier continued, "could he have assisted at this little scene. Your highness does himself discredit in referring to the performance as trifling, for, by the Blood, I never saw so accomplished an actor. The Signorina's talent likewise astonished me, though it was confined to mere pantomime, one might have thought it the languishing of a love-sick girl. By your favour, Signorina, there are indeed certain letters in my saddle-bags which my groom has in charge, but the varlet has gone to his supper in the servants' hall. I, too, am hungry and will seek the steward. The letters, with your Highness's permission, shall be presented on the morrow, which indeed is almost here."

They entered the villa together in apparent friendliness, but it was with a sense of impending evil that Brandilancia retired to his room.

Was it simply that the man had interrupted them at a moment when in spite of Marie de' Medici's tactful greeting no audience was desired, or was there something sinister in his coming? The more Brandilancia reflected the less he liked the familiarity which amounted to an assumption of authority. Radicofani's voice had not rung true. "The fellow suspects me. Nay, he knows that I am not the Earl of Essex," groaned the young man, as he tossed upon his bed; "and if his creature knows, then the Grand Duke knows also, and who can guess on what errand this villain comes? He pretended to believe that we were rehearsing a comedy, but he doubtless places the worst possible construction upon the scene which he has just witnessed. Was it a comedy, or am I in earnest? Ah! I have deliberately fallen into the trap against which Malespini warned me. I have lingered too long in this fool's paradise. Love and its penalty have stricken me in the same instant. Thank Heaven! no thought of this madness of mine can have entered the pure mind of my lady. Until this night I have breathed no word that could have betrayed it, and even now she doubtless thinks my ravings those of a poet. I will leave the villa to-morrow, lest my further presence here should bring trouble upon her."

Even as he formed the resolution a slight sound caught his ear, the cautious opening and closing of the door which led from the ante-chamber of his bedroom into the outer hall, the only means of communication between his own room and other parts of the villa. A light shone between the folds of the portière, and there were sounds of some one moving about softly in the ante-room. Springing from his bed, Brandilancia seized his sword.

"Who is there?" he demanded.

"'T is I, Radicofani," and the tapestries parted, disclosing the form of the Captain, towering beyond a camp-bed which had been spread across the doorway.

"I should have informed your worship," he apologised smugly, "that I sleep here to-night. Put up your sword, and rest assured that no one shall pass this room without my license."

"And could they give you no better lodging than that?" asked Brandilancia.

"Room in plenty," the Captain replied, "but it is on the Grand Duke's orders that I act as your body-guard, and I enter upon my duties at once, for I am responsible for your safety."

The prisoner inquired no further, but letting fall the portière, threw himself upon his bed confounded. His resolution to leave the villa had been made too late.

But the morning brought a fresh access of hope, as Brandilancia noticed between the widely-drawn curtains that the obstructing truckle-bed had been set against the wall and that his guard had left his post.

The dwarf Leonora, who was the only occupant of the dining hall when he descended, stole to his side and bade him await the Signorina in the belvedere in the upper garden.

Here Marie de' Medici presently joined him.

"My lord," she said, between her quick panting, for she was out of breath with running, "I shame to tell you, but you must leave us at once, indeed you should have done so long since."

"It is what I had upon my mind to say to you, sweet lady," he replied. "I have an appointment to meet at Venice ten days hence, and must leave my papers for the Grand Duke and proceed upon my journey, much as it irks me to tear myself from your company."

"Then you know not that my uncle has sent Radicofani to take you to Florence?"

"The Grand Duke does me honour, and under other circumstances I would gladly accept his further hospitality; but his Highness will understand that Robert Devreux is not free to follow his own inclinations."

"No, you are not free," she answered hastily. "Read this letter which Radicofani gave to my aunt this morning and which I purloined from her writing-cabinet. Nay, hesitate not but read, for it concerns you vitally." At her command he read:

To the Grand Duchess Christina de' Medici.

"MOST HONOURED AND DEAR SPOUSE:

"Your letter informing me of the arrival at the villa of a person purporting to be the Earl of Essex has occasioned me great concern inasmuch as the fellow is undoubtedly an impostor.

"His Eminence, Don Jerome Osorio, Bishop of Algarve, who arrived in this city some five days since, asserts positively that on the date upon which this rascal presented himself at the Villa Medici the Earl of Essex personally conducted the sack of the town of Faro in southern Portugal, and, having feloniously carried the bishop's library on board the English flag-ship, he forth-with set sail for the open ocean, evidently upon his return voyage for England.

"Imagine, therefore, my anxiety on learning that you have given harbourage to some rascal, who having by base practises learned that the Earl had an errand with me, now usurps his name and credit. I send this letter by my trusty servitor, Radicofani, whom I have charged to bring the villain with all speed to me that I may examine him by the question and learn his motives in assuming this disguise. If he has brought with him any papers (some of which he may easily have stolen from the Earl of Essex) see to it that Radicofani obtains possession of them before the rascal's suspicions are aroused. I tremble when I think how he may have practised upon your unsuspicious nature, and what villainies he may already have accomplished, or rather I would thus tremble did I not know that you inherit the resolution of the race of Lorraine, which, even when a mistake has been committed, knows how to wring success from disaster. Confiding thus in your courage and your woman's wit, I remain,

"Your loving husband,

FERDINANDO.

"P.S. For the better furtherance of my desires confide my suspicions to no one not even to my niece, but take leave of this caitiff with all ceremony as though he were indeed him whom he represents."

Brandilancia paled slightly, but not at the danger in which he stood. "The Grand Duke is correct in his suspicions," he said, "I have lied to you, I am not the Earl of Essex."

She smiled enigmatically. "You have known it all along?" he exclaimed. "Then I am a poorer actor than I thought."

"Nay, you acted your part well, but early in our acquaintance I knew you for a nobler man than the Earl of Essex. I have no guess as to the station to which you may have been born, but you are fitted to play a knightly part, on a far different stage from this, my King among men."

"And when I have won my crown," he replied, "the world shall know that it was your faith in me which nerved me to the effort, for I shall lay it at your feet, my Queen, the

only woman who has ever really understood or cared for me." His arms were about her and she was sobbing in the excitement of her triumph. "Yes, yes," she cried, "you will come again, but now you must fly. What am I that I should hold you thus when you stand in danger of your life?"

"Have no fear for me dear lady," he replied. "The Grand Duke is fair-minded, and will not fail to credit my assertions when I explain why I undertook this adventure."

"My uncle believes nothing without absolute proof. Such chivalrous motives as yours would seem to him incredible. If you fail to convince him of your identity he will execute you as a common rogue. If you prove it he will use every inch of his advantage ere you escape his clutches. You must fly, but how? On learning an hour since, that Radicofani had descended to the city, I ordered our horses for a ride only to learn that he had left strict orders at the stables and at the gates of the villa that you were not to be allowed to leave the grounds. My friend, you are a close prisoner. Think fast. What can you do?"

"Nothing, dear lady, but trust that since I have committed no crime I shall not receive the treatment of a criminal."

"What loss of time is this?" exclaimed Leonora as she suddenly made her appearance from behind the hedge. "Here I have stood on guard for half an hour by the sun-dial and you have wasted it in idle chatter. I tell you, Signor, my mistress is right, you are as good as a dead man if you trust to the Grand Duke; but take the advice of the Owlet and we will foil him nicely."

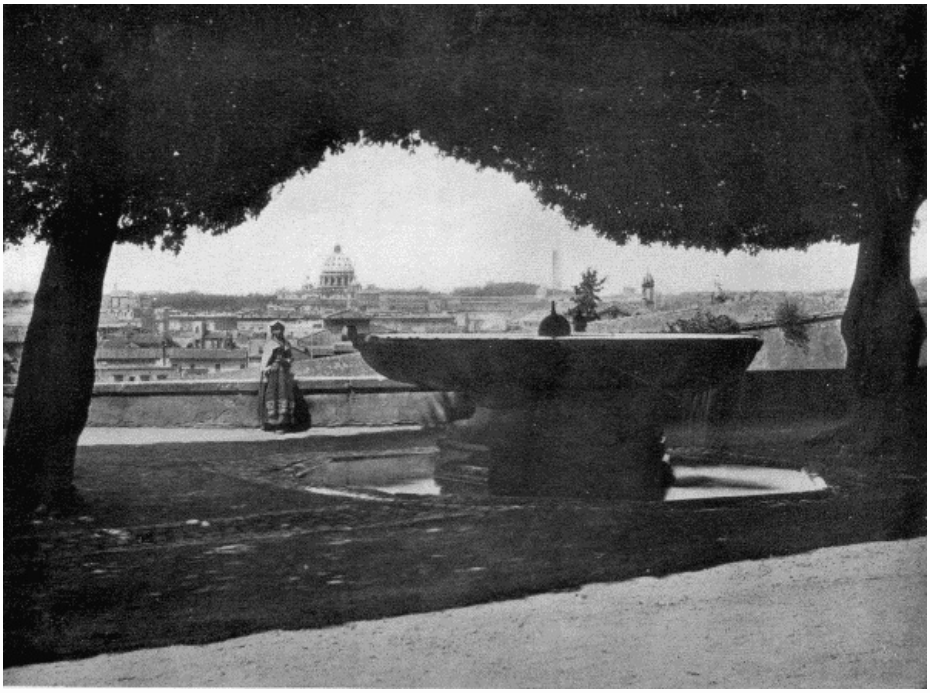
For an instant a suspicion flashed across his mind that her apparent friendliness was untrustworthy. It was she, he suspected, who had ushered Radicofani into the garden on the previous evening, or at least had failed to give warning of his approach. But he dismissed these thoughts as unworthy.

"What expedient do you suggest Leonora?" he asked.

"Do you not recognise that contadina," the dwarf replied, "the one standing between the fountain and the parapet yonder? She is a friend of yours and will help me save you."

"A friend of mine!" Brandilancia repeated wonderingly.

Leonora laughed maliciously. "Have you forgotten possessing yourself of a little fan which my mistress dropped, quite by accident, from a window on the day of your arrival, and that you were assisted in finding it by the laundress of the villa? The artful jade has a better memory. She does not fail to remind me of the incident and to inquire for you whenever she calls for the linen. I have been obliged to stop her mouth with more than one coin to keep her from blabbing to the Grand Duchess. However that incident proves to have been all for the best. Her cart is at the kitchen door, she is waiting there at my orders. Summon her to your room, purchase and don the costume which she now wears. With her kerchief shading your face no one will recognise you, and you will drive away in triumph throned upon her hampers, until well beyond the city when you can turn the donkey loose and catch the Venetian post."



View from the Garden of the Villa Medici

His laugh rang out boyishly. "The adventure of Bucciolo, which I read to the Signorina, from the tales of Ser Giovanni suggested that expedient," he said. "It were a good motive for a roaring farce, but I must consider the dignity of the name I bear."

"Nay speak it not," entreated Marie de' Medici in a whisper, throwing her arms about his neck. "I heard a step upon the gravel."

He regarded her wonderingly, "Let who will hear," he persisted. "It shall never be said that the Earl of Essex slunk from danger in a wench's petticoats."

"Well spoken, I like you the better for that," laughed a loud voice, and Captain Radicofani parting the shrubbery suddenly appeared, interrupting, for the second time, their confidences. "How unsuspectingly you children fell into my trap," he sneered. "I knew that the Signorina would warn you. You were acting a tableau I presume just now as you held her in your embrace. A pretty scene, i' faith, but one of which the Grand Duke will not be amused to hear. I had hoped to learn still more of the libretto of this little play, but you know more of mine. We will make no further pretence, and lest I lose you by further shilly-shallying, we will start upon our journey at once.

"Until we are well upon our way, Signorina, may I beg you, and Leonora also, to remain in your own suite of apartments and to attempt to hold no communication with this gentleman?"

Marie de' Medici bowed haughtily. "I shall employ the time in writing my uncle how unwarrantably Captain Radicofani exceeds his orders," she replied as she swept angrily from the belvedere.

Seeing that the indignation of her mistress merely amused the condottiere the dwarf took a cajoling tone. "At least your highness will remain to luncheon," she said insinuatingly.

"That invitation I am powerless to refuse," replied the Captain, "but you may order it served in this gentleman's chamber, whither I will now conduct him."

With a disconcerting chuckle Radicofani suited his action to the word, and busied himself with preparations for the journey, taking care, however, as he strode from ante-room to bed-chamber to keep his prisoner constantly in sight. The latter's hope of escape had reached a low ebb when Malespini knocked timidly. He had brought certain papers which the Signor had left in the library. Captain Radicofani received the secretary distrustfully and bestowed the papers among his own effects. "I will look them over," he commented, "and if innocent pass them on to our friend before we arrive in Florence."

Malespini retreated deferentially, but, once outside the door he executed a silent war-dance as an outlet for his rage. In its eccentric evolutions he hurtled against a

servant bringing the luncheon, and fully half of the viands poured like an avalanche down the stairs. While the man strove to gather up the broken crockery the secretary snatched the tray and with ill-concealed triumph re-entered the apartment.

"Is this all you have brought?" grumbled the disappointed Captain.

"Truly," replied the wily Malespini, "this light collation was intended solely for his highness the Earl of Essex, who I hear must keep his room. For your lordship dinner awaits in the banquet-room, where the Grand Duchess has ordered a boar's-head, stuffed with sage and onions, together with a pasty of pheasants, and where she will serve you with her own hands a stirrup-cup of the Grand Duke's oldest vintage."

Captain Radicofani sprang up with alacrity, but noticing that Malespini was edging nearer to his friend, ordered the secretary gruffly to pass out before him.

"Behind the bed," said Malespini in a low voice to the prisoner, as he lighted one of the tapers in the mantel candelabra, "and take all of these candles, *all* or you are lost."

"Idiot," shouted the Captain; "it is not yet noon. What need of lights? Play me no tricks, but leave the room."

Springing from his chair as soon as the door had closed behind Radicofani, Brandilancia examined the huge state-bedstead, and with a little exertion trundled it forward. Behind its tapestry hangings a secret door, suspected only by a crack in the wainscotting, opened beneath his prying fingers, and revealed a spiral staircase leading downward into pitchy darkness. Comprehending Malespini's admonition, he hastily appropriated the candles, and, drawing the bedstead into its place behind him, descended the dizzily circling steps. Eighty-seven he counted, twisting round and round within the turret, and then he paused, for he distinctly heard the sound of rushing water. The air had become moist as well as cool, and the steps were green and slippery with moss. Advancing with more caution, he presently found himself in a vaulted passage a little higher than his head, where a narrow pathway followed a conduit of dark water, which reflected the flame of his candle in a thousand glancing sparkles.

II

IN WHICH IT IS DEMONSTRATED THAT IT IS SOMETIMES EASIER TO SET OUT UPON A QUEST THAN TO RETURN THEREFROM

It was the Aqua Virgo, the old subterranean aqueduct built by the Emperor Claudius, that pierced the hill beneath the Villa Medici, in which Brandilancia now found himself. If he turned to the left he knew he would soon find egress through the doorway to which the chance fluttering of Marie de' Medici's fan had led him. But this would be to appear upon the streets of Rome in open day, and to run the risk of seizure by Radicofani's guards. Moreover, Malespini's advice to provide himself with so many candles was significant, and Brandilancia unhesitatingly chose the longer way, not doubting that it would finally lead him into the open country.

The stream at his side was of considerable volume and flowed with great swiftness, while the shelf upon which he was advancing was hardly more than ten inches broad. Both it and the wall were slimy with dampness, giving no secure hold to hand or foot. The pathway mounted steadily, and apparently pursued a straight course, but no opening showed itself in the distance, and the light of his taper penetrated but a little way into the blackness. As he glanced backward his shadow loomed in a gigantic and almost unrecognisable form, following him waveringly like a malevolent spirit. His footsteps woke hollow reverberations; the water gurgled and sobbed, and an odor suggestive of the tomb added to the impression that he was wandering in some unexplored catacomb. He could proceed but slowly, and the low temperature chilled him to the bone, but he pushed on resolutely as it seemed to him for interminable hours. "I shall go mad," he thought, "if there is no change in this deadly monotony," and at that instant the vault echoed with the beat of hurrying footsteps.

Brandilancia could see the distant flare of torches, and he knew that his candle was as plainly visible to his pursuers. He dared not extinguish it, but quickened his pace to a run, slipping, almost falling into the water as he dashed recklessly forward. Suddenly, but not an instant too soon, he halted before a void. The pathway had disappeared; another step and he would have plunged into a reservoir of unknown depth which yawned without a barrier before him.

As he lifted his candle and peered across the wide expanse he saw that the tunnel was closed directly opposite him by a wall of solid masonry, and in his dismay almost a minute elapsed before he discovered to the left an open archway which indicated that the tunnel here turned at an angle. But how should he cross to this doorway? The coping which separated the cistern from the canal in the centre of the tunnel was too narrow and the water poured over it noisily. He was about to attempt swimming when he noticed that he was standing upon a plank, evidently placed here to be used as a bridge. He retreated a few steps and pushed it cautiously forward. It reached across the cistern and rested upon the sill of the arched doorway.

In the brief interval thus consumed the footsteps had gained upon him and in the light of the approaching torches he plainly recognised Radicofani, who shouted to him to surrender. Thus beset he ventured the crossing, but the plank was rotten and broke under his weight, falling with him into the reservoir. He struck out in the direction in which he imagined the archway to be, by good fortune found it by feeling along the wall, and clambered upon the ledge which ran along the side of the conduit as in the first tunnel.

He had suffered no other harm than the thorough wetting and the loss of his candles, and the torches of his pursuers, who had now reached the opposite side of the cistern, showed that the tunnel was slightly wider than its opening, and that by hugging the wall he was not visible to Radicofani. The latter had heard the splash and regarded the water dubiously.

"Have you gone to the bottom?" he shouted, but Brandilancia was wisely silent. "If not," cried the Captain, "and you are hiding yonder within hearing, let me tell you that you will die like a rat in a sewer unless you give yourself up at the entrance to that tunnel, where you will find me waiting for you."

Drenched to the skin Brandilancia's teeth chattered with the physical cold, and fear numbed his heart. "What if Radicofani spoke the truth?"

But to carry out his threat the Captain must retrace his steps and ride to the spot where the aqueduct entered the hill. How far he had proceeded Brandilancia could not guess, possibly half or three-fourths of the way. If so there was hope of reaching the opening before Radicofani, and he hurried on with what speed he could consistent with groping his way with hands and feet in the total darkness. The exertion stirred his blood but the tunnel seemed to have no end. His hands were worn and bleeding with clinging to the rough wall, and a great lassitude was stealing over him when he caught a faint glimmer of light like that of a star, not the lurid glow of a candle or torch but the blessed white light of day. It was the longed-for opening, though still far away. He thought that he had out-distanced Radicofani and stumbled on, exultation giving him new strength when a sudden eclipse of this star of hope made him crouch motionless, grovelling close to the earth. A man's head and shoulders were silhouetted blackly against the brightness. The man peered cautiously into the tunnel, and listened; but neither hearing nor seeing anything, presently withdrew.

Was it Radicofani? Were workmen preparing to wall up the exit? Ought he to make a sudden rush for life and liberty?

Every instinct prompted him to this resolution, and he crawled cautiously forward to within a few feet of the opening. Again the man appeared, with a sudden bound Brandilancia was upon him and both rolled in a life-and-death struggle upon the ground.

So dazed was he by the glare of the full light of day, so nearly crazed with desperation that he did not recognise the voice that implored him to cease his blows, or realise that his supposed antagonist was the friendly Malespini, who, on the instant that Radicofani had discovered and descended the secret staircase, had slipped his guards and ridden to Brandilancia's succour on the swiftest horse obtainable in Rome.

Hastily exchanging his own mire-besmirched garments for the secretary's unobtrusive suit, Brandilancia, with many apologies for his onslaught, listened to Malespini's explanations of a circuitous route by which he could avoid Radicofani, ride to Orte, and, leaving the horse at the inn stables, take the diligence on the following day for Venice. Malespini's suggestions, acceptable in themselves, were gratifyingly supplemented by a tender letter from Marie de' Medici and a purse well filled with gold.

"Of the money I have fortunately no need," Brandilancia replied, "but the care of

your mistress for my safety and your own pains in my behalf command my eternal gratitude. You shall both hear from me from Venice, and so farewell."

Malespini's scheme seemed at first likely to be crowned with success, and having secured his seat in the Venetian post, Brandilancia naturally imagined his troubles at an end; but shortly after leaving Orte, where the road turns to the eastward for its climb over the Apennines, the lumbering vehicle came to a sudden halt. Shouts and oaths without, the shrieks of a woman at his side, and the opening of the door by a masked man, formidably armed, sufficiently explained the situation.

The passengers on dismounting were relieved of their purses by the bandits, but, with the exception of Brandilancia, were allowed to proceed upon their journey. No explanation was offered for this discrimination, but there was something familiar in the figure of the leader, who, after pointing out Brandilancia, had ridden rapidly on in advance of his men, and the captive wondered at the excellent accoutrements of the band and the good quality of the horse which he was compelled to mount.

They struck at once into a wild mountain gorge, avoiding villages and farms, and when at noon the brigands halted for refreshments in a little wood, and removed their masks, Brandilancia recognised no familiar faces.

Remounting, the brigands pursued their way up a steep bridle path, their destination a strong castle, perched high on a spur of the mountain. The prisoner's heart sank as he noted its isolation and strength, for here a captive might remain for years and finally die undiscovered.

But Brandilancia had not reckoned on the cupidity of his host. His capture had been planned not by hatred, but in the hope of ransom, as was explained to him by the brigand chief, into whose presence he was led upon his arrival at the stronghold.

The man still wore his mask, but at the first word which he uttered Brandilancia to his astonishment recognised the condottiere Radicofani. Accosted by name, the Captain removed his mask, and coolly confronted his prisoner.

"It is as well," he said, "that you should understand the situation. Your flight and apparent escape remove my accountability to the Grand Duke for your person. I should not have troubled myself further about you, were it not that upon my empty-handed return to the villa the Signorina Marie de' Medici very indiscreetly taunted me with having allowed a far more important personage than the Earl of Essex to slip unrecognised through my fingers. Just who you are she did not see fit to divulge; but I gathered that you are of sufficient consequence for your friends to be willing to pay handsomely for your release. You may therefore write to them, and I will see that your letters reach their destination on condition that you advise the fulfilment of my demands."

"The Signorina has unwittingly misled you," Brandilancia replied. "The Grand Duke was right in his belief that the Earl of Essex had sailed for England, but though I am his accredited representative, as I hope to prove to your master if you will convey me to him, I am a man of no wealth and one whom the world will not miss."

"Tush! my fine fellow; it is useless to attempt to deceive me, and it is against your own interest; for you can make better terms with me than with the Grand Duke, who is by far a greater brigand than your present host."

Thus admonished Brandilancia resigned himself to the inevitable, and wrote two letters; the first to the Earl of Essex, expressing his regret that he had not been able to personally present to Ferdinando de' Medici the papers entrusted to him instead of sending them by the hand of Radicofani. While reporting his captive condition, he begged his friend to be at no expense or trouble for his redemption, beyond an explanation to the Grand Duke that he had undertaken the mission upon proper authority and should be allowed to return.

Having dashed off this missive at fever heat Brandilancia paused, pen in hand, moodily regarding the blank sheet before him until gruffly reminded by Radicofani that he must either write or give over the attempt.

He started at the command, for in imagination he had been far away in a thatch-roofed cottage behind hawthorne hedges, where Anne, faithful Anne, had so often welcomed her wild lover. Their wills had clashed after their marriage. She had objected unreasonably when his career led him to London, had been sceptical as to his success, and even, so it seemed to him, as to his genius. There had been angry

reproaches and bitter recriminations, but at heart he had never doubted her affection and had always intended to convince her of his own when he could also prove that in following the call of his talent he had acted for her best interest. His stay at the Villa Medici and its very hostess seemed to him now a hallucination whose passing left no trace upon his sober senses, but could Anne understand this? If she believed him erring was the high-spirited wife capable of forgiveness? He saw himself condemned and shame-stricken before the tribunal of her unswerving rectitude but none the less he ventured his plea in lines that had been forming themselves, as always when he was under the stress of emotion, with the clarity and perfection of a crystal born from the drip and ooze of some dark cavern.

It is of all his sonnets the one which rings most true, ending with its appeal for reconciliation after long estrangement.

"Your heart
My home of love; if I have ranged,
Like him that travels, I return again!"

He was not certain that he would be permitted to rejoin her, but he would not sadden Anne by his foreboding. His heart had returned to its allegiance; this was the important thing, and this she should know.

"I leave you now," said Radicofani as Brandilancia handed him the letters, "for I must make speed to wait upon the Grand Duke at Florence. Regard yourself as my guest rather than as a prisoner. I leave only a few old servants charged to make you as comfortable as the ruinous condition of this old castle of my ancestors will permit. The length of your stay is conditioned only upon the promptitude of your friends in complying with my conditions. I see that your letters are written in English. No matter, I have no desire to pry into your private affairs and shall send them by the earliest opportunity."

Brandilancia bowed ceremoniously, but sank exhausted into his chair. He was shivering in a violent chill, the first stages of Roman fever, brought on by his experiences in the subterranean aqueduct. For weeks he tossed upon his pallet alternately freezing and burning, much of the time delirious—now wandering with Anne through English meadows with "daisies pied" and "babbling of green fields"—and anon scorching the wings of his soul in the flame of Italian beauty and passion.

With the passing of the fever he eagerly demanded an interview with Radicofani but was informed that the Captain was still at Florence. He had written that no response of any kind had been received from either of the letters sent to England, though ample time had elapsed for their arrival. Brandilancia was not, however, to be set at liberty on this account, and days lengthened to weeks and weeks to months and he was still a prisoner.

The lofty situation of the castle far above the malaria of the valleys, swept by every wind of heaven, had completed his cure, and as he paced the sightly platform he found himself hungering for liberty and action. In this reflux of returning health and energy, on one exhilarating morning in early spring, when all nature seemed calling to him to escape, Brandilancia hailed with gratitude the arrival of the secretary Malespini bringing the almost despaired of tidings that his prison doors were open and he was at last free to depart.

"The Grand Duke has commanded this," Brandilancia asked, "through the intervention of my faithful friend the Earl of Essex?"

"Not so," Malespini responded drily. "You may thank friends nearer at hand, for the Grand Duke knows as little of your existence as your English friends apparently care for it."

"Then it is the Signorina who has effected my deliverance?"

Malespini shook his head. "The Signorina believes, as we all did until recently, that you made your escape to your own country. She is entirely absorbed at present with her approaching marriage, for your embassy was successful. Your papers, which Radicofani carried to the Grand Duke, initiated negotiations that have been carried to a successful termination. The Duke of Nevers, who is a Gonzaga, and a cousin of the Marquis of Mantua has come to Italy, as proxy of the French king, to betroth the Signorina."

"May she have all happiness," Brandilancia exclaimed fervently, "but to whom then

do I owe my release?"

"Partly to the friend now before you, but in great measure also to one whom you will hardly guess, that little package of ruse and malice Leonora Dosi."

"Not the Owlet!"

"My friend you might have rotted in this mountain dungeon but for her cleverness, and Radicofani's stupidity. The Grand Duke sent him a fortnight since to escort us all from the Villa Medici to Mantua, where the Marchioness Eleonora de' Medici Gonzaga is preparing a brilliant fête in honour of her sister's approaching marriage. On the way Radicofani, who is loquacious in his cups, bragged to Leonora of how neatly he had captured you. The Owlet took counsel with me, and together we so intimidated the Captain with threats to report him to the Grand Duke, convincing him at the same time of your utter insignificance (for Leonora declares that you confessed to her mistress in her presence that you were not the Earl of Essex), that he consented to your release.

"By good luck I am commissioned to present a comedy in the palace and am now supposed to be travelling in search of artists to assist in the performance. You shall return with me in that capacity. Though the Signorina knows not as yet of your presence in Italy she will be rejoiced to see you again and will speed you on your homeward journey,—for Mantua is on your way to Venice whence you told me you would take ship."

"I would be overjoyed to carry out your plan, my good friend," replied Brandilancia, "but shall I be safe? I have found such difficulty in tearing myself away from the hospitalities of Italy that I am wary of accepting further entertainment."

"I wonder not at your reluctance, but with the Gonzagas at Mantua you will be beyond the power of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, who though he is indeed expected to attend the festivities, will never suspect that you played another rôle at his Roman villa. The play is to be acted in part by noble amateurs, and the Signorina herself will take the principal part. It is the comedy which you dramatised from Ser Giovanni's story of the heiress of Belmont, for nothing else would suit the Signorina. You shall impersonate the successful lover. There have been many aspirants for that rôle but I have held it for you. Can you resist my lord?"

"No, Malespini, I cannot resist, for I am indeed what you would have me seem, a simple player. I will go with you since you need my service, and will bid your mistress and the Owlet also a grateful farewell."

Thus, though he had thought never again to see the woman who had so powerfully influenced his imagination and because he honestly believed her influence at an end, Brandilancia ventured himself again within its domain.

Tranquil, lily-starred lakes, blue as the heavens they mirror, lapped with caressing ripples the foundations of the immense Gonzaga palace and gave it the same enchanting environment on the morning of his arrival as to-day. Its rosy walls glowed in the morning light like a cluster of pink lotus-blossoms, while, a little apart from the main group of buildings, a slender tower shot into the air, and suspended from its summit, like some bell-shaped flower which droops its head, an iron cage was sharply etched against the glowing sky.

"Is that a beacon?" asked Brandilancia. "If so, though unlighted, I accept it as a good omen, as it were a signal hung out for my welcome."

"Heaven forfend that it should have aught to do with you, my lord, or you with it," replied Malespini. "The flame of many a poor fellow's life has gone out in that sinister cresset; but think not of it, for my lady awaits you within the palace. You are to learn how the Medici love, not how they hate."

Through interminable apartments regal with paintings and statues, collected earlier in the century by Isabella d'Este Gonzaga, the secretary led Brandilancia to the small writing-room of the Marchesa.

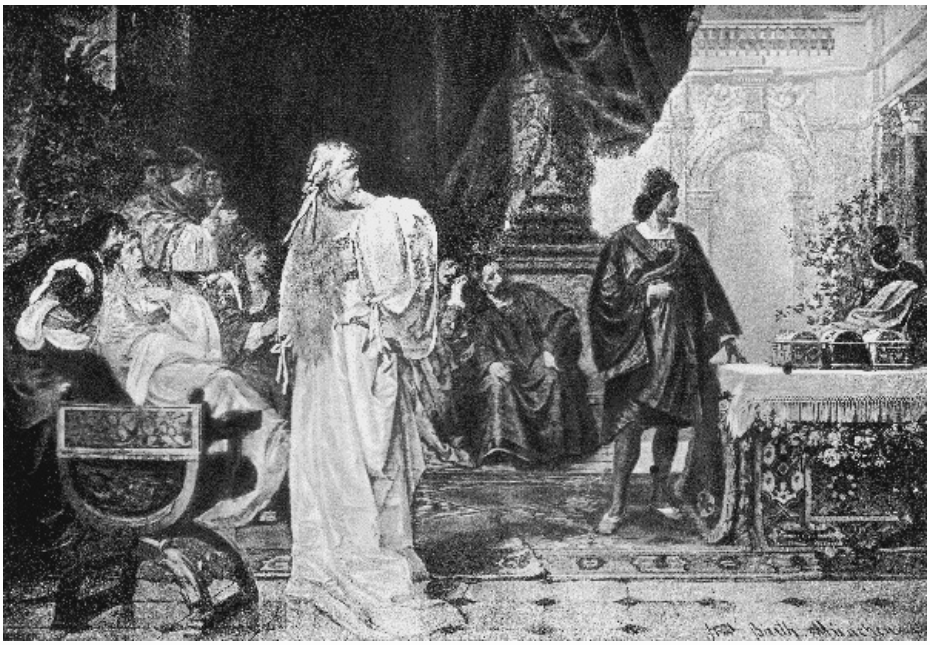
Marie de' Medici was standing alone at the window gazing at the darkening lake. She turned as he entered, and her cry, "At last you have returned, at last, O my beloved!" broken by sobs and wild caresses, made good Malespini's promise.

She believed that the King of France, instead of sending the promised proxy, had himself returned to betroth her at the approaching festival, when he would doubtless declare himself publicly. Since it pleased him, to make further proof of her affection,

she accepted his confession that he was only a poor comedian with apparent faith and with protestations of unshaken love. She told him of the despair with which she faced her brilliant future, of the loathing which overcame her at the thought of any husband but himself; and she begged him to rescue her from so hideous a fate.

How could he brutally tell so adorable a creature that the burning words, which he had spoken on the night before his flight from the Villa Medici, were but a poetic rhapsody, inspired by a frenzy which had passed with the glamour that evoked it? He strove instead to recall her to a sense of her own position, and he urged every consideration of honour and of interest, apparently with some success; for she became calmer, and promised to do whatever he desired, if he would but remain and sustain her through the ordeal of her betrothal.

He believed himself abandoned by the woman whom he had loved, but his heart was cold. He told himself that he would live henceforth without love, but would endeavour in purest friendship to save this woman who leaned on him for strength from making shipwreck of her life. They met constantly in the intimacy of rehearsals, and as these proceeded personal sentiments were occasionally introduced into the lines.



Choosing the Casket

From the painting by F. Barth. Permission of the Berlin Photographic Co.

"Ah, me! this word choose," Marie de' Medici exclaimed on one occasion. "I may neither choose whom I would nor refuse whom I dislike. So is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father."

On the evening of the final presentation of the play she startled Brandilancia by laying her hand in his as she interpolated the declaration: "My spirit commits itself to yours to be directed, as by her lord, her governor, and king."

The play ended, she led him to a portico overlooking the lake.

"I have only a moment," she said, "while I am supposed to be dressing for the dance which follows. You doubtless recognised in the small dark man seated at my uncle's side the Duke of Nevers, and you have probably informed him of your presence here; but my uncle little suspects that we have anticipated their negotiation. Now surely is the proper time to announce yourself. Wait in the ante-room of the Marquis, it adjoins the library, and after the Grand Duke has set his signature to the settlement, and the Duke of Nevers is about to sign for the King of France, enter, take the pen from his hand, and sign for yourself. If you wish I will accompany you, and we will confess that we are already affianced. Why do you hesitate? Surely this is now the only thing to do."

He gazed at her in uncomprehending astonishment. "Nay, dearest lady," he protested, "put this wild fancy from your mind. Your uncle would never accept me as your suitor; you would gain only dishonour by such a course. Bid me farewell, and forget me in the glory of your new life; and God help us both."

"Nay, I can not, I can not give you up," she cried passionately her arms about his neck, "you have made me love you. I shall die if you leave me."

"If this is true," he stammered, "if by some miracle you do indeed love me beyond all earthly considerations, and your heart is great enough to sacrifice all for the devotion of a heart that will at least be loyal, then fly with me from this world of shame and cruelty, to some paradise beyond the power of all who know us."

"Fly," she repeated in bewilderment, "and leave your kingdom, your crown?"

"Oh! what is fame, what is honour," he cried, "to love like yours? Listen, it is perfectly feasible. When I parted with my friends at Cadiz Essex told me he would return with the fleet as soon as he could refit, and cruise about the Azores, hoping to intercept the Spanish treasure-fleet. He should be there at this time, and Raleigh with him. But Raleigh purposed after aiding his friend in his enterprise to continue his voyage to the new world, where he has planted a colony. In Venice we can take passage with some merchant-man and join Raleigh at Flores. Come with me, my Queen to the new world, where we will found a new dynasty, for I can wait for my kingdom. I can write my plays and my poems there, in some lodge in the forest, and years hence, when cities have sprung up in that wilderness great actors will give them presentation before men who can appreciate them, who will honour our memory and glory that we were Americans."

She regarded him with eyes widening with alarm. "Surely you are mad," she said, "to throw away the Crown of France for which you have fought so bravely."

"The crown of bay and laurel for which I am fighting has no root in France, sweetheart, but in English soil," he replied wonderingly.

"Good God!" she cried, "then you are not—not Henry of Navarre?"

"Nay, how could that be possible? I am, as I long since told you, only a simple English playwright who, much against his will, came hither on the business of his friend the Earl of Essex. If you love me not I would to God that I had never so come, since, by some strange delusion, I have troubled your pure heart and have brought upon myself grief, and dishonour.

"But forgive me, sweet lady, this madness shall be as though it had not been, soon forgotten by you and safely hidden in the deepest chamber of my heart."

For a moment she gazed at him astounded, for her mind refused to credit the truth. In despite of his words she believed that he was putting her disinterestedness to a supreme test which she must not fail. She clung to him convulsively. "I love you, you alone," she declared, "and I will go to El Dorado. I will meet you to-morrow at this hour at the water-gate of the palace. I will come in the Gonzaga barge, and we will flee together to Venice, and thence whither you will."

As she spoke the door leading into the palace was flung open, and the Grand Duke followed by courtiers and ladies came toward them.

"Ah! here are our actors," he exclaimed, "bring the laurel crowns. This for my niece and this for the gifted artist who has honoured our festival. Come forward Brandilancia and receive the token of our appreciation." But as the wreath was presented the Grand Duchess caught her husband's arm, exclaiming: "Ferdinando, this is the false Earl of Essex who deceived us all in Rome. Ask Radicofani, ask your niece, she cannot have failed to recognise him."

"Nay, ask the French envoy," replied Marie de' Medici, "his Highness the Duke of Nevers will tell you whom we have the honour to entertain as our guest."

"I, Mademoiselle," exclaimed the representative of the French King, "truly, I have never before looked upon his face."

"Declare yourself Sire, I beseech of you," Marie de' Medici implored, and Brandilancia answered calmly:

"I am the authorised representative of the Earl of Essex. Brandilancia is the Italian equivalent of my name, which in English is plain Will Shakespeare. That I am an actor and playwright you have graciously conceded, and that is the only distinction which I have ever claimed."

His words carried overwhelming conviction to the brain of the deluded girl, and she sank fainting into the arms of the man whom she had so misunderstood and who was still far from comprehending the cause of her emotion.

"Leave my niece to the care of her women," the Grand Duke commanded sternly. "Radicofani, is this indeed the rogue who slipped from your clutches?"

"It is, my lord," replied that worthy, as he grasped the actor's arm.

"Then consign him to the hospitalities of our sky-parlour. In the cage suspended from that tower, young man, you may await my investigation of your case."

From his lofty outlook in the iron cage, dizzily suspended between earth and heaven, our adventurer obtained a new and wider view. The palace and its life dwindled to a speck. Far away to the north he could discern the white summits of the mountains that cradle the blue lake of Garda, while at his feet the Mincio flowed peacefully toward the Adriatic, where a good ship (on which, but for his folly in pausing at Mantua, he might on the morrow be voyaging homeward) was impatiently tugging at her moorings. Fool that he was, he had made his bed and must lie on it. It was a very uncomfortable bed at the present moment, for he could neither stretch himself at full length nor stand erect, but sat with his hands clasping his knees and his head bowed upon them. How long must he retain this cramped position? Malespini's words came to him with sinister emphasis. Would he be left here until starvation released him from agony and his bones bleached in the sun? The Angelus chimed from the belfries, the only structures which reached his plane, and gave him a sense of human companionship, but the tones of the bells sounded thin in the empty air, and his loneliness increased with their cessation. The sun climbed the heavens and beat unmercifully upon his unprotected head, but just as his thirst became intolerable and he groaned in agony, a low, chuckling laugh replied from a window in the tower near his cage, and turning his head he saw the malicious face of the dwarf Leonora Dosi. Repugnant as she was to him he greeted her appearance now, for it flashed through his mind that she might have brought him some message from Marie de' Medici.

"It is good of you, Signorina," he said, "to think of me in my trouble; or is it perchance your mistress who has sent you?"

He could not have asked a question which would have angered her more. "My mistress may not have clean forgotten her singing-bird," she replied, "but she has forgotten to order that his cage should be supplied with water and seed cups, and I cajoled Radicofani till he let me supply this neglect."

As she spoke she held aloft a flask of water whose crystal clearness seemed to Brandilancia's blood-shot eyes the most desirable thing in all the world.

"Ah! Signorina how can I ever thank you? and how can you get it to me?"

"Oh! I have thought of that. See I have brought a pole long enough to reach your cage, and the bottle is so slender that it will pass between the bars."

She attached the flask to one end of the pole with tantalising deliberation, pausing after it was fastened to pour and drink a glass of the water with expressive gusto. The gurgle of the liquid was more than the tortured man could bear. "Dear Signorina for the love of Heaven be quick. I die of thirst."

"Oh! no, Signor, one does not die so soon, or with so little suffering. Men in your predicament have been known to live three days before they went mad, and four more before they died."

"You hell cat!" he cried, "have you come to gloat over and increase my agony?"

"That is not a pretty name," she said slowly, "I like better the 'dear Signorina' with which you honoured me just now. You are too hasty, Signor Brandilancia, too hasty in your conclusions, and in speaking them forth. It might strike a wiser man in your situation that it would be worth while not to antagonise a friend who has come to serve you. In proof that you have misunderstood my motives I now pass you the water. It was good? You would like more? Presently. It is not well to drink too much when one is as thirsty as you are, besides I want to talk with you. Do you realise that you are in a very serious position?"

"Have I been condemned to death?"

"Not so. There will be no trial, no execution. You will simply be forgotten, left here to die. The Grand Duke believes you to be the lover of his niece. That fact would not in the least distress him, were it not for her approaching marriage, which he fears may be interrupted by some rash act on your part."

"Tell the Grand Duke, if you come from him, and the Signorina also to have no fear,

that madness is past. If I am released I will repair to England and never trouble her again."

Scorn curled the dwarf's lips. "Think you, the Duke would trust your promise? And as for the Signorina she desires nothing of the sort, for she loves you passionately."

"Poor lady," he groaned. "But for me she might have reconciled herself to her destiny, wretch that I am to break the heart of one who loves me. Tell her from me, that if she desires me to do so, and God in His mercy delivers me from this bed of death I will keep my promise to snatch her from the fate she dreads, and we will begin the new life in the new world of which we dreamed."

The face of the dwarf was contorted with merriment which made it the more hideous.

"Is the life of a savage in the wilderness a fit one for a daughter of the Medici?" she demanded. "You need neither of you die or forego a single luxury which your hearts desire, if you will gather your wits together and listen to me.

"Possibly you think that I have no influence with the Grand Duke, but if so you greatly mistake. I know the secret of my parentage, and have so disposed matters that my death would bring it to light. Ferdinando de' Medici will grant any request of mine. I am to go to Paris, not as the servant but as the Lady in Waiting of the Queen of France. Will it please you to join her train as Manager of her Royal Theatre and Purveyor of Sports to the French Court? You could then enjoy the society of the Queen without scandal."

His heart was hot with indignation but he restrained his anger. "If indeed," he said, "there is no escape from this loathed marriage for that sweet lady, I shall pray that no memory of me may ever intrude upon her happiness. Surely what you suggest is as impossible as it is infamous. The Grand Duke would never allow me to follow his niece to Paris."

"The Grand Duke cares not one whit what his niece may choose to do after she is once securely married. What I suggest is perfectly possible. I have taken a fancy to you, Brandilancia. If I ask the Grand Duke to give you to me as my husband he will not refuse me; on the contrary it will be a welcome solution of the problem before him. If perchance any inconvenient inquiries should in future be made by England concerning your welfare he will be spared all responsibility. His niece will have the plaything she desired, and will no longer mope. He will have secured my gratitude and can trust me to preserve the conventionalities; and as for you, my popinjay, your fortune is made. Do not fancy that you will remain a mere montebank. You shall exchange your cap and bells for a ducal coronet, châteaux jewels, honours, wealth in what form you will shall be yours. You will be King in everything but name. Henry of Navarre shall in reality be nothing but your condottiere, and I will not be *exigeante*. I know that I am misshapen, hideous. I ask only a little gratitude."

That word stopped his mouth, for he was about to curse her as a minister of Satan, but a touch of pity softened his anger and contempt.

"You know not what you ask," he said. "She would despise me, and I would abhor myself. Let me die without forfeiting her respect."

"*She!*" the dwarf sneered, and was suddenly silent. Her keen insight told her that if she betrayed to this strangely constituted man that the scheme had originated with her mistress he would loathe where he now pitied and every chance of success be lost.

"What were you about to say?" he asked.

"Only that you little know the love you slight. She would forgive you anything but desertion. Yours is a strange code of honour, that can win the affection of a noble lady and then throw it lightly away. I am going now. Once for all I ask, will you accept my offer?"

"And tempt that innocent soul to a life of perfidy and shame?—God send me death quickly and spare me such villainy as that."

"Your prayer will not be answered," she sneered. "Death will come, but not quickly,—unless you beat your brains out against the bars of your cage, and before that you will shriek and call for me, but I will not come. You have known how the women of the Medici love. Learn now how they hate."

Her footsteps died away and despair settled upon his heart. How long, how long, he

asked himself, must he endure this agony before death would come to his release.

The dwarf had left food and water on the window-sill in plain sight but beyond his reach. He closed his eyes but the odour of the viands reached him and increased his faintness. The hours lagged on, and toward evening a light breeze sprang up and he fell into a troubled sleep which somewhat dulled his suffering. From this he was rudely awakened by the swaying and jolting of his cage, and he realised that it was being hauled hastily and not too gently into the tower.

Men dragged him from it, a physician gave him a reviving draught and assisted him down the staircase at whose foot he fell into the arms of the faithful Malespini.

"Is it she, who has rescued me?" he asked as the secretary seated him in a row-boat which shot toward the palace.

"Nay, you are released by the Grand Duke's orders," Malespini replied. "I bring you great news, Signor. A gentleman has arrived from England who demands your safe return in the Queen's name. Even the Medici could not gainsay a summons signed 'Elizabeth' and emphasised by one of her Majesty's ships of war. Say naught of the hospitality just accorded you, I beseech you, until well out of Italy, else you may excite the English admiral who is the bearer of the Queen's message to some rash act, for he seems to me a man of short temper, and it were well that the Grand Duke in his chagrin were not tried too far."

"The English Admiral!" repeated the astonished Brandilancia,—"sent for me by Queen Elizabeth. It is not possible!" But, as the torchlight fell upon the gallant figure impatiently pacing the landing which they were approaching, he cried "Miracle of God! it is indeed Essex!"

"It is I, Will, of a surety," replied the other. "Did you think I would suffer you to die in the trap into which you had ventured for love of me? I have been consumed with anxiety, especially after the Grand Duke in answer to my importunity assured me that you left the Villa Medici months since and that he was ignorant of your whereabouts. I had quarrelled with the Queen when that news arrived, and she had ordered me to the Azores. I asked for an audience, but she would not receive me, and I left England determined to push on to Italy without her knowledge and rescue you *vi et armis*."

"You should not have done that, my good friend. Elizabeth has beheaded men for slighter disregard of her authority."

"I outran not my orders, Will, for I had scarcely left England when a swift sailing packet overtook me with letters from the Queen, one for the Grand Duke desiring your immediate return, the other my instructions to use all despatch in securing your person."

"But if you received no letter from me and had no speech with the Queen, I do not understand how her Majesty learned of my predicament."

"Through your wife, Will. When I returned to England from my expedition to Cadiz she sought me out, and demanded why I had not brought you. Then, as the time passed by at which I had told her she might expect you, it seems she grew wild with anxiety, and, journeying to London, laid the matter before the Queen, who admires your talent as a playwright and has herself some ambition in that direction. Anne, the artful wench, very tactfully persuaded her Majesty that, with you for a collaborator, she might write a comedy which would redound to her eternal fame. Therefore, our royal mistress bids you think of some plot which shall bring again upon the boards that arch-rogue, John Falstaff. I am to bring you to Windsor Castle, where you are to prepare this masterpiece, at the Queen's dictation (Heaven save the mark!), in time for its presentation before the Court during the Twelfth Night festivities."

"And Anne, whom I thought so indifferent to my career, to my very existence, did this for me?"

"Yes, Will, 't is a good girl and a handsome, and one you have not treated overly well, as it seems to me; but you will make it all up over your Christmas pudding."

As he spoke the great clock of the palace slowly clanged midnight, and Brandilancia turned white and caught Essex's arm for support. "Would to God that I might go with you," he groaned; "would that I had never come to Italy upon your cursed business. I stand here a doubly perjured man. How, I scarcely know (for I swear I set not about it cold-bloodedly), I have won the love of the peerless Marie de' Medici. For me she has discarded the King of France, and has promised to meet me at this spot and at this

very hour and fly with me to El Dorado. I left her stricken to the heart by my misfortunes. If I desert her now her death will be upon my head. See you not the Gonzaga barge is approaching in which she promised to forsake the world with me."

"Make yourself easy on the score of my mistress," exclaimed Malespini. "You have kept your appointment, but when she made hers she had no intention of keeping it with a man of your quality. Under a strange hallucination she has fancied all along that you were the King of France, and her fainting fit was occasioned by her dismay and humiliation on discovering that you were only the king of poets. I will not say that she did not find you agreeable. She was pleased when she learned that your friend had arrived in time to rescue you, and ere she left for Florence this afternoon bade me wish you *bon voyage*, and to thank you for much merry entertainment."

The Earl of Essex whistled softly, and an expression of infinite relief relaxed the contorted features of Brandilancia. "I have learned how the women of the Medici love," he murmured. "Thank God, our English women love in a different fashion."

CHAPTER VIII

THE LADIES OF PALLIANO

(BEING A RELATION BY THE CONDOTTIERE LUIGI RODOMONTE GONZAGA OF CERTAIN OF HIS ADVENTURES DURING THE CAMPAIGNS OF 1525 TO 1528)

I

THE NEST OF THE PHŒNIX

'TIS an incredible fable that of the phoenix, the crimson wonder-bird, which springs in immortal youth from the flames which destroy its eyrie. But it is not more strange than one which I could tell of how I found Fenice, and snatched the joy and glory of my life from the conflagration of her ancestral town and castle, in which, but for my efforts, her pure soul would have vanished from the earth.

Fenice, flame-bird, radiant and peerless, I had named her at our first meeting, long before the tragic burning of Palliano, for it seemed to me that in her vivacity and brilliancy she resembled a little dancing flame. I well remember also how at that time the longing came to me to warm my numbed heart forever in her presence.

I am no poet, but a plain man of war, and this phantasy of the phœnix came into my head in a very natural and simple way, for Fenice when first I saw her was sending up little fire-balloons from the garden of the Colonna palace. It was an unusual and a dangerous pastime for a young girl, but the sudden flashing from the gloom of those flickering lights, that illumined for an instant the beautiful face which the darkness as quickly obliterated, gave an additional zest to my enjoyment of the vision.

I strode to her side and affected great interest in her occupation. The balloons were ingeniously constructed to represent birds with spread wings, and it was the alchemist of the family who dwelt at Palliano who had invented them. "It is his conceit," she explained, "that rising from the flames they resemble the phœnix, a bird peerless in beauty and song, which appears upon earth but twice in a thousand years."

"Then that shall be my name for you," I said, for we were alone for the instant; "but

will you as tranquilly soar away from me, leaving the world the darker for your passing?"

Though she gave me not at that time the answer I coveted, I liked none the less the modesty which made her winning difficult. There were also other matters of importance to the world at large, which I must now digress to explain, that at first hindered, but in the end abetted that winning.

It was in the spring of the eventful year of 1525 that my cousin, Federigo Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, requested me to escort his mother, the worshipful Marchesa Isabella d'Este Gonzaga, upon her journey to Rome. This demand was the more reasonable in that the Marchesa was a most loving and munificent patroness of my sister Giulia, for whose orphaned condition the great lady had shown the most tender sympathy, removing her from our lonely ancestral castle, and bringing the girl up in her own brilliant court. Giulia was now at the height of the attractiveness which was soon to be so extravagantly sung, many still maintaining her the most beautiful woman of our time.

From that estimate her brother must be allowed to differ. A superbly regal creature she certainly was, but too grandly made for my ideals. Let the question rest, for her heart was ever as great as her body, and I deny her supremacy to but one other. At this time I loved her better than any woman in the world, and as she was to accompany the Marchesa, I was the more willing to lend my protection to the cortège.

It was an inauspicious season for ladies to choose for a pleasure jaunt, for their Majesties the Emperor Charles V. and Francis I. had entered upon their struggle for the possession of Italy. The French had already entered Lombardy, and the Imperial forces under the Viceroy of Naples, Pescara and Bourbon were marching to meet them, but the Marchesa was of an adventurous and fearless disposition, and was moreover bent in her present expedition upon something more than pleasure. Never have I known man or woman of such marvellous finesse as well as courage, and she desired above all things to obtain the cardinal's hat for Ercole, her second son. Therefore it seemed good to her, while the actual fighting was still confined to the north of Italy, to hasten to Rome, and obtain this coveted prize, before the Emperor should succeed in deposing Pope Clement and possibly set up another pontiff less friendly to the House of Gonzaga.

Colonna Palace, Rome—The Grand Salon

At the same time, that Charles V. might have no cause to complain of her lack of loyalty, she sent her third son, Ferrante, to Spain to assure the Emperor of her entire sympathy with his cause and to ask for a command in the Imperial army. Rome at this time was a place where there were wheels within wheels. While on the surface all was gay and peaceful, and old enemies hobnobbed with one another, daggers lurked under

the olive branches, old feuds were not forgotten, plots were hatched, and secrets were wormed from comrades over the wine-cup. While I could not emulate the consummate ruse with which the Marchesa trimmed her sails to every possible wind I had my own little surprise to spring at the auspicious moment.

I believed that the firm hand of the Emperor alone could give peace to Italy. I had lost faith in the Medicean popes, and especially in this weak and crafty cousin of Leo X. As a condottiere by profession I could have sold my services to the French but I preferred to offer them to Charles V., and I had a secret commission in my pocket from his representative, the Marquis of Pescara, then near Pavia, authorising me to raise and command the Italian contingent to the Imperial army. The Marquis desired me to take counsel with his wife's kindred, the Colonnas, who were always inimical to the Pope, as to the best means of effecting a junction with their troops in case an attack upon Rome should be decided upon the coming year. When I add that the head of the house, Vespasian Colonna, had offered the hospitalities of his palace to the Marchesa Isabella d'Este Gonzaga, it will be understood how marvellously this lady's visit to Rome fell in with my schemes.

As we made our entry into that most beautiful room of all the world, the *sala de gala* of the Colonna palace, my sister clutched my arm tightly. A glimpse of the glories of heaven could not in sooth have been more transporting to the rapt gaze of an anchorite, for Giulia was essentially of this world and a superb mundane life was her highest ambition.

She had profited by her tutelage at the court of the Marchesa, the most cultured in the north of Italy, but this dazzling room surpassed any in the Mantuan palace as far as her own beauty outshone that of her protectress. So as her foolish little heart cried out "Oh! that I might reign here as Queen," she looked up into the admiring eyes of Vespasian Colonna and heard the echo of her unuttered cry—"Reign here as Queen."

Garden of the Colonna Palace, Rome
With permission of Mr. Charles A. Platt

For Vespasian was a widower, and the snows of age had not cooled the volcanic fires of his heart. He offered his arm to the Marchesa, and together they made the rounds of the regal apartments. But ever as we paused before a portrait and he explained that this was some fair ancestress his backward glance at Giulia told that in his estimation she surpassed them all.

The interior of the palace inspected we passed over a bridge, which spanned a side

street, to the terraced garden crowned by the ruins of the old Roman Temple of the Sun. Here were also statues and fountains, square-cut hedges, and sun-warmed, marble seats, and the air was heavy with the perfume of roses and jasmine. But the glory of the garden, as Colonna told us, was its outlook over Rome. This we could not now fully appreciate for dusk was falling and the city was in a purple haze, which deepened as we looked. Soon coloured lights glimmered forth in the dark *allées*, and suddenly from the summit of the ruin there rose slowly a fire balloon and twinkling far away into the blue seemed to seek its companion stars.

"It is the conceit of my daughter Isabella," Vespasian explained, "a fête of fire-works in honour of your coming."

I delayed to hear no more, but drawn by some mysterious attraction sought and found the Signorina Colonna. The flame signals flashed in her cheeks as her eyes met mine, for my glance seemed to her doubtless overbold, though it held naught of disrespect God wot.

And then she explained the mechanism of her fire balloon which was simple enough though it had been invented by a Moorish alchemist, who still practised the black art in a tower of the family castle in the Campagna. "If you ever come to Palliano we will greet you with a still more brilliant illumination," she promised, little realising how well she would keep that pledge.

It was then as I have already said that I bestowed upon her the name of Fenice, making what improvement I could of my scant opportunities. These were suddenly cut short, for Ippolito de' Medici, the Pope's handsome and dissipated nephew, presently joined us and bore Fenice away with the air of a proprietor. Such indeed he had a right to regard himself, as I ascertained on the next day during a conference with Vespasian Colonna and his nephew the Cardinal Pompeo.

Castle of Vittoria Colonna at Ischia.

I had arrived at the understanding desired by their kinsman the Marquis of Pescara, for they very willingly agreed that whenever desired all the clansmen of the Colonna would be ready to combine with the Imperial forces in the siege of Rome. Pompeo, the most truculent of the race in spite of the fact that he was a churchman, would take command, but Ascanio Colonna who was now in Naples with his sister Vittoria, the Marchesa di Pescara, might be counted upon with his sturdy vassals from the Abruzzi. We were jubilant, for news had just arrived that the Emperor's troops had won the battle of Pavia and that Francis I. was a prisoner. The Pope was reported nearly crazed with fear, and our plot of taking Rome for Charles V. seemed perfectly feasible.

"In any event," said Vespasian, "our compact of friendship stands, and I hold you and your family in such high esteem that I desire to make our alliance not merely that of

comrades-in-arms but a much closer relationship. I wish to propose a marriage, which Pompeo here shall celebrate, in our ancestral home before you leave us."

My hopes rose high for I thought he had perceived my love for Fenice and I sank upon one knee in a transport of gratitude.

"Nay, rise my brother," he continued, "I count myself honoured in your acceptance of that relation. Your sister's beauty will confer undying lustre upon our house. Believe me she runs no danger as my wife, for even should the chances of war reverse the present position of King and Emperor, I have assured myself with the Pope, since my daughter is betrothed to his nephew Ippolito. He will not break with me for she will be one of the richest heiresses in Italy, well able to aid her husband in his ambition to become the Grand Duke of Tuscany."

My heart, which had been so hot, was like ice. So wretched was I that I got no comfort from the thought of the brilliant future opening before my sister. I terminated my interview with Vespasian in all haste, and strode into the garden, pacing its walks like a madman.

Here, as my good fortune willed, I came upon Ippolito de' Medici, seated with all the familiarity of an accepted lover by the side of Fenice. It was true that the young couple were chaperoned by my sister, and that Ippolito, who was holding a skein which she was winding, was leaning forward in rapt attention listening to some merry story which Giulia was relating; but, instead of congratulating myself that Fenice had now a protectress who was devoted to my interest, I was filled with rage to see Ippolito thus received into the intimacy of the family.

My sister by a light gesture indicated that there was room for me on the marble bench near Fenice, and the girl, to give me room, moved a trifle nearer to her betrothed. This angered me, and, instead of seating myself, I glowered at a little distance until Giulia, having finished her winding and her story, came toward me, leaving Ippolito free to address himself to Fenice. To my surprise he did not avail himself of the opportunity, but, springing up, begged my sister to walk with him to another part of the garden. Delighted by this unexpected turn of affairs, I seated myself by the side of Fenice and rallied her upon her lover's neglect.

"He could not have pleased me more," she replied. "The Signorina Gonzaga would be my good angel if she could rid me of him forever."

This admission was like the striking of a spark in the darkness. It was not only illuminating as to Fenice's feeling toward her fiancé, but it fired the mine of passion stored in my heart. How I told her I know not; the words exploded from me with such violence that I fear I frightened her, and yet—and yet she was not displeased, for when Giulia returned to us she found Fenice striving to cool my hot cheeks with her small hands, but succeeding only in inflaming them the more by her gentle caresses. My sister paused before us with her arms akimbo.

"Here is a coil," she said, "and I beg you to tell me how I am to explain it to the Signor Ippolito de' Medici."

"Ah! dearest lady, can you think of no way of persuading the Signor Ippolito to renounce his suit?" cried Fenice.

"Very easily," Giulia replied, "since he has just besought me to pray you to release him from his engagement that he may be free to marry me; but upon reflection I am not sure that this expedient would please your honoured father."

With that we all fell a-laughing, though the situation was serious enough. It grew rapidly more so, for my sister, apparently forgetting her new vows, manifested the utmost pleasure in Ippolito's society, and drove me wild with her coquetry. I remonstrated with her, telling her plainly that I could not understand her behaviour.

"Have you no sense of decency," I cried, "to contract yourself to a noble gentleman, who, though he is no longer young, is still distinguished in appearance and possessed of many attractions—one whose fortune and rank immeasurably surpass your own, and who, moreover, loves you beyond your desert? Are you not ashamed, I insist, to accept all this and then to treat your affianced husband with such indignity? If you must take a lover, wait at least till your honeymoon is over, and then choose one who will contrast less unfavourably with the man whom you so dishonour."

She laughed at me when I began, but as I waxed more imprudent in my chiding her cheek flamed and she retorted "Truly, since you misunderstand me thus, I scorn to

explain my conduct." Nor did she deign to amend it, and so anxious was I, that (a temporary peace delaying any warlike demonstration), I lingered on in Rome to protect her against herself, and to see her safely married. The wedding took place in midsummer, but the aged bridegroom was in no happy frame of mind, for Giulia had led him a lively dance during their short engagement, and had so practised upon Ippolito de' Medici by her wiles that the infatuated young man had broken his compact with the Colonnas. Suspecting that my sister had caused this defection Vespasian hastened his marriage and retired with his bride and his daughter to Palliano the strongest of his castles.

Nor was I invited to accompany the party for, having dared to ask her father for the hand of Fenice, I met with an angry refusal and was accused of having by my attentions given Ippolito an excuse for breaking his word.

But Fenice promised with many tears to be true to me, and with her pledge to await my coming I was forced to be content.

Rome having now no further attraction for me I returned to Lombardy, leaving the Marchesa, who still awaited her son's cardinalate, in the security of a peace which at that time promised to be lasting.

No sooner, however, was Francis I. released from his Spanish captivity than the Pope began again to intrigue with him, and the Emperor, learning that Clement had broken faith, ordered the attack upon Rome.

Then, at last, the Pope, realising how much he needed the friendship of the Gonzagas, sent the Marchesa Ercole's red hat.

That triumph achieved she would gladly have returned to Mantua but it was now too late, for Bourbon had arrived before the city. The siege had begun, and neither man nor woman might leave Rome.

At the Pope's own villa upon Mount Mario (the Villa Madama), without the walls, I met Cardinal Pompeo Colonna and heard the news that his uncle Vespasian had died, and that Giulia and Fenice were still at Palliano, where I vowed soon to join them.

Of the sack of Rome which intervened I shall say nothing. Would God that I could as easily dismiss its memory from my mind. I entered the city with the youngest son of the Marchesa Isabella d'Este, Ferrante Gonzaga, who commanded a division of Spaniards, and we made our way at once to the Colonna palace which refuge the Marchesa had packed with her friends. Their lives we saved and the palace from burning and plundering. Cardinal Pompeo himself paid the ransoms of many of its guests, and rescued from the Spanish soldiery upwards of five hundred nuns. Far be it from me to extenuate the life of that profligate prelate, but his brave and generous acts at this fearful time must be counted to his credit.

After that horror of cruelty and wanton destruction abated I counted on being free to seek Fenice and my sister, but greatly to my disgust, I was constituted the warden of the Pope, who was confined a close prisoner in the castle of St. Angelo.

Though this seemed to me at the time a great hardship it proved in the end the best that could have happened, for so I came to know Clement most intimately and even to feel a pity for one so beset. I well remember his dismay when Ippolito de' Medici came to him with the alarming news that the Orsini, who, under cover of their devotion to the Pope embraced every opportunity to fight the Colonnas, had refused to recognise that the war was ended and were now burning and pillaging the castles of their rivals throughout the Campagna.

Ippolito reported that Fenice and my sister were for the present safe, having fortified themselves in Palliano, but he desired the Pope to send him with orders to Napoleone Orsini to restrain his wild clansmen, and also to grant him a far greater favour. This was no less than absolution from clerical vows, which he had taken at the time of my sister's marriage, and permission, since she was now a widow, to ask for her hand.

But Clement knew that Ippolito's next move would be to use my sister's wealth to secure the government of Florence, which his Holiness desired for his more favoured nephew Alessandro. He therefore refused to release Ippolito from his vows as a churchman, salving the wound by creating him a cardinal and promising that he should one day succeed to the tiara. Then, imagining that he had thus disposed forever of so slight a thing as a young man's passion, he bade him make all speed to the

pacifying of the truculent Orsini, for he well knew that unless this were instantly done the Emperor would call him in question for their unruliness.

I had been present during this interview, as was my duty, and the Pope now turned to me and bade me assist Ippolito by all means in my power, and we went forth together to prepare for the expedition.

But Ippolito's face was all aflame, and he could at first speak of nothing but his disappointment.

"By the Blood!" he cried, "his Holiness shall rue his interference in my love affairs, for I will balk him yet."

"Have you forgotten," I asked, "that you have just been made a cardinal?"

"And what of that? Is not Pompeo Colonna a cardinal? He can find no fault with me if I follow his example. I tell you that I love your sister and that she loves me. Is there any power that can divide us?"

"Yea," I answered "that of God, and there is also my power with which it seems you have forgotten to reckon."

He looked at me and laughed. "That for *your* power," he scoffed, snapping his fingers.

We had planned to ride to Nemi to find Napoleone Orsini but at Frascati we were met by a messenger who gave Ippolito a letter. On reading it he told me excitedly that Pompeo Colonna was besieged in his monastery of Subiaco by a rabble of the Orsini.

"Go, and hold them in play," he commanded, "and I will hasten on to Nemi and fetch Napoleone with me, to command his clansmen to raise the siege."

The plan commended itself to my reason and, suspecting no treachery, I galloped off with my troop for the relief of Pompeo. Ippolito shouted to me to await his coming at Subiaco, and I might have remained there until this day had I obeyed him. But at the monastery to my surprise I found all quiet nor had there been any fighting since the previous year, when the papal troops had been beaten by the monks and left their banner behind them. Both Cardinal Pompeo and I were puzzled by the false news which had brought me in such haste, but, being where we were, we accepted the hospitality of the monastery and rested and refreshed ourselves for three hours and no more. For, at the expiration of that time, came an aged man clad in Oriental garments, who had escaped from Palliano that morning while Napoleone Orsini was sacking the town. The castle on the summit of the cliff was unstormed when he left, but its fall was inevitable unless help should speedily arrive. Then I knew how Ippolito de' Medici had tricked me, for he desired not my company at Palliano, where he wished to pose as the sole rescuer of its ladies.

The messenger whom my sister had sent to Subiaco was the Moorish alchemist who had taught Fenice to make the fire balloons, and I was at first encouraged by his assurance that the fortress was well munitioned, and that he had manufactured great quantities of gunpowder which was stored in its donjon. But I reflected that this circumstance was but an added danger as the assailants were endeavouring to fire the castle.

With this news the Cardinal ordered his bravi to horse, and the monks girded up their gowns for the march. As fighting men the latter suffered no disparagement when matched with my soldiery save in their weapons, for, as their vows forbade them to take the sword, they were forced to content themselves with battle-axes.

Wearied as were our horses my troop took the lead, and all night by toilsome ways over the mountains we rode toward Palliano, in the vain hope of arriving there before Ippolito in spite of the long detour which he had foisted upon us; and I felt no fatigue, for I rode for my sister's honour and the life of her I loved.

But, in the grey dawn, at the little town of Genazzano, some six miles from the Colonna stronghold, I met Ippolito and his escort returning from Palliano, for he, too, had ridden hard. His face was drawn and white, but he faced me unflinchingly.

"You need not have come," he said, "for I have given Napoleone Orsini the mandate of his Holiness. He will draw off his men. They will leave the castle of Palliano unattacked. I was too late to save the town."

"And my sister?" for Fenice's name stuck in my throat.

"Your sister is capable of taking care of herself," he answered bitterly; "at least that was the reply she gave me when I offered to remain for her defence. Nay, look not so black for I am not the villain that my mad words of yesterday stamped me. Let me right myself in your estimation. I offered her no insult, but honourable marriage, for I have not yet been consecrated, and I would have repudiated the cardinalcy and every other bribe of the devil, if she could have loved me. But she told me plainly that she had never done so, that she had but coquetted with me in the old days to prove me fickle and false to my betrothed, and thus leave Fenice free to wed with you; and that this Vespasian Colonna understood and left you his blessing ere he died."

"Say you so! Ippolito," I cried. "Then I have not made this journey in vain, and you are a better man than I thought. I will plead your cause with my sister. You shall win her yet."

But he shook his head though he wrung my hand for he knew her mind better than I. So I rode on with my men, and it was well that I did so, for Orsini after the departure of Ippolito had returned to the attack of Palliano, and as we came in sight of the promontory on which it stands, the sky was crimson, not with sunrise, but with the reflection of burning houses.

The citadel towered gaunt and black above the ruined town like the phœnix in its flaming nest, and I acknowledged that my darling had kept her promise to greet my coming with a festival of fire.

I wondered if from one of those dark windows she were looking forth anxiously for succour, and I called the alchemist to my side and bade him send up a fire balloon as a signal that help was at hand.

"It will notify the enemy of our approach," he protested, but I replied that I cared not, and from the silken guidon of my troop he fashioned the balloon so that as it soared aloft the device of the Gonzagas was displayed to all onlookers.

Then, with hardly an interval, there shot from the platform of the great tower of the castle in quick succession a flight of answering flame signals—one, two, three, a half-dozen; I counted them as they rose and drifted away on the light morning breeze. There flashed forth lights also below in the camp of the Orsini which ringed the town, for the sentries had sounded the alarm, and when we came up with their outposts the army had formed in battle array.

I was glad of this, for it has never been my practice to fall upon and massacre sleeping men. My trumpeter sounded a parley and with a white handkerchief on the staff from which I had stripped my ensign I rode out to meet Napoleone.

I told him that I came as messenger from the Pope to bid him keep the peace, for the war was over.

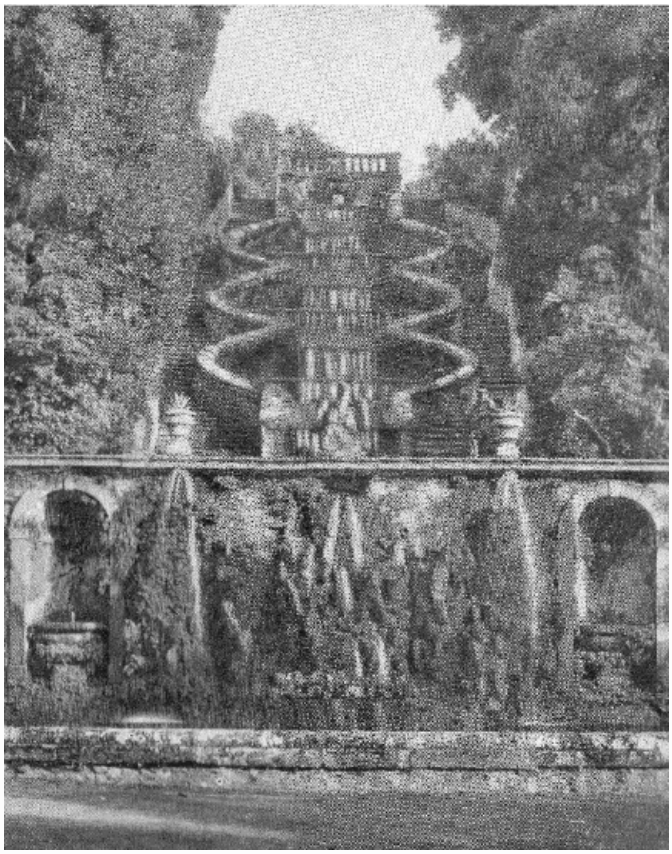
He replied that he had already received that news from Ippolito de' Medici, who on the previous evening had come and gone; but that it was not easy to pacify such men as the Orsini when their blood was up.

"Then I will pacify them," I cried, "for peace I will have, though I fight for it."

"That is the peace for me," he replied, and at it we went.

I banged them well, and the monks of Subiaco coming up in good time when we were nearly spent, joined in the fray with their war-cry of "The Holy Column!" and "Christ for Colonna!" My sister's vassals also made a sally from the castle but were driven back, certain of Orsini's men following them closely and throwing firebrands upon them as they dashed through the postern gate. That was the great disaster and tragedy of the day, for the tower in which the fugitives had sought shelter was the powder-magazine and a spark from the fiery missile thrown, guided by the evil one, found its way to a little trail of the devil's dust, which had been scattered on the stairs, and so fired the mine in that pent-up hell.

With a noise as of the rending of mountains the tower belched a volcano of flame and the battle-field was as Sodom and Gomorrah when the heavens rained brimstone.



The Cascade Villa Conti Torlonia, Frascati.

By good fortune the occupants of the castle were chiefly in a tower upon the other side of the court, at whose foot the main battle was now raging, so that the loss of life was not so great as it might otherwise have been. As it was we were all so terrified that we ceased from our fighting, Orsini's men fleeing in hot haste, nor did our troops pursue, but busied themselves in giving help to the wounded. At the same time those within the castle, seeing that the battle was over, opened its gates, and to my unutterable joy I beheld Fenice and my sister standing unharmed within its portal.

So it was that we pacified the wild Orsini, and later a new castle was born phœnix-like from the ashes of the old. But for a while it was deserted, for Cardinal Pompeo would no longer risk the lives of his relatives at Palliano, but leaving the wounded in the care of the monks we escorted the ladies to the Colonna palace at Rome which was thereafter my sister's residence.

Villa Madama—Interior

By all the canons of romance-writing my story should end here at its climax, but this is not the way of real life, which goes on spinning new threads, and intertwining them so with the old that there is no coming to the end until the shears of death cut the skein.

My duty as the Pope's body-guard kept me at his side, and my cousin Ferrante Gonzaga having less to do, was constantly at the Colonna palace, where he incontinently fell in love with Fenice. This had indeed been planned out long before by his mother, for the Marchesa had lived long enough in the Colonna palace to fall under its spell and she had marked the Colonna heiress as a suitable parti for Ferrante.

Therefore at the great reconciliation between the Emperor and the Pope which took place at Bologna, where Clement crowned Charles, and they parcelled out to their favourites the dignities of Italy, Ferrante Gonzaga besought the hand of Fenice in recognition of the services of his house. To this request both the Emperor and the Pope agreed, but when the parties to be contracted were called into their presence, Cardinal Pompeo Colonna and I came with them and forbade the banns. Being asked why we thus defied the will of the greatest powers of Christendom, I confessed how in the crimson dawn of the peace of Palliano, being determined that no power in heaven or earth or hell should henceforth jeopardise our happiness, Fenice and I had been secretly but soundly married by the Cardinal, deferring only the public festivities of the wedding to a merrier morn.

With that the Emperor declared the jest a good one, and that one Gonzaga was as good as another. "And better," whispered his Holiness in my ear, as I knelt before him for his blessing.

II

OTHER BIRDS OF THE FLAMING NEST

Centuries ago—here the Colonna came,
Vittoria with them, Angelo himself
Gazing upon her as she gravely moved,
And sighing for her, while Fabrizio's sword
Clanged on the gravel—here the d'Este came
From Tivoli, where o'er dark cypresses
Their villa looks above the billowy land
Of the Campagna.

WILLIAM WETMORE STORY.

It was with the Villa Conti-Torlonia at Frascati that Story rightly associated the men and women of the Colonna in the lines which I have quoted.

The Haunted Pool
Villa Conti Torlonia, Frascati

Hither certainly came the ladies of Palliano[8] from their castle in the neighbouring hills, for the Conti were cousins of the Colonna, and fond of entertaining their kindred on the terraces of their ancestral villa.

Here Giulia Gonzaga must have met another renowned woman of the family, Giovanna of Aragon, the wife of Ascanio Colonna, with their little son Marcantonio, from the Castle of Marino, hardly three miles away. This boy was to become the most renowned man of his race, and was to form a link between the lives of two women of Palliano, to whom brief reference must be made, for the pity and horror of their fate are not surpassed in all the annals of tragedy.

At first glance it may seem strange that the Colonnas possessed no suburban villa which could rival that of the Conti. Castles in plenty were theirs, Marino, Palliano, Palestrina, and a score of others, but though these sheltered comfortless, so-called palaces within their strong walls, there was never an attempt made here to indulge in such a feat of landscape-gardening as the Conti's

"fountain stairs,
Down which the sheeted water leaps alive."

The reason of this lack of the amenities of life is not far to seek. The magnificent Colonna palace at Rome, with its beautiful garden, answered every purpose of an elaborate villa. Here they flaunted in seasons of prosperity, retiring to their mountain fastnesses in times of trouble.

For five hundred years succeeding generations have added to the sumptuousness and charm of the Roman palace, and the portraits of the fair ladies who once gave those regal rooms their chief attraction still look down upon us from their walls. They hold us still with an all-compelling fascination: the noble Vittoria Colonna, whom Michael Angelo worshipped; that Duchessa Lucrezia, whom Van Dyck painted in her velvet robe and jewelled ruff; Felice Orsini and her children; and the bewitching Marie Mancini, as Mignard makes her known in her arch and innocent girlhood, and again with world-weary disillusion betraying itself through Netscher's pomp and opulence.

It is the women who interest us most, for the men of the race, masterful and brave, heroic even in certain great crisis, have often shown themselves brutally cruel.

The ceilings of the Colonna palace blaze with the victory of Lepanto whose hero Marcantonio Colonna is the glory of his family; but you will find no portrait of his murdered mistress Eufrosina, or of

Vittoria Colonna
From a portrait in the Colonna Gallery

the most famous of all the duchesses of Palliano, whose ghost might well haunt that gloomy castle.

Violante de Cardona was, in the latter part of the sixteenth century, the most charming woman in Naples. Her wonderful eyes alone rendered her irresistible to most men, and she added to remarkable beauty the fascinations of wit and culture. All of the young bloods of Naples were captives at her chariot wheels, all but young Marcantonio Colonna, who must have known her for he dwelt at this time at the Castle of Ischia inherited from his aunt Vittoria Colonna.

Violante made choice among her adorers of Giovanni Caraffa, nephew of Pope Paul IV. whom Marcantonio had cause to hate, for Paul had despoiled him of Palliano, under pretext of his mother's heretical opinions, and had given the fief to this very Giovanni.

Thus Violante to her great misfortune became the usurping Duchess of Palliano, for her husband made her life a martyrdom and was ultimately responsible for her death. He was not so utterly depraved as his brother Cardinal Carlo Caraffa but his maniacal jealousy was more dangerous than the Cardinal's vices, and he made himself rich by the maladministration of the papal revenues.

Marie Mancini, Princess Colonna
From a portrait in later life by Netscher

The Pope though bigoted and fanatical was sternly upright, and discovering the crimes of his nephews visited unsparing retribution upon them. Cardinal Carlo's offences were most flagrant. He had quarrelled openly with a young gallant, Marcello Capecce, for the favours of Martuccia one of the most notorious courtesans of Rome, drawing his sword upon Capecce at a banquet where he had denied the Cardinal's right to appear as Martuccia's escort. Though the Pope had banished the brothers from Rome they might have lived in peace and obscurity but for Carlo's attempt to revenge himself upon Capecce.

It happened most opportunely for the Cardinal's purpose that Capecce had long cherished a hopeless passion for the Duchess of Palliano.

The Cardinal fanned this flame and Marcello, believing himself encouraged followed Violante to her villa. Here the Cardinal managed to bring the Duke at the very moment of the compromising visit.

Why Carlo Caraffa should thus have endangered the life and reputation of his sister-in-law as well as that of his enemy is not definitely stated. Perhaps he counted on the Duke's love for his wife and intended simply to enrage his brother against a presuming but unfavoured lover. Whatever the accusation the jealous husband was not at first absolutely convinced, and he placed the matter for investigation in the hands of his wife's brother the Count Aliffe, who spied upon Capecce and reported that he was undoubtedly in love with the Duchess of Palliano for his desk was filled with poems in her honour.

De Stendhal tells us vividly how Capecce was arrested on the charge of having attempted to poison the Duke, who, "to avoid public scandal stabbed him to death in prison." He also murdered the Duchess's lady-in-waiting, but seems not to have had the heart to kill his wife with his own hands. Nevertheless he believed it incumbent upon him as a wronged husband to exercise justice upon her, and he deputed the deed to her brother, who was nothing loth to wipe out the stain upon his family honour.

On the night of the twenty-fifth of August, 1559, the Count Aliffe, with his friend Leonardo del Cardine, a friar, and some soldiers, appeared at the villa and told his sister his errand. She received her sentence with the haughtiest disdain. Never had she been so thoroughly a duchess.

When urged to confess she protested her innocence, and assisted her brother in bandaging her own eyes. He hesitated for a moment; perhaps if she had appealed to his affection his heart might have given way; but she raised the handkerchief and coolly asked: "Well, what are we about, then?"

Thus taunted he turned the wand in the noose about her neck, and so strangled her.

The Pope seems to have approved the act or to have been indifferent to it; but it created a thrill of horror even at that time, for the beautiful Duchess had been greatly loved and was believed to be innocent.

Strange to say, the man who was to avenge her fate was he whose heritage she had usurped. Marcantonio Colonna had used all his influence at the Court of Spain until Philip declared war upon Pope Paul IV., and deputed the Duke of Alva and the Spanish Army to wage the famous war of the Campagna. Thus Marcantonio came to his own again, and the Pope, who was near his end, in bitterness of soul signed the capitulation which saved Rome from a second sack by the Spaniards.

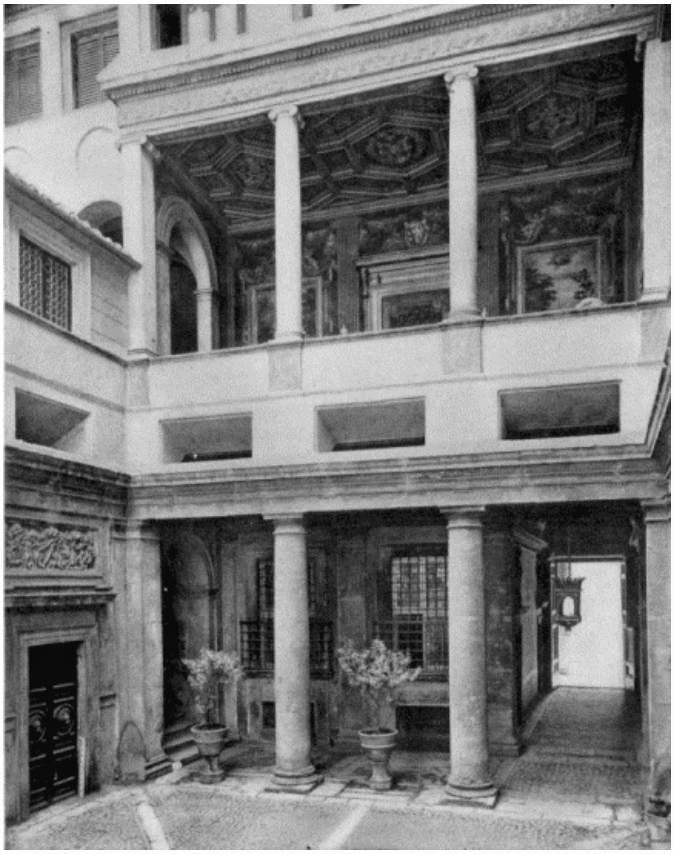
News that the Pope was dying ran through Rome, and the populace liberated the prisoners of the Inquisition and burned the building. They howled for the Dominican monks, the guardians of the tribunal, that they might burn them also, but at the entrance to the monastery they were stopped by five mounted knights keeping guard over the doomed monks. They were all of them nobles, and all had suffered from the Pope, and they were led by Marcantonio Colonna, whose father and mother had been persecuted by the Inquisition. They had ridden in haste to Rome when they heard that Paul was dying to preserve order in the city.

"And at the sight of those calm knights," says Marion Crawford, "sitting their horses without armour and with sheathed swords, the people drew back while Colonna spoke; and because he also had suffered much at Paul's hands they listened to him, and the great monastery was saved from fire and the monks from death."

But though Revenge was restrained, Justice claimed the murderers of the Duchess of Palliano. Their trial was deliberate, but in the end Cardinal Carlo Caraffa met the same death which she had suffered, while her husband, her brother, and their accomplice were beheaded in the Torre di Nona.

The first use made by Colonna of his revenues was to equip the battleship which he commanded at Lepanto, where he won the title of Champion of Christendom.

The pitiful story of Eufrosina, who for a brief period was mistress of Palliano, is a sad blot upon the Champion's otherwise honourable career. Some authorities maintain that she was of good family, and that Marcantonio had killed her husband for love of her; others that she was a slave girl whom he had brought back from the Orient. All agree that she was beautiful, but Colonna had not made her his duchess. Strangely enough he offered the tiara of the murdered Violante to Felice Orsini, daughter of the very man who had striven in vain to win Palliano by force of arms. It was a tempting marriage, for it united the two great rival houses of Rome, and Eufrosina was heartlessly cast aside. Her after-history is a tragedy beside which the story just related pales to an idyl.



Court of the Massimi Palace

That she was a woman of extraordinary powers of fascination is proved by the fact that, though it was notorious that she had been abandoned by Marcantonio, Lelio Massimi, then the representative of one of the proudest patrician families of Rome, did not hesitate to make her his wife. Massimi was an old man and a widower, whose first wife, Gerolema Savelli, had given him six sons, notable for their herculean strength and arrogance and their father's remarriage to such a woman was an insult to their mother's memory which they could not condone.

They entered Massimi's apartment upon his wedding night and shot his bride to death in his arms. The old man cursed his sons excepting only the youngest, Pompeo, who had taken no part in the assassination, and shortly afterward died broken-hearted, foretelling that Pompeo alone would continue the line as all of his brothers would die violent deaths.[9]

The record of the hearts of flame which have burned themselves out in the old nest of the phœnix might be indefinitely prolonged, for though battered by many sieges Palliano was never totally destroyed, and formed the background of many a sinister drama. Marie Mancini Colonna, Principessa di Palliano, writes that fear of imprisonment in the dungeon of her titular castle was the principal motive of her flight from her husband in 1672. She had been threatened with such a fate and the threat was not without precedent.

As a prison the Castle of Palliano exists at the present day. Has its symbol of the phœnix attained a new meaning, and is it possible that erring souls issue from its gates, their stains burned clean by purgatorial flame?

Marie Mancini Colonna, Principessa di Palliano, by Mignard
Photographische Gesellschaft, Berlin

CHAPTER IX

THE LURE OF OLD ROME

ANTINOUS

Brother, 't is vain to hide
That thou dost know of things mysterious,
Immortal, starry; such alone could thus
Weigh down thy nature. Hast thou sinned in aught
Offensive to the heavenly powers? Caught
A Paphian dove upon a message sent?
Thy doubtful bow against some deer herd bent
Sacred to Dian? Haply thou hast seen
Her naked limbs among the alders green
And that, alas is death.

KEATS.

IT is impossible to saunter even so aimlessly as we have done through the villas of the cardinals of the Renaissance and not feel the potency of the charm by which their builders were enthralled, "the glamour of the world antique."

We may struggle against the spell, telling ourselves that the scope and limits of the present volume will not permit of a glance at the villas of ancient Rome, but they insidiously steal upon us through those of the Renaissance. Particularly is this true of

the Villa d'Este and the Villa Albani, magic gateways both leading directly into that earlier, and only real, Rome.

For, though separated by the gulf of many centuries from the villa of the Emperor Hadrian at Tivoli, they are virtually ante-chambers to that once magnificent palace.

We might turn from the attractive vista which they reveal but for an alluring phantom which can never be disassociated from those imperial ruins, a face whose beauty and pathos draws us on irresistibly to solve the mystery of its gentle sadness.

Who, that has stood before the matchless relief of Antinous in the villa Albani, does not agree with the assertion, that "it is no shadow of sin which gives the pure brow its gravity, and that whatever may be the burden which bows the beautiful head, he bears it with a noble resignation which proves him superior to his suffering and unsullied by his doom."

Antinous
Bas-relief found at Hadrian's Villa, now in the Villa Albani

In the general resurrection of ancient masterpieces which took place during the Renaissance only one, the Apollo Belvedere, commanded wider admiration as a type of manly beauty. But the Apollo is a theatrical manifestation of the popular conception of god-like perfection, while Antinous makes appeals directly to the heart through his very humanity.

One hundred and thirty-six of his portrait statues, busts, and reliefs have come down to us, and as many engraved gems and coins bearing varying interpretations of his familiar and unmistakable personality; so that it is common to speak of the Antinous type as the last ideal creation of ancient art. And yet we are assured on the highest authority that Antinous really lived, and that there is historical foundation for the authenticity of these portraits.

"He has a distinct individuality always recognisable," says Gregorovius. "In every case we see a face bowed down, full of melancholy beauty, with deep-set eyes, slightly arched eyebrows, and abundant curls falling over the forehead. It is the beautiful expression of a nature which combined the Greek and the Asiatic characteristics only slightly idealised. We read the fate of Antinous in this sorrowful figure, for the artists knew of the death of sacrifice to which he dedicated himself, and this mysterious sadness would attract the observer even if he could not give the name to the statue."

But history only whets our curiosity, for ancient writers are neglectful or

tantalisingly bald in their allusions to Antinous. We are told only that he was the favourite of Hadrian, the most magnificent and enlightened of all the Roman emperors, who loved the gentle Bithynian youth so extravagantly that he made him his inseparable companion and even contemplated him as his successor; that during the fateful Egyptian journey an oracle announced that the Emperor must shortly die unless a voluntary victim could be found to take upon himself the doom with which he was threatened; and that Antinous unhesitatingly laid down his life for his patron. "Greater love hath no man than this," and Hadrian's ostentatious lamentation, and even his deification of his friend, seems puerile in comparison with the devotion of Antinous.

No modern author has developed this alluring theme in a satisfactory manner. Ebers in his novel *The Emperor*, is inadequate. He laboriously loads its pages with his carefully verified material, but his imagination is wingless, the result far from convincing.

Ruins of a Gallery of Statues in Hadrian's Villa
From an etching by Piranesi

One poet there was, he whose lines head this chapter, endowed with the inspiration to divine, and the power to worthily reveal the secret of the sadness in that haunting face, to which sculptors alone have done full justice. There are hints scattered through his poems that startlingly supplement the vague clues which now tantalise and baffle as we trace the story of Antinous in Hadrian's villa.

For where history and literature fail us archæology supplies its circumstantial evidence, and if we scan, through the crystal lenses of uncoloured truth, the stage where the drama which we seek was enacted we shall see the sculptured semblances of the vanished actors, and be able to surmise in part the lost book of the play.

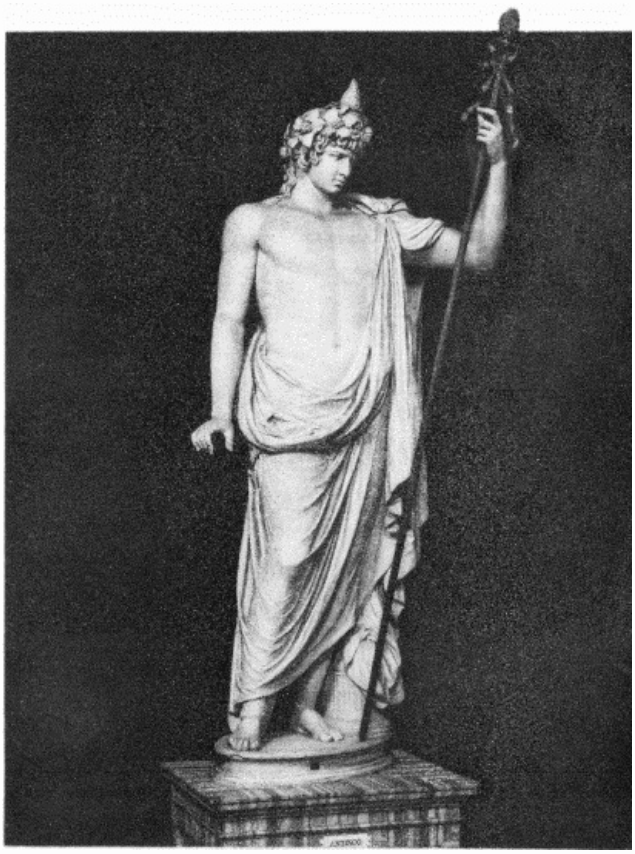
The ruins of the great pleasure-palace, where the Emperor and his favourite resided during the opening scenes of their history, now lie bleak and bare, exposed to the burning sun and the wandering winds, despoiled even of the vines and flowers with which nature has striven to hide the ravages of man. We must go back to their excavation in the early part of the sixteenth century if we would study the tell-tale *mise-en-scène*.

It was Pirro Ligorio who in 1538 made for Cardinal Ippolito d'Este II. the first systematic exploration and authoritative map of Hadrian's villa. A Neapolitan by birth, but called to Rome by his friend Pope Paul IV. (Caraffa), Ligorio, upon his arrival was associated with the aged Michael Angelo in the building of St. Peter's.

With the arrogance of youth he quarrelled with the great master and did not hesitate to speak of him openly as a dotard who had outlived his usefulness and should yield

his place to a younger genius. Paul IV. had the wisdom to retain Michael Angelo in his important post, and the tact to take the sting from Ligorio's removal by giving him the commission for the casino in the Vatican Gardens which (as it was not finished until the pontificate of Pius IV.) was destined to bear the name of the Villa Pia.

Learned authorities have endeavoured to find the original of Ligorio's masterpiece in some ancient building, whereas the perfect adaptability of its plan to new requirements proves that it could never have been produced earlier than the Renaissance. It has been well epitomised as the "day-dream of an artist who has saturated his mind with the past."



Antinous as Bacchus, in the Museum of the Vatican
Permission of Alinari.

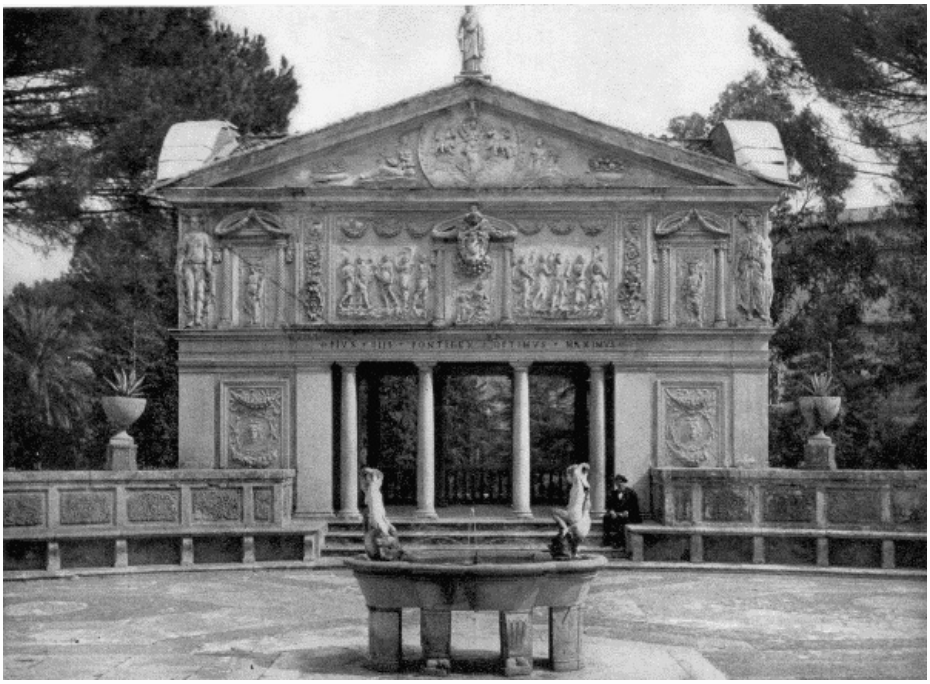
In the profusion of joyous mythological deities which give the façade of the Casino the richness of decoration of a jewel-casket, nymphs and graces dance, Pan flutes, and marine monsters frolic with all the abandon of classical feeling, and it is in the ornamental details, not in the conception of the ensemble, that we detect the influence of the Villa of Hadrian. When the papal villa was approaching completion, Ligorio attracted the attention of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este II. (the patron of Tasso) a connoisseur and dilettante in all the arts, who wisely entrusted to the young architect the construction of his famous villa at Tivoli.

The Cardinal had the right to quarry materials from the neighbouring ruins, and among the first of the great discoveries which Ligorio records is that of a statue of Antinous. It depicted the youth under the attributes of Bacchus, and was possibly a replica of the beautiful statue found later at Præneste and now in the Sala Rotonda of the Vatican.

From the hour that it was carried in triumph to the terraces of Villa d'Este, Ligorio and his patron as well, were taken captive by a new enthusiasm, for a lucky chance had guided the excavators to the most richly ornamented of all the apartments in the Emperor's wonderful palace—the heavy-folded curtain of Time had rolled upward disclosing the scene of the happiest hours in the short life of Antinous.

An exquisite circular palazzita lay before them, islanded by a marble-lined canal five metres broad from an encircling portico, whose roof was supported by forty Corinthian columns of precious *giallo antico*. Noting the important part played by water in this construction, the canal fed by fountains, whose pipes and mechanism plainly showed within the statues which ornamented the rotunda, Ligorio hastily concluded that this

was the Emperor's natatorium or swimming pool. But the feminine elegance of the fairy-like suite of apartments, to which the canal served as a moat; the presence of drawbridges worked from the centre, thus cutting off or affording communication with the colonnade at the will of the occupant, and evidences that the canal itself was a *nympheum* or aquatic garden, among whose rose-coloured lotus blossoms white swans glided, flamingoes darted, and tall clusters of papyrus screened the porticoes from the gaze of passers, favoured the conclusion that this pavilion of all delight was designed for some beautiful woman royally beloved. The frieze of loves, mounted upon hippocampi imitating the games of the circus, which Ligorio copied in the vestibule of the Villa Pia formed a part of the decoration lavished here.



Villa Pia in the Garden of the Vatican *Alinari*
Pirro Ligorio, architect

The conspicuous situation of the palazzita between the basilica and the imperial apartments, to which its encircling colonnade served as a corridor of communication, indicated that the lady was not a favourite of low degree, to be hidden away in some Rosalind's bower of the immense labyrinthine palace, while the most valuable statues in the entire villa, such as the replica of the Cnidian Venus by Praxiteles, the Eros bending the bow, by the same master, made this temple of love and Venus a fitting pavilion for an empress. Such it may well have been, for here was found the sculptured portrait of Faustina, the wife of Antoninus Pius, Hadrian's successor, who resided in the villa both before and after the death of Antinous.

She was the beautiful mother of a more beautiful daughter of the same name, an empress in her turn, and both branded by a historian of the time as infamous.

Swinburne's apostrophe in *Ave Faustina Imperatrix* applies equally to the portrait bust of mother or daughter:

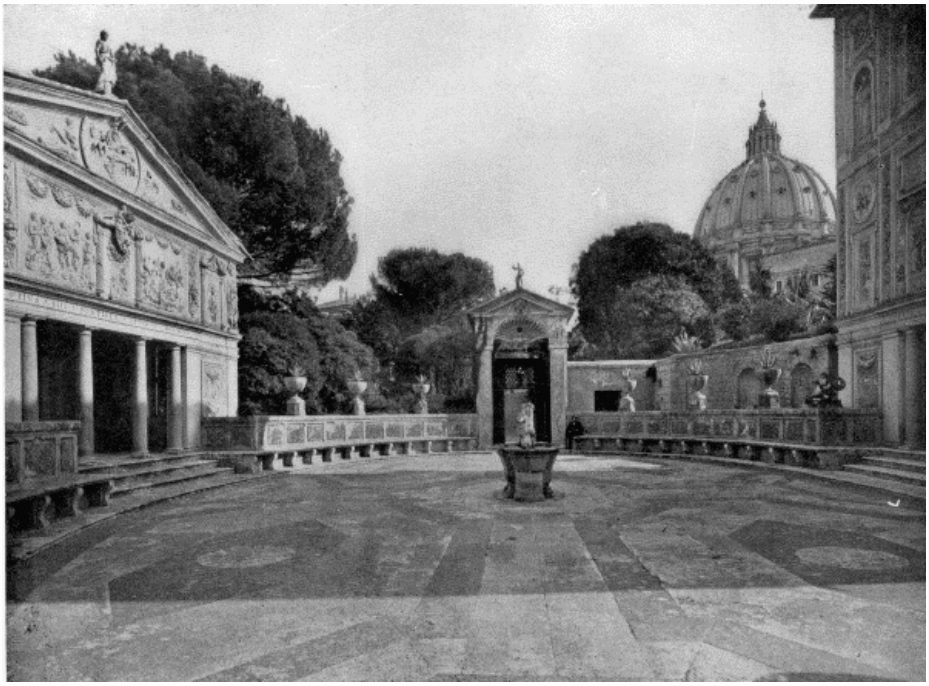
"Your throat,
Strong, heavy, throwing out the face,
And hard, bright chin
And shameful, scornful lips that grace
Their shame, Faustine."

But it is possible that Swinburne was too hasty in accepting ancient gossip, and that both the Faustinas were maligned. "Modern scholarship," says Monsieur Victor Duruy, "argues for their rehabilitation, and chiefly because the husbands of each, good and wise men both, have left such unequivocal testimony of their respect."

"To the gods," wrote Marcus Aurelius of the younger Faustina, "I am indebted that I have such a wife, so obedient, so affectionate, and so simple."

And after the death of his wife (Faustina the elder) Antoninus Pius cried in his grief: "O God, I would rather live with her in a desert than without her in this palace."

In this enchanting palazzita the younger Faustina may have passed her childhood, while the scholarly boy, Marcus Aurelius, her cousin, listened to the disquisitions of the philosophers as they discussed great problems with the Emperor.



Villa Pia, Vatican *Alinari*
The Rotondo—Pirro Ligorio, architect

Hadrian loved the lad, and for his absolute truthfulness nicknamed him Verissimus, making him a knight at the age of six. He was the comrade of Antinous, and as they passed to and fro together through colonnaded rotonda they must have often noted the young mother (she was sixteen when married) and her bewitching child, waving white hands from across the lily-padded moat.

Here, then, are certain of the actors, as well as our *mise-en-scène*, and Marcus Aurelius, in his *Meditations*, has himself given us a hint as to the drama. "Forget not," he writes, "that in times gone by everything has already happened just as it is happening. Place before thine eyes whole dramas with the same endings, the same scenes, just as thou knowest them by thine own experience, or from earlier history—such, for example, as the whole Court of Hadrian."

If with these instructions we remember Marcus Aurelius's still more significant words, "Even in a palace life may be well led," each of us can according to his own fancy divine the secret which Antinous kept so well.

Had Ligorio given to literature the sympathetic imagination which he displayed in his art it might have been worthily revealed. For ten years he explored with the most intense enthusiasm the interminable apartments which were to prove an inexhaustible mine of art for modern museums, and whose bibliography would fill a library. Then in 1572 his munificent patron died, and the work suddenly came to an end.

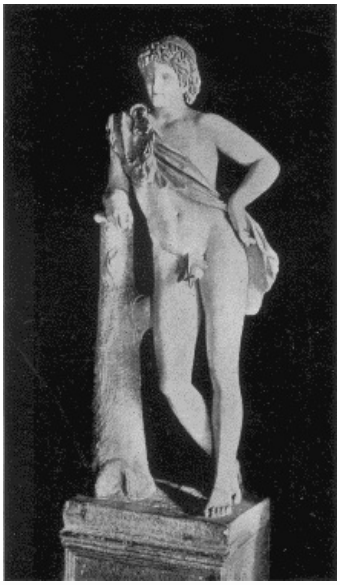
For two centuries the Villa of Hadrian lay neglected until new discoveries revived popular interest, and a young German scholar was called to superintend the building and installation of the last of the great villas erected in Rome by a member of its hierarchical aristocracy.

There exists such striking parallelism in the history of the Villa d'Este and the Villa Albani, and on such identical lines was the work carried on that it would almost seem that, the duration of human life not being sufficient to complete it, Cardinal Ippolito and Pirro Ligorio were granted reincarnation for another fifty years in Cardinal Albani and his friend Winckelmann.

Notwithstanding the many masterpieces secured by Cardinal d'Este it was known from ancient records that the greatest treasures of the Villa Hadriana had escaped his eager search, having been so securely hidden on the invasion of the Goths, that they evaded as well all other plunderers. But early in the eighteenth century Gavin Hamilton, commissioned to

Eros Bending the Bow
Capitoline Museum

secure antiques for the British Museum, drained an extensive marsh called the Pantello and found it to be the depository in which Belisarius had secreted the missing statues on the approach of Totila.[10] From this hiding-place there emerged between 1730 and 1780, the *Antinous* of the museum of the Capitol and the relief of the Villa Albani together with the *Resting Faun* of Praxiteles which so captivated the imagination of Hawthorne, and many another famous work of art now the glory of some far distant museum.



Faun of Praxiteles
Capitoline Museum

Fortunately for Italy, England found a contesting bidder in Cardinal Albani, and the majority of the statues found in the Pantello were purchased by him. At the same time the magnificent collection of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, was offered at public sale by the degenerate spendthrift who inherited it, and sixty of the finest statues were secured for Villa Albani and rejoined their old companions.

Winckelmann gloated over their beauty, for he united the artist's appreciation to the connoisseurship of the archæologist. What solicitude for its appropriate setting, only surpassed by that of Hadrian himself, did he bestow on the placing of each individual statue, and with what exultation he records its arrival.

"The Cardinal has brought from Tivoli on a *carro* drawn by sixteen bullocks a female river deity of colossal size well preserved" (and still to be seen reclining on the margin of a reservoir). To the relief of *Antinous* Winckelmann gave the place of honour which it now occupies. Let us read his own record of the esteem in which he held it.

"The glory and the crown of sculpture in this age *as well as in all ages*" he does not hesitate to assert, "are two likenesses of Antinous." One of them, in the Albani villa, is in relief, the other is a colossal head in the Mondragone villa.

"The former disinterred from Hadrian's villa is," says Winckelmann, "only a fragment of an entire figure which probably stood on a chariot. For the right hand, which is empty, is in a position that leads me to conclude that it must have held the reins. In this work therefore would have been represented the deification of Antinous as we know that figures so honoured were placed upon cars to signify their translation to the gods.

Villa Albani

Casino, Villa Albani *Alinari*

Candelabrum from
Hadrian's Villa
Museum of the Vatican

Alinari

Candelabrum from
Hadrian's Villa
Museum of the Vatican

Alinari

"The colossal head in the Mondragone villa (now in the Louvre) I hold it no heresy to say is, next to the Vatican Apollo and the Laocoon, the most beautiful work which has come down to us."

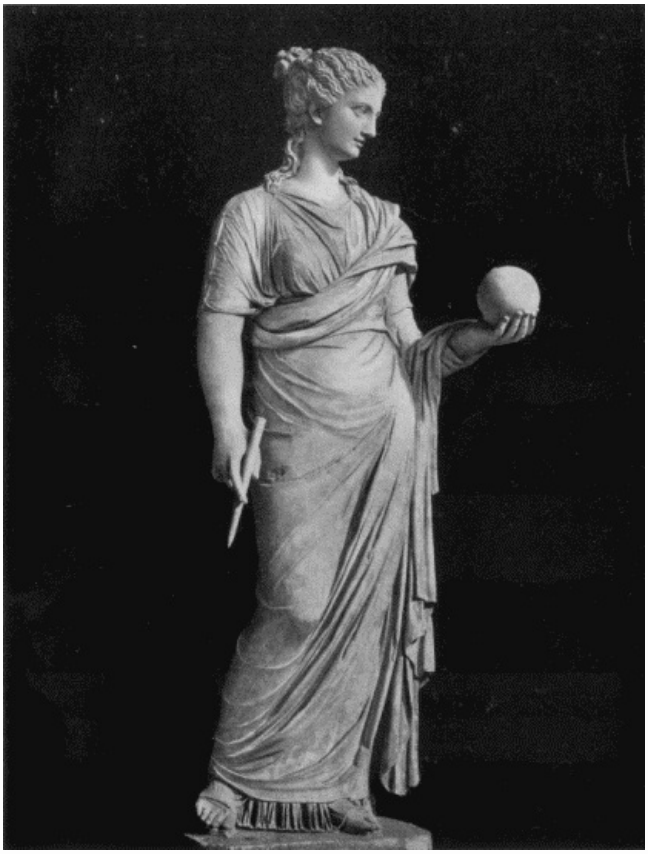
The two friends lived a charmed life more in the past than in the Rome of their own day until the spree was rudely broken by Winckelmann's tragic death at the hands of a vulgar robber, and the grey-haired cardinal wandered alone among his cherished marbles. Many of these he donated to the Capitoline Museum and to the Vatican, but the relief of Antinous he held among his most cherished possessions. It would have broken the good man's heart to have known that these statues were doomed to wander far from the home which he had provided for them. The French took possession of Italy, and the masterpieces of the Villa Albani formed only a fraction of the wholesale robberies which for a time enriched the museum of the Louvre.

On the fall of Napoleon the Pope chose the sculptor Canova as his envoy to negotiate with the allies for the return of the art treasures of Italy. Canova was successful, for he pleaded from a full heart; but although he secured the restitution of the two hundred and ninety-four statues which Napoleon had taken from the Villa Albani, Cardinal Giuseppe Albani, an unworthy successor of the great collector, sold all but one in order to avoid the cost of their return transportation. The poor peripatetic philosophers, emperors, empresses, gods, and goddesses trooped on like uneasy ghosts, not a few of them finding shelter in the Glyptothek at Munich.

The one piece of sculpture reserved from this fate of expatriation, and reinstated in triumph in its old position in the salon at the left of the main gallery of the villa, it is hardly necessary to state, was the relief of *Antinous*. Here it remains and lures us, according to our bent, to study or to dream of the life which its original so passionately lived, and instinctively we search for some statue of a woman of equal charm to link with it in our dreams.

Ebers thought he had found it in the loveliest of the nine muses which Ligorio discovered in the theatre of Hadrian's villa. In 1689 Velasquez was sent to Rome to acquire them for Philip V. Eight of them may still be seen in the Museum of Madrid, but the ninth muse, Urania, from which the d'Estes could not then be induced to part, is now in the Sala delle Muse of the Vatican. This is the Urania which Ebers imagines to have been carved by the young Alexandrine sculptor, Pollux, from the Selene whom we are told Antinous vainly loved.

The face is very winsome and the romance might satisfy us, but for a portrait-statue of a genuine Selene, found by Ligorio near the palazzita and now in the casino of the Villa Albani.



Urania *Alinari*
Museum of the Vatican

It is catalogued as *Iris Descending*, but mistakenly, says Monsieur Guzman, for Iris was invariably represented with wings, and this graceful figure is wingless, a torch in hand, and floating downward so gently that her motion scarcely agitates her soft drapery. Authorities are now agreed that the lovely figure represents Selene, the moon-goddess, who, enamoured with Endymion, kept tryst with him in his dreams, and a beautiful "Sleeping Youth" was actually discovered beneath the descending Selene, thus completing the composition and verifying the assumption as to its subject. That the recumbent youth was not at once recognised as intended to represent Endymion is due to the inability of the scientific mind to grasp more than one idea at a time, for the features bore so marked a resemblance to those of Antoninus Pius that it was rightly considered a portrait of that Emperor in his youth. Only recently have archæologists accepted the title, *Antoninus Pius as Endymion* and it seems probable that the Selene of Villa Albani portrayed the Empress Faustina, and that this group was a tribute of the Emperor's to his beautiful wife, his "Diva Faustina," who stooped to him like the moon-goddess from the sky. Is it not equally possible that he caused the symbols of Selene to be cut upon her signet that she might use it in her intimate correspondence, that the charm of this wonderful woman was associated in his mind with the magic of moonlight, gentle, love-compelling, and pure? Such a testimonial does in fact exist in a medal struck by the command of Antoninus Pius after the death of the Empress, representing Faustina bearing two torches, but returning to heaven, and depriving him of the light which had illumined their wedded life; and lest there should be any doubt that the deity typified in this apotheosis is Selene the Emperor caused the words *Luna lucifera* to be engraved beneath the name of Faustina.

The myth of the love of the lady-moon has nowhere been so exquisitely rendered as in the *Endymion* of Keats, and his description of the descent of Selene applies well to the moon-maiden of the Villa Albani:

"I raised
My sight right upward, but it was quite daz'd
By a bright something sailing down apace,
Making me quickly veil my eyes and face.
. . . . . .
Her locks were simply gordianed up and braided
Leaving in naked comeliness unshaded
Her pearl round ears, white neck, and orbed brow.
. . . I see her hovering feet

More bluely veined, more whitely sweet
Than those of sea-born Venus when she rose
From out her cradle shell. The wind out-blows
Her scarf into a fluttering pavilion,
'Tis blue and over-spangled with a million
Of little eyes, as though thou wert to shed
Over the darkest lushest blue-bell bed
Handfuls of daisies."[11]

Faustina may have known Antinous before her marriage, while Hadrian still hoped to make him his successor, ere the clamours of the people forced him to make the wiser choice. Had Antinous been so favoured, is there any doubt whether Faustina would not have inclined to him instead of to the good man with the serious, anxious face, who was more than twice her age when he became her husband?

The statues of Antinous fully realise Keats's ideal of Endymion.

"His youth was fully blown
Shining like Ganymede to manhood grown,
A smile was on his countenance; he seemed
To common lookers-on like one who dreamed
Of idleness in groves Elysian
But there were some who feelingly could scan
A lurking trouble in his nether lip.
Then would they sigh, 'Ah! well-a-day
Why should our young Endymion pine away?'"

We know not on what authority Ebers links the name of Antinous, Endymion-like, with that of Selene. Was there some missive sealed by a moon-beam torch, or addressed to the lady moon which went astray and set the gossip of the Court crackling like a flame in dry grass? Or was it merely his aspiration for the throne of the Cæsars which was signified by the common expression, "he longed for the moon," and not a love hopeless, but beyond his power to conquer for the unattainable Selene, which saddened his young life so deeply, and determined him to throw it away when the occasion seemed to demand the sacrifice.

Both research and fancy will lead you far, for it was in Egypt that the most dramatic part of the story was enacted, and that Antinous, believing that in so doing he saved Hadrian's life, launched forth upon the Nile during a terrific tempest, and standing erect in the unguided canoe sought a voluntary death in the storm-lashed waters.

The Emperor's grief was wildly extravagant. He gave the beautiful body a king's burial in a tomb flanked by obelisks and guarded by a sphinx; and he built about it a magnificent city which he called Antinopolis, a city which exists to this day though no man lives within its desolate columned streets.

But the deserted city has been identified in the ruins called by the Egyptians, Antinœ. Its hippodrome, and theatres, and temple tomb have all been mapped by archæologists, and its Arch of Triumph, of Roman bricks faced with white marble, its long colonnades of Corinthian columns, and its melancholy waving palms have been photographed by troops of unreflecting tourists.

While erecting memorials to his friend, Hadrian was not unmindful of his own sepulchral monument, the present castle of St. Angelo. It served as a mausoleum for the imperial family. The ashes of Faustina (to whose memory her husband erected the beautiful temple bearing her name) were placed here, their urn guarded by two bronze peacocks, the emblems of an empress.

These peacocks with the pineapple, which crowned the summit of the tomb, now ornament the Court of the Belvedere of the Vatican, in whose galleries may be found some of the statues with which Hadrian decorated the upper colonnade of the mausoleum, and which were wrenched from their pedestals and toppled upon the heads of the Goths when Totila besieged Rome.

Gregorovius in his scholarly biography of Hadrian thus sums up his achievements and estimates his character:

"He ruled the empire like a noble Roman, with prudence and strength. He enjoyed life with the joy of the ancients. He travelled throughout the world and found it worth the trouble. He restored it and embellished it with new beauty. He was lavish on a great scale."

We certainly do not know what he thought of his whole life at the end of it. He might have agreed with the estimate of Marcus Aurelius: "All that belongs to the soul is a dream and a delusion; life is a struggle and a wandering among strangers, and fame after death is forgetfulness."

That he had some vague belief in the immortality of the soul the well-known poem written shortly before his death certainly shows:

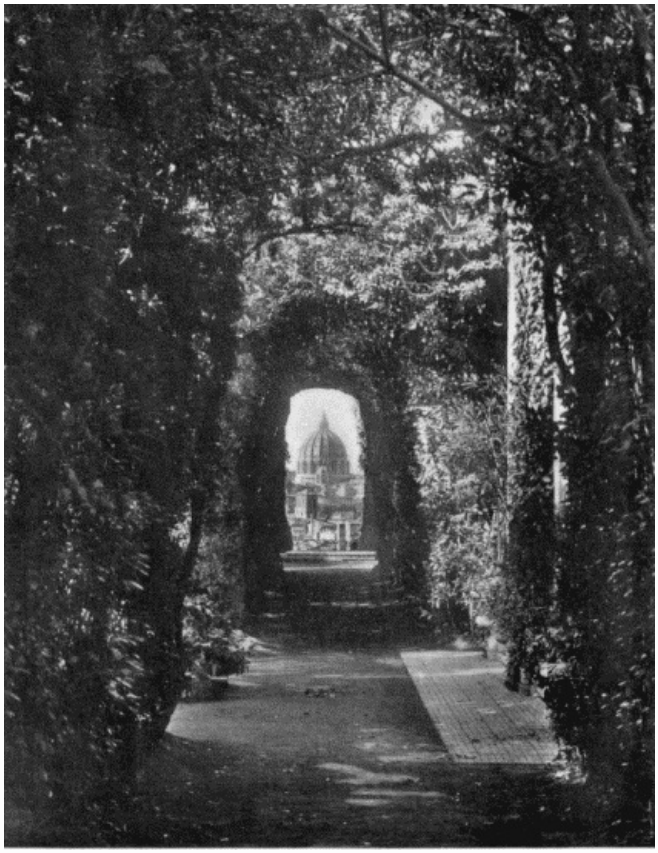
"Animula, vagula, blandula;
Hospes, comesque corporis,
Quæ nunc abibis in loca;
Pallidula, rigida, nudula,
Nec ut soles dabis jocos?"

"Celestial spirit, evanescent fay,
  Supernal guest and sharer of my might,
Wherefore and whither dost thou fly away,
  Exquisite phantom, nude and ghostly white,
Never with me again to flit and play,
Never with me to play?"

Reluctantly, after all our search, we find that archæology, while it tells us much of Hadrian, leaves Antinous still a mystery.

The forsaken pleasure palace is silent and empty save for ghosts of the imagination. We see the imperial barges glide up the Nile as in a pageant, but it is all a wordless pantomime, though the beautiful immortal figure stands.

"Still there where he a thousand years hath stood
And watched, with gaze intent, the ages' flood
His graceful limbs reflecting, then as now
His lotus crown the sadness on his brow,
And races new in line unending glide
Along in shells upon the flowing tide;
But aye as they approach and look on him
Athwart their joy there falls a sorrow dim,
The citherns cease that rang as they drew nigh,
On glowing lips the jests and kisses die.
And, lo! the heart is seized by infinite woe,
With arms outstretched they gaze as on they go—
'O waken, boy! O waken from thy dream!
Say what thou seest below the ages stream,
Tell us, is life's enigma known to thee?
Give us thy own fair immortality!'
But ere he from his revery wakens they
Have with the river drifted far away."



View through the Key-hole of the Gate of the Villa of the Knights of Malta

L'ENVOI

A keyhole glimpse at Rome they show
'Twixt cypresses, a stately row,
Where all who pass are free to see
The villa of the Priory.
Here belted knights, with cross on breast,
In days of old were wont to rest,
And 'neath the ilex hedges tall
Oft paced the subtle Cardinal,
His robe upon the pavement cool
Mantling like some ensanguined pool.

St. Peter's keys, traditions tell,
Open the gates of Heaven and Hell.
O'er many a villa gate they 're shown,
With triple crown carved deep in stone.
If, then, you crave a fuller view
Than keyhole glimpses give to you,
Unlock and enter. You shall know
A Heaven of art, a Hell of woe.

THE END

FOOTNOTES:

[1] His magnificent villa of Caprarola and the still more entrancing villa of Lante are linked with legends of Giulio Farnese and Vittoria Accoramboni in the author's *Romance of Italian Villas*, which with the *Romance of the Renaissance Châteaux* will be found supplementary to the present volume.

[2] From *The Italian Rhapsody*, by permission of Mr. Robert Underwood Johnson.

[3] Translated by E. Frère Champney.

[4] A song composed by Lorenzo de' Medici. "How lovely is our youth, and yet how fast it flies! Those who wish for joy must snatch it now. Trust not to to-morrow; seize it now, seize it now!"

[5] The earliest cards were not inscribed with hearts, diamonds, clubs, and spades, but with swords, money, clubs, and cups. The same emblems are still used on the Spanish playing-cards.

[6] The French historians call him Richart de Cornouailles, the Italians Ricciardo.

[7] A *stornello a fiore* consists generally of a couplet beginning with an invocation to a flower, as:

> Fior di limone!
> Limone è agro e non si puoi mangiare
> Ma son più agre le pene d'amore.
>
> Fior di granato!
> Se li sospiri mie fossere fuocco,
> Tutto il mondo sarebbe buciato.

See also the *stornelli* in Browning's *Fra Lippo Lippi* of two of which Richard's are variants.

[8] Palliano or Pagliano, for the name is variously spelled.

[9] John Addington Symonds further relates in what strange ways fate fulfilled this prediction. "Disaster fell on each of the five brothers. The first of them, Ottavio, was killed by a cannon-ball at sea in honorable combat with the Turk. Another, Girolamo, who sought refuge in France, was shot down in an ambuscade while pursuing his amours with a gentle lady. A third, Alessandro, died under arms before Paris in the troops of General Farnese. A fourth, Luca, was imprisoned at Rome for his share of the step-mother's murder, but was released on the plea that he had avenged the wounded honour of his race. He died, however, poisoned by his own brother Marcantoni in 1599. Marcantoni was arrested on suspicion and imprisoned in Torre di Nona, where he confessed his guilt. He was shortly afterward beheaded on the little square before the bridge of St. Angelo."

[10] Hamilton was aided in his work by Piranesi whose engravings record the state of the ruins at this time.

[11] The same figure is depicted in the frescoes of Pompeii, and here the deep blue of an Italian night glittering with stars gives the added touch of colour.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ROMANCE OF ROMAN VILLAS (THE RENAISSANCE) ***

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