

Vittoria — Volume 6 eBook

Vittoria — Volume 6 by George Meredith

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Page 1

EPISODES OF THE REVOLT AND THE WAR—THE TOBACCO-RIOTS—RINALDO GUIDASCARPI

Anna von Lenkenstein was one who could wait for vengeance. Lena punished on the spot, and punished herself most. She broke off her engagement with Wilfrid, while at the same time she caused a secret message to be conveyed to him, telling him that the prolongation of his residence in Meran would restore him to his position in the army.

Wilfrid remained at Meran till the last days of December.

It was winter in Milan, turning to the new year—the year of flames for continental Europe. A young man with a military stride, but out of uniform, had stepped from a travelling carriage and entered a cigar-shop. Upon calling for cigars, he was surprised to observe the woman who was serving there keep her arms under her apron. She cast a look into the street, where a crowd of boys and one or two lean men had gathered about the door. After some delay, she entreated her customer to let her pluck his cloak halfway over the counter; at the same time she thrust a cigar-box under that concealment, together with a printed song in the Milanese dialect. He lifted the paper to read it, and found it tough as Russ. She translated some of the more salient couplets. Tobacco had become a dead business, she said, now that the popular edict had gone forth against ‘smoking gold into the pockets of the Tedeschi.’ None smoked except officers and Englishmen.

“I am an Englishman,” he said.

“And not an officer?” she asked; but he gave no answer. “Englishmen are rare in winter, and don’t like being mobbed,” said the woman.

Nodding to her urgent petition, he deferred the lighting of his cigar. The vetturino requested him to jump up quickly, and a howl of “No smoking in Milan—fuori!—down with tobacco-smokers!” beset the carriage. He tossed half-a-dozen cigars on the pavement derisively. They were scrambled for, as when a pack of wolves are diverted by a garment dropped from the flying sledge, but the unluckier hands came after his heels in fuller howl. He noticed the singular appearance of the streets. Bands of the scum of the population hung at various points: from time to time a shout was raised at a distance, “Abasso il zigarro!” and “Away with the cigar!” went an organized file-firing of cries along the open place. Several gentlemen were mobbed, and compelled to fling the cigars from their teeth. He saw the polizta in twos and threes taking counsel and shrugging, evidently too anxious to avoid a collision. Austrian soldiers and subalterns alone smoked freely; they puffed the harder when the yells and hootings and whistlings thickened at their heels. Sometimes they walked on at their own pace; or, when the noise swelled to a crisis, turned and stood fast, making an exhibition of curling smoke, as a mute form of contempt. Then commenced hustlings and a tremendous uproar;



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sabres were drawn, the whitecoats planted themselves back to back. Milan was clearly in a condition of raging disease. The soldiery not only accepted the challenge of the mob, but assumed the offensive. Here and there they were seen crossing the street to puff obnoxiously in the faces of people. Numerous subalterns were abroad, lively for strife, and bright with the signal of their readiness. An icy wind blew down from the Alps, whitening the housetops and the ways, but every street, torso, and piazza was dense with loungers, as on a summer evening; the clamour of a skirmish anywhere attracted streams of disciplined rioters on all sides; it was the holiday of rascals.

Our traveller had ordered his vetturino to drive slowly to his hotel, that he might take the features of this novel scene. He soon showed his view of the case by putting an unlighted cigar in his mouth. The vetturino noted that his conveyance acted as a kindling-match to awaken cries in quiet quarters, looked round, and grinned savagely at the sight of the cigar.

“Drop it, or I drop you,” he said; and hearing the command to drive on, pulled up short.

They were in a narrow way leading to the Piazza de' Mercanti. While the altercation was going on between them, a great push of men emerged from one of the close courts some dozen paces ahead of the horse, bearing forth a single young officer in their midst.

“Signore, would you like to be the froth of a boiling of that sort?” The vetturino seized the image at once to strike home his instance of the danger of outraging the will of the people.

Our traveller immediately unlocked a case that lay on the seat in front of him, and drew out a steel scabbard, from which he plucked the sword, and straightway leaped to the ground. The officer's cigar had been dashed from his mouth: he stood at bay, sword in hand, meeting a rush with a desperate stroke. The assistance of a second sword got him clear of the fray. Both hastened forward as the crush melted with the hiss of a withdrawing wave. They interchanged exclamations: “Is it you, Jenna!”

“In the devil's name, Pierson, have you come to keep your appointment in mid-winter?”

“Come on: I'll stick beside you.”

“On, then!”

They glanced behind them, heeding little the tail of ruffians whom they had silenced.

“We shall have plenty of fighting soon, so we'll smoke a cordial cigar together,” said Lieutenant Jenna, and at once struck a light and blazed defiance to Milan afresh—an



example that was necessarily followed by his comrade. “What has happened to you, Pierson? Of course, I knew you were ready for our bit of play—though you’ll hear what I said of you. How the deuce could you think of running off with that opera girl, and getting a fellow in the mountains to stab our merry old Weisspriess, just because you fancied he was going to slip a word or so over the back of his hand in Countess Lena’s ear? No wonder she’s shy of you now.”



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“So, that’s the tale afloat,” said Wilfrid. “Come to my hotel and dine with me. I suppose that cur has driven my luggage there.”

Jenna informed him that officers had to muster in barracks every evening.

“Come and see your old comrades; they’ll like you better in bad luck— there’s the comfort of it: hang the human nature! She’s a good old brute, if you don’t drive her hard. Our regiment left Verona in November. There we had tolerable cookery; come and take the best we can give you.”

But this invitation Wilfrid had to decline.

“Why?” said Jenna.

He replied: “I’ve stuck at Meran three months. I did it, in obedience to what I understood from Colonel Zofel to be the General’s orders. When I was as perfectly dry as a baked Egyptian, I determined to believe that I was not only in disgrace, but dismissed the service. I posted to Botzen and Riva, on to Milan; and here I am. The least I can do is to show myself here.”

“Very well, then, come and show yourself at our table,” said Jenna. “Listen: we’ll make a furious row after supper, and get hauled in by the collar before the General. You can swear you have never been absent from duty: swear the General never gave you forcible furlough. I’ll swear it; all our fellows will swear it. The General will say, ‘Oh! a very big lie’s equal to a truth; big brother to a fact, or something; as he always does, you know. Face it out. We can’t spare a good stout sword in these times. On with me, my Pierson.’”

“I would,” said Wilfrid, doubtfully.

A douse of water from a window extinguished their cigars.

Lieutenant Jenna wiped his face deliberately, and lighting another cigar, remarked—
“This is the fifth poor devil who has come to an untimely end within an hour. It is brisk work. Now, I’ll swear I’ll smoke this one out.”

The cigar was scattered in sparks from his lips by a hat skilfully flung. He picked it up miry and cleaned it, observing that his honour was pledged to this fellow. The hat he trampled into a muddy lump. Wilfrid found it impossible to ape his coolness. He swung about for an adversary. Jenna pulled him on.

“A salute from a window,” he said. “We can’t storm the houses. The time’ll come for it—and then, you cats!”



Wilfrid inquired how long this state of things had been going on. Jenna replied that they appeared to be in the middle of it;—nearly a week. Another week, and their, day would arrive; and then!

“Have you heard anything of a Count Ammiani here?” said Wilfrid.

“Oh! he’s one of the lot, I believe. We have him fast, as we’ll have the bundle of them. Keep eye on those dogs behind us, and manoeuvre your cigar. The plan is, to give half-a-dozen bright puffs, and then keep it in your fist; and when you see an Italian head, volcano him like fury. Yes, I’ve heard of that Ammiani. The scoundrels, made an attempt to get him out of prison—I fancy he’s in the city prison—last Friday night. I don’t know exactly where he is; but it’s pretty fair reckoning to say that he’ll enjoy a large slice of the next year in the charming solitude of Spielberg, if Milan is restless. Is he a friend of yours?”



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“Not by any means,” said Wilfrid.

“Mio prigione!” Jenna mouthed with ineffable contemptuousness; “he’ll have time to write his memoirs, as, one of the dogs did. I remember my mother crying over, the book. I read it? Not!! I never read books. My father said—the stout old colonel—‘Prison seems to make these Italians take an interest in themselves.’ ‘Oh!’ says my mother, ‘why can’t they be at peace with us?’ ‘That’s exactly the question,’ says my father, ‘we’re always putting to them.’ And so I say. Why can’t they let us smoke our cigars in peace?”

Jenna finished by assaulting a herd of faces with smoke.

“Pig of a German!” was shouted; and “Porco, porco,” was sung in a scale of voices. Jenna received a blinding slap across the eyes. He staggered back; Wilfrid slashed his sword in defence of him. He struck a man down. “Blood! blood!” cried the gathering mob, and gave space, but hedged the couple thickly. Windows were thrown up; forth came a rain of household projectiles. The cry of “Blood! blood!” was repeated by numbers pouring on them from the issues to right and left. It is a terrible cry in a city. In a city of the South it rouses the wild beast in men to madness. Jenna smoked triumphantly and blew great clouds, with an eye aloft for the stools, basins, chairs, and water descending. They were in the middle of one of the close streets of old Milan. The man felled by Wilfrid was raised on strong arms, that his bleeding head might be seen of all, and a dreadful hum went round. A fire of missiles, stones, balls of wax, lumps of dirt, sticks of broken chairs, began to play. Wilfrid had a sudden gleam of the face of his Verona assailant. He and Jenna called “Follow me,” in one breath, and drove forward with sword-points, which they dashed at the foremost; by dint of swift semicirclings of the edges they got through, but a mighty voice of command thundered; the rearward portion of the mob swung rapidly to the front, presenting a scattered second barrier; Jenna tripped on a fallen body, lost his cigar, and swore that he must find it. A dagger struck his sword-arm. He staggered and flourished his blade in the air, calling “On!” without stirring. “This infernal cigar!” he said; and to the mob, “What mongrel of you took my cigar?” Stones thumped on his breast; the barrier-line ahead grew denser. “I’ll go at them first; you’re bleeding,” said Wilfrid. They were refreshed by the sound of German cheering, as in approach. Jenna uplifted a crow of the regimental hurrah of the charge; it was answered; on they went and got through the second fence, saw their comrades, and were running to meet them, when a weighted ball hit Wilfrid on the back of the head. He fell, as he believed, on a cushion of down, and saw thousands of saints dancing with lamps along cathedral aisles.

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The next time he opened his eyes he fancied he had dropped into the vaults of the cathedral. His sensation of sinking was so vivid that he feared lest he should be going still further below. There was a lamp in the chamber, and a young man sat reading by the light of the lamp. Vision danced fantastically on Wilfrid's brain. He saw that he rocked as in a ship, yet there was no noise of the sea; nothing save the remote thunder haunting empty ears at strain for sound. He looked again; the young man was gone, the lamp was flickering. Then he became conscious of a strong ray on his eyelids; he beheld his enemy gazing down on him and swooned. It was with joy, that when his wits returned, he found himself looking on the young man by the lamp. "That other face was a dream," he thought, and studied the aspect of the young man with the unwearied attentiveness of partial stupor, that can note accurately, but cannot deduce from its noting, and is inveterate in patience because it is undeceived. Memory wakened first.

"Guidascarpi!" he said to himself.

The name was uttered half aloud. The young man started and closed his book.

"You know me?" he asked.

"You are Guidascarpi?"

"I am."

"Guidascarpi, I think I helped to save your life in Meran."

The young man stooped over him. "You speak of my brother Angelo. I am Rinaldo. My debt to you is the same, if you have served him."

"Is he safe?"

"He is in Lugano."

"The signorina Vittoria?"

"In Turin."

"Where am I?"

The reply came from another mouth than Rinaldo's.

"You are in the poor lodging of the shoemaker, whose shoes, if you had thought fit to wear them, would have conducted you anywhere but to this place."

"Who are you?" Wilfrid moaned.



“You ask who I am. I am the Eye of Italy. I am the Cat who sees in the dark.” Barto Rizzo raised the lamp and stood at his feet. “Look straight. You know me, I think.”

Wilfrid sighed, “Yes, I know you; do your worst.”

His head throbbed with the hearing of a heavy laugh, as if a hammer had knocked it. What ensued he knew not; he was left to his rest. He lay there many days and nights, that were marked by no change of light; the lamp burned unwearyingly. Rinaldo and a woman tended him. The sign of his reviving strength was shown by a complaint he launched at the earthy smell of the place.

“It is like death,” said Rinaldo, coming to his side. “I am used to it, and familiar with death too,” he added in a musical undertone.

“Are you also a prisoner here?” Wilfrid questioned him.

“I am.”

“The brute does not kill, then?”

“No; he saves. I owe my life to him. He has rescued yours.”

“Mine?” said Wilfrid.

“You would have been torn to pieces in the streets but for Barto Rizzo.”

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The streets were the world above to Wilfrid; he was eager to hear of the doings in them. Rinaldo told him that the tobacco-war raged still; the soldiery had recently received orders to smoke abroad, and street battles were hourly occurring. "They call this government!" he interjected.

He was a soft-voiced youth; slim and tall and dark, like Angelo, but with a more studious forehead. The book he was constantly reading was a book of chemistry. He entertained Wilfrid with very strange talk. He spoke of the stars and of a destiny. He cited certain minor events of his life to show the ground of his present belief in there being a written destiny for each individual man. "Angelo and I know it well. It was revealed to us when we were boys. It has been certified to us up to this moment. Mark what I tell you," he pursued in a devout sincerity of manner that baffled remonstrance, "my days end with this new year. His end with the year following. Our house is dead."

Wilfrid pressed his hand. "Have you not been too long underground?"

"That is the conviction I am coming to. But when I go out to breathe the air of heaven, I go to my fate. Should I hesitate? We Italians of this period are children of thunder and live the life of a flash. The worms may creep on: the men must die. Out of us springs a better world. Romara, Ammiani, Mercadesco, Montesini, Rufo, Cardi, whether they see it or not, will sweep forward to it. To some of them, one additional day of breath is precious. Not so for Angelo and me. We are unbeloved. We have neither mother nor sister, nor betrothed. What is an existence that can fly to no human arms? I have been too long underground, because, while I continue to hide, I am as a drawn sword between two lovers."

The previous mention of Ammiani's name, together with the knowledge he had of Ammiani's relationship to the Guidascarpi, pointed an instant identification of these lovers to Wilfrid.

He asked feverishly who they were, and looked his best simplicity, as one who was always interested by stories of lovers.

The voice of Barto Rizzo, singing "Vittoria!" stopped Rinaldo's reply: but Wilfrid read it in his smile at that word. He was too weak to restrain his anguish, and flung on the couch and sobbed. Rinaldo supposed that he was in fear of Barto, and encouraged him to meet the man confidently. A lusty "Viva l'Italia! Vittoria!" heralded Barto's entrance. "My boy! my noblest! we have beaten them the cravens! Tell me now—have I served an apprenticeship to the devil for nothing? We have struck the cigars out of their mouths and the monopoly-money out of their pockets. They have surrendered. The Imperial order prohibits soldiers from smoking in the streets of Milan, and so throughout Lombardy! Soon we will have the prisons empty, by our own order. Trouble yourself no more about Ammiani. He shall come out to the sound of trumpets. I hear them! Hither,

my Rosellina, my plump melon; up with your red lips, and buss me a Napoleon salute
—ha! ha!”

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Barto's wife went into his huge arm, and submissively lifted her face. He kissed her like a barbaric king, laughing as from wine.

Wilfrid smothered his head from his incarnate thunder. He was unnoticed by Barto. Presently a silence told him that he was left to himself. An idea possessed him that the triumph of the Italians meant the release of Ammiani, and his release the loss of Vittoria for ever. Since her graceless return of his devotion to her in Meran, something like a passion—arising from the sole spring by which he could be excited to conceive a passion—had filled his heart. He was one of those who delight to dally with gentleness and faith, as with things that are their heritage; but the mere suspicion of coquetry and indifference plunged him into a fury of jealous wrathfulness, and tossed so desirable an image of beauty before him that his mad thirst to embrace it seemed love. By our manner of loving we are known. He thought it no meanness to escape and cause a warning to be conveyed to the Government that there was another attempt brewing for the rescue of Count Ammiani. Acting forthwith on the hot impulse, he seized the lamp. The door was unlocked. Luckier than Luigi had been, he found a ladder outside, and a square opening through which he crawled; continuing to ascend along close passages and up narrow flights of stairs, that appeared to him to be fashioned to avoid the rooms of the house. At last he pushed a door, and found himself in an armoury, among stands of muskets, swords, bayonets, cartouche-boxes, and, most singular of all, though he observed them last, small brass pieces of cannon, shining with polish. Shot was piled in pyramids beneath their mouths. He examined the guns admiringly. There were rows of daggers along shelves; some in sheath, others bare; one that had been hastily wiped showed a smear of ropy blood. He stood debating whether he should seize a sword for his protection. In the act of trying its temper on the floor, the sword-hilt was knocked from his hand, and he felt a coil of arms around him. He was in the imprisoning embrace of Barto Rizzo's wife. His first, and perhaps natural, impression accused her of a violent display of an eccentric passion for his manly charms; and the tighter she locked him, the more reasonably was he held to suppose it; but as, while stamping on the floor, she offered nothing to his eyes save the yellow poll of her neck, and hung neither panting nor speaking, he became undeceived. His struggles were preposterous; his lively sense of ridicule speedily stopped them. He remained passive, from time to time desperately adjuring his living prison to let him loose, or to conduct him whither he had come; but the inexorable coil kept fast—how long there was no guessing—till he could have roared out tears of rage, and that is extremity for an Englishman. Rinaldo arrived in his aid; but the woman still clung to him. He was freed only by the voice of Barto Rizzo, who marched him back. Rinaldo subsequently told him that his discovery of the armoury necessitated his confinement.



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“Necessitates it!” cried Wilfrid. “Is this your Italian gratitude?”

The other answered: “My friend, you risked your fortune for my brother; but this is a case that concerns our country.”

He deemed these words to be an unquestionable justification, for he said no more. After this they ceased to converse.

Each lay down on his strip of couch-matting; rose and ate, and passed the dreadful untamed hours; nor would Wilfrid ask whether it was day or night. We belong to time so utterly, that when we get no note of time, it wears the shrouded head of death for us already. Rinaldo could quit the place as he pleased; he knew the hours; and Wilfrid supposed that it must be hatred that kept him from voluntarily divulging that blessed piece of knowledge. He had to encourage a retorting spirit of hatred in order to mask his intense craving. By an assiduous calculation of seconds and minutes, he was enabled to judge that the lamp burned a space of six hours before it required replenishing. Barto Rizzo’s wife trimmed it regularly, but the accursed woman came at all seasons. She brought their meals irregularly, and she would never open her lips: she was like a guardian of the tombs. Wilfrid abandoned his dream of the variation of night and day, and with that the sense of life deadened, as the lamp did toward the sixth hour. Thenceforward his existence fed on the movements of his companion, the workings of whose mind he began to read with a marvellous insight. He knew once, long in advance of the act or an indication of it, that Rinaldo was bent on prayer. Rinaldo had slightly closed his eyelids during the perusal of his book; he had taken a pencil and traced lines on it from memory, and dotted points here and there; he had left the room, and returned to resume his study. Then, after closing the book softly, he had taken up the mark he was accustomed to place in the last page of his reading, and tossed it away. Wilfrid was prepared to clap hands when he should see the hated fellow drop on his knees; but when that sight verified his calculation, he huddled himself exultingly in his couch-cloth:—it was like a confirming clamour to him that he was yet wholly alive. He watched the anguish of the prayer, and was rewarded for the strain of his faculties by sleep. Barto Rizzo’s rough voice awakened him. Barto had evidently just communicated dismal tidings to Rinaldo, who left the vault with him, and was absent long enough to make Wilfrid forget his hatred in an irresistible desire to catch him by the arm and look in his face.

“Ah! you have not forsaken me,” the greeting leaped out.

“Not now,” said Rinaldo.

“Do you think of going?”

“I will speak to you presently, my friend.”

“Hound!” cried Wilfrid, and turned his face to the wall.

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Until he slept, he heard the rapid travelling of a pen; on his awakening, the pen vexed him like a chirping cricket that tells us that cock-crow is long distant when we are moaning for the dawn. Great drops of sweat were on Rinaldo's forehead. He wrote as one who poured forth a history without pause. Barto's wife came to the lamp and beckoned him out, bearing the lamp away. There was now for the first time darkness in this vault. Wilfrid called Rinaldo by name, and heard nothing but the fear of the place, which seemed to rise bristling at his voice and shrink from it. He called till dread of his voice held him dumb. "I am, then, a coward," he thought. Nor could he by-and-by repress a start of terror on hearing Rinaldo speak out of the darkness. With screams for the lamp, and cries that he was suffering slow murder, he underwent a paroxysm in the effort to conceal his abject horror. Rinaldo sat by his side patiently. At last, he said: "We are both of us prisoners on equal terms now." That was quieting intelligence to Wilfrid, who asked eagerly: "What hour is it?"

It was eleven of the forenoon. Wilfrid strove to dissociate his recollection of clear daylight from the pressure of the hideous featureless time surrounding him. He asked: "What week?" It was the first week in March. Wilfrid could not keep from sobbing aloud. In the early period of such a captivity, imagination, deprived of all other food, conjures phantasms for the employment of the brain; but there is still some consciousness within the torpid intellect wakeful to laugh at them as they fly, though they have held us at their mercy. The face of time had been imaged like the withering mask of a corpse to him. He had felt, nevertheless, that things had gone on as we trust them to do at the closing of our eyelids: he had preserved a mystical remote faith in the steady running of the world above, and hugged it as his most precious treasure. A thunder was rolled in his ears when he heard of the flight of two months at one bound. Two big months! He would have guessed, at farthest, two weeks. "I have been two months in one shirt? Impossible!" he exclaimed. His serious idea (he cherished it for the support of his reason) was, that the world above had played a mad prank since he had been shuffled off its stage.

"It can't be March," he said. "Is there sunlight overhead?"

"It is a true Milanese March," Rinaldo replied.

"Why am I kept a prisoner?"

"I cannot say. There must be some idea of making use of you."

"Have you arms?"

"I have none."

"You know where they're to be had."



“I know, but I would not take them if I could. They, my friend, are for a better cause.”

“A thousand curses on your country!” cried Wilfrid. “Give me air; give me freedom, I am stifled; I am eaten up with dirt; I am half dead. Are we never to have the lamp again?”



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“Hear me speak,” Rinaldo stopped his ravings. “I will tell you what my position is. A second attempt has been made to help Count Ammiani’s escape; it has failed. He is detained a prisoner by the Government under the pretence that he is implicated in the slaying of an Austrian noble by the hands of two brothers, one of whom slew him justly—not as a dog is slain, but according to every honourable stipulation of the code. I was the witness of the deed. It is for me that my cousin, Count Ammiani, droops in prison when he should be with his bride. Let me speak on, I pray you. I have said that I stand between two lovers. I can release him, I know well, by giving myself up to the Government. Unless I do so instantly, he will be removed from Milan to one of their fortresses in the interior, and there he may cry to the walls and iron-bars for his trial. They are aware that he is dear to Milan, and these two miserable attempts have furnished them with their excuse. Barto Rizzo bids me wait. I have waited: I can wait no longer. The lamp is withheld from me to stop my writing to my brother, that I may warn him of my design, but the letter is written; the messenger is on his way to Lugano. I do not state my intentions before I have taken measures to accomplish them. I am as much Barto Rizzo’s prisoner now as you are.”

The plague of darkness and thirst for daylight prevented Wilfrid from having any other sentiment than gladness that a companion equally unfortunate with himself was here, and equally desirous to go forth. When Barto’s wife brought their meal, and the lamp to light them eating it, Rinaldo handed her pen, ink, pencil, paper, all the material of correspondence; upon which, as one who had received a stipulated exchange, she let the lamp remain. While the new and thrice-dear rays were illumining her dark-coloured solid beauty, I know not what touch of man-like envy or hurt vanity led Wilfrid to observe that the woman’s eyes dwelt with a singular fulness and softness on Rinaldo. It was fulness and softness void of fire, a true ox-eyed gaze, but human in the fall of the eyelids; almost such as an early poet of the brush gave to the Virgin carrying her Child, to become an everlasting reduplicated image of a mother’s strong beneficence of love. He called Rinaldo’s attention to it when the woman had gone. Rinaldo understood his meaning at once.

“It will have to be so, I fear,” he said; “I have thought of it. But if I lead her to disobey Barto, there is little hope for the poor soul.” He rose up straight, like one who would utter grace for meat. “Must we, O my God, give a sacrifice at every step?”

With that he resumed his seat stiffly, and bent and murmured to himself. Wilfrid had at one time of his life imagined that he was marked by a peculiar distinction from the common herd; but contact with this young man taught him to feel his fellowship to the world at large, and to rejoice at it, though it partially humbled him.



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They had no further visit from Barto Rizzo. The woman tended them in the same unswerving silence, and at whiles that adorable maternity of aspect. Wilfrid was touched by commiseration for her. He was too bitterly fretful on account of clean linen and the liberty which fluttered the prospect of it, to think much upon what her fate might be: perhaps a beating, perhaps the knife. But the vileness of wearing one shirt two months and more had hardened his heart; and though he was considerate enough not to prompt his companion very impatiently, he submitted desperate futile schemes to him, and suggested—"To-night?—tomorrow?— the next day?" Rinaldo did not heed him. He lay on his couch like one who bleeds inwardly, thinking of the complacent faithfulness of that poor creature's face. Barto Rizzo had sworn to him that there should be a rising in Milan before the month was out; but he had lost all confidence in Milanese risings. Ammiani would be removed, if he delayed; and he knew that the moment his letter reached Lugano, Angelo would start for Milan and claim to surrender in his stead. The woman came, and went forth, and Rinaldo did not look at her until his resolve was firm.

He said to Wilfrid in her presence, "Swear that you will reveal nothing of this house."

Wilfrid spiritedly pronounced his gladdest oath.

"It is dark in the streets," Rinaldo addressed the woman. "Lead us out, for the hour has come when I must go."

She clutched her hands below her bosom to stop its great heaving, and stood as one smitten by the sudden hearing of her sentence. The sight was pitiful, for her face scarcely changed; the anguish was expressionless. Rinaldo pointed sternly to the door.

"Stay," Wilfrid interposed. "That wretch may be in the house, and will kill her."

"She is not thinking of herself," said Rinaldo.

"But, stay," Wilfrid repeated. The woman's way of taking breath shocked and enfeebled him.

Rinaldo threw the door open.

"Must you? must you?" her voice broke.

"Waste no words."

"You have not seen a priest?"

"I go to him."

"You die."



“What is death to me? Be dumb, that I may think well of you till my last moment.”

“What is death tome? Be dumb!”

She had spoken with her eyes fixed on his couch. It was the figure of one upon the scaffold, knitting her frame to hold up a strangled heart.

“What is death to me? Be dumb!” she echoed him many times on the rise and fall of her breathing, and turned to get him in her eyes. “Be dumb! be dumb!” She threw her arms wide out, and pressed his temples and kissed him.



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The scene was like hot iron to Wilfrid's senses. When he heard her coolly asking him for his handkerchief to blind him, he had forgotten the purpose, and gave it mechanically. Nothing was uttered throughout the long mountings and descent of stairs. They passed across one corridor where the walls told of a humming assemblage of men within. A current of keen air was the first salute Wilfrid received from the world above; his handkerchief was loosened; he stood foolish as a blind man, weak as a hospital patient, on the steps leading into a small square of visible darkness, and heard the door shut behind him. Rinaldo led him from the court to the street.

"Farewell," he said. "Get some housing instantly; avoid exposure to the air. I leave you."

Wilfrid spent his tongue in a fruitless and meaningless remonstrance. "And you?" he had the grace to ask.

"I go straight to find a priest. Farewell."

So they parted.

CHAPTER XXX

EPISODES OF THE REVOLT AND THE WAR

THE FIVE DAYS OF MILAN

The same hand which brought Rinaldo's letter to his brother delivered a message from Barto Rizzo, bidding Angelo to start at once and head a stout dozen or so of gallant Swiss. The letter and the message appeared to be grievous contradictions: one was evidently a note of despair, while the other sang like a trumpet. But both were of a character to draw him swiftly on to Milan. He sent word to his Lugano friends, naming a village among the mountains between Como and Varese, that they might join him there if they pleased.

Toward nightfall, on the nineteenth of the month, he stood with a small band of Ticinese and Italian fighting lads two miles distant from the city. There was a momentary break in long hours of rain; the air was full of inexplicable sounds, that floated over them like a toning of multitudes wailing and singing fitfully behind a swaying screen. They bent their heads. At intervals a sovereign stamp on the pulsation of the uproar said, distinct as a voice in the ear—Cannon. "Milan's alive!" Angelo cried, and they streamed forward under the hurry of stars and scud, till thumping guns and pattering musket-shots, the long big boom of surgent hosts, and the muffled voluming and crash of storm-bells, proclaimed that the insurrection was hot. A rout of peasants bearing immense ladders met them, and they joined with cheers, and rushed to the walls. As yet no gate was in



the possession of the people. The walls showed bayonet-points: a thin edge of steel encircled a pit of fire. Angelo resolved to break through at once. The peasants hesitated, but his own men were of one mind to follow, and, planting his ladder in the ditch, he rushed up foremost. The ladder was full short; he called out in German to a soldier to reach his hand down, and the butt-end



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of a musket was dropped, which he grasped, and by this aid sprang to the parapet, and was seized. "Stop," he said, "there's a fellow below with my brandy-flask and portmanteau." The soldiers were Italians; they laughed, and hauled away at man after man of the mounting troop, calling alternately "brandy-flask!—portmanteau!" as each one raised a head above the parapet. "The signor has a good supply of spirits and baggage," they remarked. He gave them money for porterage, saying, "You see, the gates are held by that infernal people, and a quiet traveller must come over the walls. Viva l'Italia! who follows me?" He carried away three of those present. The remainder swore that they and their comrades would be on his side on the morrow. Guided by the new accession to his force, Angelo gained the streets. All shots had ceased; the streets were lighted with torches and hand-lamps; barricades were up everywhere, like a convulsion of the earth. Tired of receiving challenges and mounting the endless piles of stones, he sat down at the head of the Corso di Porta Nuova, and took refreshments from the hands of ladies. The house-doors were all open. The ladies came forth bearing wine and minestra, meat and bread, on trays; and quiet eating and drinking, and fortifying of the barricades, went on. Men were rubbing their arms and trying rusty gun-locks. Few of them had not seen Barto Rizzo that day; but Angelo could get no tidings of his brother. He slept on a door-step, dreaming that he was blown about among the angels of heaven and hell by a glorious tempest. Near morning an officer of volunteers came to inspect the barricade defences. Angelo knew him by sight; it was Luciano Romara. He explained the position of the opposing forces. The Marshal, he said, was clearly no street-fighter. Estimating the army under his orders in Milan at from ten to eleven thousand men of all arms, it was impossible for him to guard the gates and then walls, and at the same time fight the city. Nor could he provision his troops. Yesterday the troops had made one: charge and done mischief, but they had immediately retired. "And if they take to cannonading us to-day, we shall know what that means," Romara concluded. Angelo wanted to join him. "No, stay here," said Romara. "I think you are a man who won't give ground." He had not seen either Rinaldo or Ammiani, but spoke of both as certain to be rescued.

Rain and cannon filled the weary space of that day. Some of the barricades fronting the city gates had been battered down by nightfall; they were restored within an hour. Their defenders entered the houses right and left during the cannonade, waiting to meet the charge; but the Austrians held off. "They have no plan," Romara said on his second visit of inspection; "they are waiting on Fortune, and starve meanwhile. We can beat them at that business."

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Romara took Angelo and his Swiss away with him. The interior of the city was abandoned by the Imperialists, who held two or three of the principal buildings and the square of the Duomo. Clouds were driving thick across the cold-gleaming sky when the storm-bells burst out with the wild Jubilee-music of insurrection—a carol, a jangle of all discord, savage as flame. Every church of the city lent its iron tongue to the peal; and now they joined and now rolled apart, now joined again and clanged like souls shrieking across the black gulfs of an earthquake; they swam aloft with mournful delirium, tumbled together, were scattered in spray, dissolved, renewed, died, as a last worn wave casts itself on an unfooted shore, and rang again as through rent doorways, became a clamorous host, an iron body, a pressure as of a down-drawn firmament, and once more a hollow vast, as if the abysses of the Circles were sounded through and through. To the Milanese it was an intoxication; it was the howling of madness to the Austrians—a torment and a terror: they could neither sing, nor laugh, nor talk under it. Where they stood in the city, the troops could barely hear their officers' call of command. No sooner had the bells broken out than the length of every street and Corso flashed with the tri-coloured flag; musket-muzzles peeped from the windows; men with great squares of pavement lined the roofs. Romara mounted a stiff barricade and beheld a scattered regiment running the gauntlet of storms of shot and missiles, in full retreat upon the citadel. On they came, officers in front for the charge, as usual with the Austrians; fire on both flanks, a furious mob at their heels, and the barricade before them. They rushed at Romara, and were hurled back, and stood in a riddled lump. Suddenly Romara knocked up the rifles of the couching Swiss; he yelled to the houses to stop firing. "Surrender your prisoners,—you shall pass," he called. He had seen one dear head in the knot of the soldiery. No answer was given. Romara, with Angelo and his Swiss and the ranks of the barricade, poured over and pierced the streaming mass, steel for steel.

"Ammiani! Ammiani!" Romara cried; a roar from the other side, "Barto! Barto! the Great Cat!" met the cry. The Austrians struck up a cheer under the iron derision of the bells; it was ludicrous, it was as if a door had slammed on their mouths, ringing tremendous echoes in a vaulted roof. They stood sweeping fire in two oblong lines; a show of military array was preserved like a tattered robe, till Romara drove at their centre and left the retreat clear across the barricade. Then the whitecoats were seen flowing over, the motley surging hosts from the city in pursuit—foam of a storm-torrent hurled forward by the black tumult of precipitous waters. Angelo fell on his brother's neck; Romara clasped Carlo Ammiani. These two were being marched from the prison to the citadel when Barto Rizzo, who had prepared to storm the building, assailed the troops. To him mainly they were indebted for their rescue.



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Even in that ecstasy of meeting, the young men smiled at the preternatural transport on his features as he bounded by them, mad for slaughter, and mounting a small brass gun on the barricade, sent the charges of shot into the rear of the enemy. He kissed the black lip of his little thunderer in, a rapture of passion; called it his wife, his naked wife; the best of mistresses, who spoke only when he charged her to speak; raved that she was fair, and liked hugging; that she was true, and the handsomest daughter of Italy; that she would be the mother of big ones—none better than herself, though they were mountains of sulphur big enough to make one gulp of an army.

His wife in the flesh stood at his feet with a hand-grenade and a rifle, daggers and pistols in her belt. Her face was black with powder-smoke as the muzzle of the gun. She looked at Rinaldo once, and Rinaldo at her; both dropped their eyes, for their joy at seeing one another alive was mighty.

Dead Austrians were gathered in a heap. Dead and wounded Milanese were taken into the houses. Wine was brought forth by ladies and household women. An old crutched beggar, who had performed a deed of singular intrepidity in himself kindling a fire at the door of one of the principal buildings besieged by the people, and who showed perforated rags with a comical ejaculation of thanks to the Austrians for knowing how to hit a scarecrow and make a beggar holy, was the object of particular attention. Barto seated him on his gun, saying that his mistress and beauty was honoured; ladies were proud in waiting on the fine frowzy old man. It chanced during that morning that Wilfrid Pierson had attached himself to Lieutenant Jenna's regiment as a volunteer. He had no arms, nothing but a huge white umbrella, under which he walked dry in the heavy rain, and passed through the fire like an impassive spectator of queer events. Angelo's Swiss had captured them, and the mob were maltreating them because they declined to shout for this valorous ancient beggarman. "No doubt he's a capital fellow," said Jenna; "but 'Viva Scottocorni' is not my language;" and the spirited little subaltern repeated his "Excuse me," with very good temper, while one knocked off his shako, another tugged at his coat-skirts. Wilfrid sang out to the Guidascarpi, and the brothers sprang to him and set them free; but the mob, like any other wild beast gorged with blood, wanted play, and urged Barto to insist that these victims should shout the viva in exaltation of their hero.

"Is there a finer voice than mine?" said Barto, and he roared the 'viva' like a melodious bull. Yet Wilfrid saw that he had been recognized. In the hour of triumph Barto Rizzo had no lust for petty vengeance. The magnanimous devil plumped his gorge contentedly on victory. His ardour blazed from his swarthy crimson features like a blown fire, when scouts came running down with word that all about the Porta Camosina, Madonna del



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Carmine, and the Gardens, the Austrians were reaping the white flag of the inhabitants of that district. Thitherward his cry of "Down with the Tedeschi!" led the boiling tide. Rinaldo drew Wilfrid and Jenna to an open doorway, counselling the latter to strip the gold from his coat and speak his Italian in monosyllables. A woman of the house gave her promise to shelter and to pass them forward. Romara, Ammiani, and the Guidascarpi, went straight to the Casa Gonfalonieri, where they hoped to see stray members of the Council of War, and hear a correction of certain unpleasant rumours concerning the dealings of the Provisional Government with Charles Albert.

The first crack of a division between the patriot force and the aristocracy commenced this day; the day following it was a breach.

A little before dusk the bells of the city ceased their hammering, and when they ceased, all noises of men and musketry seemed childish. The woman who had promised to lead Wilfrid and Jenna to the citadel, feared no longer either for herself or them, and passed them on up the Corso Francesco past the Contrada del Monte. Jenna pointed out the Duchess of Graatli's house, saying, "By the way, the Lenkensteins are here; they left Venice last week. Of course you know, or don't you?—and there they must stop, I suppose." Wilfrid nodded an immediate good-bye to her, and crossed to the house-door. His eccentric fashion of acting had given him fame in the army, but Jenna stormed at it now, and begged him to come on and present himself to General Schoneck, if not to General Pierson. Wilfrid refused even to look behind him. In fact, it was a part of the gallant fellow's coxcombry (or nationality) to play the Englishman. He remained fixed by the house-door till midnight, when a body of men in the garb of citizens, volubly and violently Italian in their talk, struck thrice at the door. Wilfrid perceived Count Lenkenstein among them. The ladies Bianca, Anna, and Lena issued mantled and hooded between the lights of two barricade watchfires. Wilfrid stepped after them. They had the password, for the barricades were crossed. The captain of the head-barricade in the Corso demurred, requiring a counter-sign. Straightway he was cut down. He blew an alarm-call, when up sprang a hundred torches. The band of Germans dashed at the barricade as at the tusks of a boar. They were picked men, most of them officers, but a scanty number in the thick of an armed populace. Wilfrid saw the lighted passage into the great house, and thither, throwing out his arms, he bore the affrighted group of ladies, as a careful shepherd might do. Returning to Count Lenkenstein's side, "Where are they?" the count said, in mortal dread. "Safe," Wilfrid replied. The count frowned at him inquisitively. "Cut your way through, and on!" he cried to three or four who hung near him; and these went to the slaughter.

"Why do you stand by me, sir?" said the count. Interior barricades were pouring their combatants to the spot; Count Lenkenstein was plunged upon the door-steps. Wilfrid gained half-a-minute's parley by shouting in his foreign accent, "Would you hurt an



Englishman?" Some one took him by the arm, and helping to raise the count, hurried them both into the house.



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“You must make excuses for popular fury in times like these,” the stranger observed.

The Austrian nobleman asked him stiffly for his name. The name of Count Ammiani was given. “I think you know it,” Carlo added.

“You escaped from your lawful imprisonment this day, did you not?—you and your cousin, the assassin. I talk of law! I might as justly talk of honour. Who lives here?” Carlo contained himself to answer, “The present occupant is, I believe, if I have hit the house I was seeking, the Countess d’Isorella.”

“My family were placed here, sir?” Count Lenkenstein inquired of Wilfrid. But Wilfrid’s attention was frozen by the sight of Vittoria’s lover. A wifely call of “Adalbert” from above quieted the count’s anxiety.

“Countess d’Isorella,” he said. “I know that woman. She belongs to the secret cabinet of Carlo Alberto—a woman with three edges. Did she not visit you in prison two weeks ago? I speak to you, Count Ammiani. She applied to the Archduke and the Marshal for permission to visit you. It was accorded. To the devil with our days of benignity! She was from Turin. The shuffle has made her my hostess for the nonce. I will go to her. You, sir,” the count turned to Wilfrid—“you will stay below. Are you in the pay of the insurgents?”

Wilfrid, the weakest of human beings where women were involved with him, did one of the hardest things which can task a young man’s fortitude: he looked his superior in the face, and neither blenched, nor frowned, nor spoke.

Ammiani spoke for him. “There is no pay given in our ranks.”

“The licence to rob is supposed to be an equivalent,” said the count.

Countess d’Isorella herself came downstairs, with profuse apologies for the absence of all her male domestics, and many delicate dimples about her mouth in uttering them. Her look at Ammiani struck Wilfrid as having a peculiar burden either of meaning or of passion in it. The count grimaced angrily when he heard that his sister Lena was not yet able to bear the fatigue of a walk to the citadel. “I fear you must all be my guests, for an hour at least,” said the countess.

Wilfrid was left pacing the hall. He thought he had never beheld so splendid a person, or one so subjugatingly gracious. Her speech and manner poured oil on the uncivil Austrian nobleman. What perchance had stricken Lena?

He guessed; and guessed it rightly. A folded scrap of paper signed by the Countess of Lenkenstein was brought to him.



It said:—"Are you making common cause with the rebels? Reply. One asks who should be told."

He wrote:—"I am an outcast of the army. I fight as a volunteer with the K. K. troops. Could I abandon them in their peril?"

The touch of sentiment he appended for Lena's comfort. He was too strongly impressed by the new vision of beauty in the house for his imagination to be flushed by the romantic posture of his devotion to a trailing flag.



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No other message was delivered. Ammiani presently descended and obtained a guard from the barricade; word was sent on to the barricades in advance toward the citadel. Wilfrid stood aside as Count Lenkenstein led the ladies to the door, bearing Lena on his arm. She passed her lover veiled. The count said, "You follow." He used the menial second person plural of German, and repeated it peremptorily.

"I follow no civilian," said Wilfrid.

"Remember, sir, that if you are seen with arms in your hands, and are not in the ranks, you run the chances of being hanged."

Lena broke loose from her brother; in spite of Anna's sharp remonstrance and the count's vexed stamp of the foot, she implored her lover:—"Come with us; pardon us; protect me—me! You shall not be treated harshly. They shall not Oh! be near me. I have been ill; I shrink from danger. Be near me!"

Such humble pleading permitted Wilfrid's sore spirit to succumb with the requisite show of chivalrous dignity. He bowed, and gravely opened his enormous umbrella, which he held up over the heads of the ladies, while Ammiani led the way. All was quiet near the citadel. A fog of plashing rain hung in red gloom about the many watchfires of the insurgents, but the Austrian head-quarters lay sombre and still. Close at the gates, Ammiani saluted the ladies. Wilfrid did the same, and heard Lena's call to him unmoved.

"May I dare to hint to you that it would be better for you to join your party?" said Ammiani.

Wilfrid walked on. After appearing to weigh the matter, he answered, "The umbrella will be of no further service to them to-night."

Ammiani laughed, and begged to be forgiven; but he could have done nothing more flattering.

Sore at all points, tricked and ruined, irascible under the sense of his injuries, hating everybody and not honouring himself, Wilfrid was fast growing to be an eccentric by profession. To appear cool and careless was the great effort of his mind.

"We were introduced one day in the Piazza d'Armi," said Ammiani. "I would have found means to convey my apologies to you for my behaviour on that occasion, but I have been at the mercy of my enemies. Lieutenant Pierson, will you pardon me? I have learnt how dear you and your family should be to me. Pray, accept my excuses and my counsel. The Countess Lena was my friend when I was a boy. She is in deep distress."

"I thank you, Count Ammiani, for your extremely disinterested advice," said Wilfrid; but the Italian was not cut to the quick by his irony; and he added: "I have hoisted, you



perceive, the white umbrella instead of wearing the white coat. It is almost as good as an hotel in these times; it gives as much shelter and nearly as much provision, and, I may say, better attendance. Good-night. You will be at it again about daylight, I suppose?"

"Possibly a little before," said Ammiani, cooled by the false ring of this kind of speech.



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“It’s useless to expect that your infernal bells will not burst out like all the lunatics on earth?”

“Quite useless, I fear. Good-night.”

Ammiani charged one of the men at an outer barricade to follow the white umbrella and pass it on.

He returned to the Countess d’Isorella, who was awaiting him, and alone.

This glorious head had aroused his first boyish passion. Scandal was busy concerning the two, when Violetta d’Asola, the youthfulest widow in Lombardy and the loveliest woman, gave her hand to Count d’Isorella, who took it without question of the boy Ammiani. Carlo’s mother assisted in that arrangement; a maternal plot, for which he could thank her only after he had seen Vittoria, and then had heard the buzz of whispers at Violetta’s name. Countess d’Isorella proved her friendship to have survived the old passion, by travelling expressly from Turin to obtain leave to visit him in prison. It was a marvellous face to look upon between prison walls. Rescued while the soldiers were marching him to the citadel that day, he was called by pure duty to pay his respects to the countess as soon as he had heard from his mother that she was in the city. Nor was his mother sorry that he should go. She had patiently submitted to the fact of his betrothal to Vittoria, which was his safeguard in similar perils; and she rather hoped for Violetta to wean him from his extreme republicanism. By arguments? By influence, perhaps. Carlo’s republicanism was preternatural in her sight, and she presumed that Violetta would talk to him discreetly and persuasively of the noble designs of the king.

Violetta d’Isorella received him with a gracious lifting of her fingers to his lips; congratulating him on his escape, and on the good fortune of the day. She laughed at the Lenkensteins and the singular Englishman; sat down to a little supper-tray, and pouted humorously as she asked him to feed on confects and wine; the huge appetites of the insurgents had devoured all her meat and bread.

“Why are you here?” he said.

She did well in replying boldly, “For the king.”

“Would you tell another that it is for the king?”

“Would I speak to another as I speak to you?”

Ammiani inclined his head.

They spoke of the prospects of the insurrection, of the expected outbreak in Venice, the eruption of Paris and Vienna, and the new life of Italy; touching on Carlo Alberto to



explode the truce in a laughing dissension. At last she said seriously, "I am a born Venetian, you know; I am not Piedmontese. Let me be sure that the king betrays the country, and I will prefer many heads to one. Excuse me if I am more womanly just at present. The king has sent his accredited messenger Tartini to the Provisional Government, requesting it to accept his authority. Why not? why not? on both sides. Count Medole gives his adhesion to the king, but you have a Council of War that rejects the king's overtures—a revolt within a revolt.



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“It is deplorable. You must have an army. The Piedmontese once over the Ticino, how can you act in opposition to it? You must learn to take a master. The king is only, or he appears, tricky because you compel him to wind and counterplot. I swear to you, Italy is his foremost thought. The Star of Italy sits on the Cross of Savoy.”

Ammiani kept his eyelids modestly down. “Ten thousand to plead for him, such as you!” he said. “But there is only one!”

“If you had been headstrong once upon a time, and I had been weak, you see, my Carlo, you would have been a domestic tyrant, I a rebel. You will not admit the existence of a virtue in an opposite opinion. Wise was your mother when she said ‘No’ to a wilful boy!”

Violetta lit her cigarette and puffed the smoke lightly.

“I told you in that horrid dungeon, my Carlo Amaranto—I call you by the old name—the old name is sweet!—I told you that your Vittoria is enamoured of the king. She blushes like a battle-flag for the king. I have heard her ‘Viva il Re!’ It was musical.”

“So I should have thought.”

“Ay, but my amaranto-innamorato, does it not foretell strife? Would you ever—ever take a heart with a king’s head stamped on it into your arms?”

“Give me the chance!”

He was guilty of this ardent piece of innocence though Violetta had pitched her voice in the key significant of a secret thing belonging to two memories that had not always flowed dividedly.

“Like a common coin?” she resumed.

“A heart with a king’s head stamped on it like a common coin.”

He recollected the sentence. He had once, during the heat of his grief for Giacomo Piaveni, cast it in her teeth.

Violetta repeated it, as to herself, tonelessly; a method of making an old unkindness strike back on its author with effect.

“Did we part good friends? I forget,” she broke the silence.

“We meet, and we will be the best of friends,” said Ammiani.



“Tell your mother I am not three years older than her son,—I am thirty. Who will make me young again? Tell her, my Carlo, that the genius for intrigue, of which she accuses me, develops at a surprising rate. As regards my beauty,” the countess put a tooth of pearl on her soft under lip.

Ammiani assured her that he would find words of his own for her beauty.

“I hear the eulogy, I know the sonnet,” said Violetta, smiling, and described the points of a brunette: the thick black banded hair, the full brown eyes, the plastic brows couching over them;—it was Vittoria’s face: Violetta was a flower of colour, fair, with but one shade of dark tinting on her brown eye-brows and eye-lashes, as you may see a strip of night-cloud cross the forehead of morning. She was yellow-haired, almost purple-eyed, so rich was the blue of the pupils. Vittoria could be sallow in despondency; but this Violetta never failed in plumpness and freshness. The pencil which had given her aspect the one touch of discord, endowed it with a subtle harmony, like mystery; and Ammiani remembered his having stood once on the Lido of Venice, and eyed the dawn across the Adriatic, and dreamed that Violetta was born of the loveliness and held in her bosom the hopes of morning. He dreamed of it now, feeling the smooth roll of a torrent.



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A cry of "Arms!" rang down the length of the Corso.

He started to his feet thankfully.

"Take me to your mother," she said. "I loathe to hear firing and be alone."

Ammiani threw up the window. There was a stir of lamps and torches below, and the low sky hung red. Violetta stood quickly thick-shod and hooded.

"Your mother will admit my companionship, Carlo?"

"She desires to thank you."

"She has no longer any fear of me?"

"You will find her of one mind with you."

"Concerning the king!"

"I would say, on most subjects."

"But that you do not know my mind! You are modest. Confess that you are thinking the hour you have passed with me has been wasted."

"I am, now I hear the call to arms."

"If I had all the while entertained you with talk of your Vittoria! It would not have been wasted then, my amaranto. It is not wasted for me. If a shot should strike you—"

"Tell her I died loving her with all my soul!" cried Ammiani.

Violetta's frame quivered as if he had smitten her.

They left the house. Countess Ammiani's door was the length of a barricade distant: it swung open to them, like all the other house-doors which were, or wished to be esteemed, true to the cause, and hospitable toward patriots.

"Remember, when you need a refuge, my villa is on Lago Maggiore," Violetta said, and kissed her finger-tips to him.

An hour after, by the light of this unlucky little speech, he thought of her as a shameless coquette. "When I need a refuge? Is not Milan in arms?—Italy alive? She considers it all a passing epidemic; or, perhaps, she is to plead for me to the king!"

That set him thinking moodily over the things she had uttered of Vittoria's strange and sudden devotion to the king.



Rainy dawn and the tongues of the churches ushered in the last day of street fighting. Ammiani found Romara and Colonel Corte at the head of strong bodies of volunteers, well-armed, ready to march for the Porta 'rosa. All three went straight to the house where the Provisional Government sat, and sword in hand denounced Count Medole as a traitor who sold his country to the king. Corte dragged him to the window to hear the shouts for the Republic. Medole wrote their names down one by one, and said, "Shall I leave the date vacant?" They put themselves at the head of their men, and marched in the ringing of the bells. The bells were their sacro-military music. Barto Rizzo was off to make a spring at the Porta Ticinese. Students, peasants, noble youths of the best blood, old men and young women, stood ranged in the drenching rain, eager to face death for freedom. At mid-day the bells were answered by cannon and the blunt snap of musketry volleys; dull, savage responses, as of a wounded great beast giving short howls and snarls



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by the interminable over-roaring of a cataract. Messengers from the gates came running to the quiet centre of the city, where cool men discoursed and plotted. Great news, big lies, were shouted:—Carlo Alberto thundered in the plains; the Austrians were everywhere retiring; the Marshal was a prisoner; the flag of surrender was on the citadel! These things were for the ears of thirsty women, diplomatists, and cripples.

Countess Ammiani and Countess d'Isorella sat together throughout the agitation of the day.

The life prayed for by one seemed a wisp of straw flung on this humming furnace.

Countess Ammiani was too well used to defeat to believe readily in victory, and had shrouded her head in resignation too long to hope for what she craved. Her hands were joined softly in her lap. Her visage had the same unmoved expression when she conversed with Violetta as when she listened to the ravings of the Corso.

Darkness came, and the bells ceased not rolling by her open windows: the clouds were like mists of conflagration.

She would not have the windows closed. The noise of the city had become familiar and akin to the image of her boy. She sat there cloaked.

Her heart went like a time-piece to the two interrogations to heaven: “Alive?—or dead?”

The voice of Luciano Romara was that of an angel's answering. He entered the room neat and trim as a cavalier dressed for social evening duty, saying with his fine tact, “We are all well;” and after talking like a gazette of the Porta Tosa taken by the volunteers, Barto Rizzo's occupation of the gate opening on the Ticino, and the bursting of the Porta Camosina by the freebands of the plains, he handed a letter to Countess Ammiani.

“Carlo is on the march to Bergamo and Brescia, with Corte, Sana, and about fifty of our men,” he said.

“And is wounded—where?” asked Violetta.

“Slightly in the hand—you see, he can march,” Romara said, laughing at her promptness to suspect a subterfuge, until he thought, “Now, what does this mean, madam?”

A lamp was brought to Countess Ammiani. She read:

“My mother!



“Cotton-wool on the left fore-finger. They deigned to give me no other memorial of my first fight. I am not worthy of papa’s two bullets. I march with Corte and Sana to Brescia. We keep the passes of the Tyrol. Luciano heads five hundred up to the hills to-morrow or next day. He must have all our money. Then go from door to door and beg subscriptions. Yes, my Chief! it is to be like God, and deserving of his gifts to lay down all pride, all wealth. This night send to my betrothed in Turin. She must be with no one but my mother. It is my command. Tell her so. I hold imperatively to it.” I breathe the best air of life. Luciano is a fine leader in action, calm as in a ball-room. What did I feel? I will



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talk of it with you by-and-by;—my father whispered in my ears; I felt him at my right hand. He said, 'I died for this day.' I feel now that I must have seen him. This is imagination. We may say that anything is imagination. I certainly heard his voice. Be of good heart, my mother, for I can swear that the General wakes up when I strike Austrian steel. He loved Brescia; so I go there. God preserve my mother! The eyes of heaven are wide enough to see us both. Vittoria by your side, remember! It is my will.

"Carlo."

Countess Ammiani closed her eyes over the letter, as in a dead sleep. "He is more his father than himself, and so suddenly!" she said. She was tearless. Violetta helped her to her bed-room under the pretext of a desire to hear the contents of the letter.

That night, which ended the five days of battle in Milan, while fires were raging at many gates, bells were rolling over the roof-tops, the army of Austria coiled along the North-eastern walls of the city, through rain and thick obscurity, and wove its way like a vast worm into the outer land.

CHAPTER XXXI

EPISODES OF THE REVOLT AND THE WAR

VITTORIA DISOBEYS HER LOVER

Countess d'Isorella's peculiar mission to Milan was over with the victory of the city. She undertook personally to deliver Carlo's injunction to Vittoria on her way to the king. Countess Ammiani deemed it sufficient that her son's wishes should be repeated verbally; and as there appeared to be no better messenger than one who was bound for Turin and knew Vittoria's place of residence, she entrusted the duty to Violetta.

The much which hangs on little was then set in motion:

Violetta was crossing the Ticino when she met a Milanese nobleman who had received cold greeting from the king, and was returning to Milan with word that the Piedmontese declaration of war against Austria had been signed. She went back to Milan, saw and heard, and gathered a burden for the royal ears. This was a woman, tender only to the recollection of past days, who used her beauty and her arts as weapons for influence. She liked kings because she saw neither master nor dupe in a republic; she liked her early lover because she could see nothing but a victim in any new one. She was fond of Carlo, as greatly occupied minds may be attached to an old garden where they have aforetime sown fair seed. Jealousy of a rival in love that was disconnected with political business and her large expenditure, had never yet disturbed the lady's nerves.



At Turin she found Vittoria singing at the opera, and winning marked applause from the royal box. She thought sincerely that to tear a prima donna from her glory would be very much like dismissing a successful General to his home and gabbling family. A most eminent personage agreed with her. Vittoria was carelessly informed that Count Ammiani had gone to Brescia, and having regard for her safety, desired her to go to Milan to be under the protection of his mother, and that Countess Ammiani was willing to receive her.



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Now, with her mother, and her maid Giacinta, and Beppo gathered about her, for three weeks Vittoria had been in full operatic career, working, winning fame, believing that she was winning influence, and establishing a treasury. The presence of her lover in Milan would have called her to the noble city; but he being at Brescia, she asked herself why she should abstain from labours which contributed materially to the strength of the revolution and made her helpful. It was doubtful whether Countess Ammiani would permit her to sing at La Scala; or whether the city could support an opera in the throes of war. And Vittoria was sending money to Milan. The stipend paid to her by the impresario, the jewels, the big bouquets—all flowed into the treasury of the insurrection. Antonio-Pericles advanced her a large sum on the day when the news of the Milanese uprising reached Turin: the conditions of the loan had simply been that she should continue her engagement to sing in Turin. He was perfectly slavish to her, and might be trusted to advance more. Since the great night at La Scala, she had been often depressed by a secret feeling that there was divorce between her love of her country and devotion to her Art. Now that both passions were in union, both active, each aiding the fire of the other, she lived a consummate life. She could not have abandoned her path instantly though Carlo had spoken his command to her in person. Such were her first spontaneous seasonings, and Laura Piaveni seconded them; saying, "Money, money! we must be Jews for money. We women are not allowed to fight, but we can manage to contribute our lire and soldi; we can forge the sinews of war."

Vittoria wrote respectfully to Countess Ammiani stating why she declined to leave Turin. The letter was poorly worded. While writing it she had been taken by a sentiment of guilt and of isolation in presuming to disobey her lover. "I am glad he will not see it," she remarked to Laura, who looked rapidly across the lines, and said nothing. Praise of the king was in the last sentence. Laura's eyes lingered on it half-a-minute.

"Has he not drawn his sword? He is going to march," said Vittoria.

"Oh, yes," Laura replied coolly; "but you put that to please Countess Ammiani."

Vittoria confessed she had not written it purposely to defend the king. "What harm?" she asked.

"None. Only this playing with shades allows men to call us hypocrites."

The observation angered Vittoria. She had seen the king of late; she had breathed Turin incense and its atmosphere; much that could be pleaded on the king's behalf she had listened to with the sympathetic pity which can be woman's best judgement, and is the sentiment of reason. She had also brooded over the king's character, and had thought that if the Chief could have her opportunities for studying this little impressible, yet strangely impulsive royal



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nature, his severe condemnation of him would be tempered. In fact, she was doing what makes a woman excessively tender and opinionated; she was petting her idea of the misunderstood one: she was thinking that she divined the king's character by mystical intuition; I will dare to say, maternally apprehended it. And it was a character strangely open to feminine perceptions, while to masculine comprehension it remained a dead blank, done either in black or in white.

Vittoria insisted on praising the king to Laura.

"With all my heart," Laura said, "so long as he is true to Italy."

"How, then, am I hypocritical?"

"My Sandra, you are certainly perverse. You admitted that you did something for the sake of pleasing Countess Ammiani."

"I did. But to be hypocritical one must be false."

"Oh!" went Laura.

"And I write to Carlo. He does not care for the king; therefore it is needless for me to name the king to him; and I shall not."

Laura said, "Very well." She saw a little deeper than the perversity, though she did not see the springs. In Vittoria's letter to her lover, she made no allusion to the Sword of Italy.

Countess Ammiani forwarded both letters on to Brescia.

When Carlo had finished reading them, he heard all Brescia clamouring indignantly at the king for having disarmed volunteers on Lago Maggiore and elsewhere in his dominions. Milan was sending word by every post of the overbearing arrogance of the Piedmontese officers and officials, who claimed a prostrate submission from a city fresh with the ardour of the glory it had won for itself, and that would fain have welcomed them as brothers. Romara and others wrote of downright visible betrayal. It was a time of passions;—great readiness for generosity, equal promptitude for indiscriminating hatred. Carlo read Vittoria's praise of the king with insufferable anguish. "You—you part of me, can write like this!" he struck the paper vehemently. The fury of action transformed the gentle youth. Countess Ammiani would not have forwarded the letter addressed to herself had she dreamed the mischief it might do. Carlo saw double-dealing in the absence of any mention of the king in his own letter.



“Quit Turin at once,” he dashed hasty lines to Vittoria; “and no ‘Viva il Re’ till we know what he may merit. Old delusions are pardonable; but you must now look abroad with your eyes. Your words should be the echoes of my soul. Your acts are mine. For the sake of the country, do nothing to fill me with shame. The king is a traitor. I remember things said of him by Agostino; I subscribe to them every one. Were you like any other Italian girl, you might cry for him—who would care! But you are Vittoria. Fly to my mother’s arms, and there rest. The king betrays us. Is a stronger word necessary? I am writing too harshly to you;—and here



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are the lines of your beloved letter throbbing round me while I write; but till the last shot is fired I try to be iron, and would hold your hand and not kiss it—not be mad to fall between your arms—not wish for you—not think of you as a woman, as my beloved, as my Vittoria; I hope and pray not, if I thought there was an ace of work left to do for the country. Or if one could say that you cherished a shred of loyalty for him who betrays it. Great heaven! am I to imagine that royal flatteries----- My hand is not my own! You shall see all that it writes. I will seem to you no better than I am. I do not tell you to be a Republican, but an Italian. If I had room for myself in my prayers—oh! one half-instant to look on you, though with chains on my limbs. The sky and the solid ground break up when I think of you. I fancy I am still in prison. Angelo was music to me for two whole days (without a morning to the first and a night to the second). He will be here tomorrow and talk of you again. I long for him more than for battle—almost long for you more than for victory for our Italy.

“This is Brescia, which my father said he loved better than his wife.

“General Paolo Ammiani is buried here. I was at his tombstone this morning. I wish you had known him.

“You remember, we talked of his fencing with me daily. ‘I love the fathers who do that.’ You said it. He will love you. Death is the shadow—not life. I went to his tomb. It was more to think of Brescia than of him. Ashes are only ashes; tombs are poor places. My soul is the power.

“If I saw the Monte Viso this morning, I saw right over your head when you were sleeping.

“Farewell to journalism—I hope, for ever. I jump at shaking off the journalistic phraseology Agostino laughs at. Yet I was right in printing my ‘young nonsense.’ I did, hold the truth, and that was felt, though my vehicle for delivering it was rubbish.“In two days Corte promises to sing his song, ‘Avanti.’ I am at his left hand. Venice, the passes of the Adige, the Adda, the Oglio are ours. The room is locked; we have only to exterminate the reptiles inside it. Romara, D’Arci, Carnischi march to hold the doors. Corte will push lower; and if I can get him to enter the plains and join the main army I shall rejoice.”

The letter concluded with a postscript that half an Italian regiment, with white coats swinging on their bayonet-points, had just come in.

It reached Vittoria at a critical moment.



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Two days previously, she and Laura Piaveni had talked with the king. It was an unexpected honour. Countess, d'Isorella conducted them to the palace. The lean-headed sovereign sat booted and spurred, his sword across his knees; he spoke with a peculiar sad hopefulness of the prospects of the campaign, making it clear that he was risking more than anyone risked, for his stake was a crown. The few words he uttered of Italy had a golden ring in them; Vittoria knew not why they had it. He condemned the Republican spirit of Milan more regretfully than severely. The Republicans were, he said, impracticable. Beyond the desire for change, they knew not what they wanted. He did not state that he should avoid Milan in his march. On the contrary, he seemed to indicate that he was about to present himself to the people of Milan. "To act against the enemy successfully, we must act as one, under one head, with one aim." He said this, adding that no heart in Italy had yearned more than his own for the signal to march for the Mincio and the Adige.

Vittoria determined to put him to one test. She summoned her boldness to crave grace for Agostino Balderini to return to Piedmont. The petition was immediately granted. Alluding to the libretto of Camilla, the king complimented Vittoria for her high courage on the night of the Fifteenth of the foregoing year. "We in Turin were prepared, though we had only then the pleasure of hearing of you," he said.

"I strove to do my best to help. I wish to serve our cause now," she replied, feeling an inexplicable new sweetness running in her blood.

He asked her if she did not know that she had the power to move multitudes.

"Sire, singing appears so poor a thing in time of war."

He remarked that wine was good for soldiers, singing better, such a voice as hers best of all.

For hours after the interview, Vittoria struggled with her deep blushes. She heard the drums of the regiments, the clatter of horses, the bugle-call of assembly, as so many confirmatory notes that it was a royal hero who was going forth.

"He stakes a crown," she said to Laura.

"Tusk! it tumbles off his head if he refuses to venture something," was Laura's response.

Vittoria reproached her for injustice.

"No," Laura said; "he is like a young man for whom his mother has made a match. And he would be very much in love with his bride if he were quite certain of winning her, or rather, if she would come a little more than halfway to meet him. Some young men are so composed. Genoa and Turin say, 'Go and try.' Milan and Venice say, 'Come and have faith in us.' My opinion is that he is quite as much propelled as attracted."



“This is shameful,” said Vittoria.

“No; for I am quite willing to suspend my judgement. I pray that fortune may bless his arms. I do think that the stir of a campaign, and a certain amount of success will make him in earnest.”



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“Can you look on his face and not see pure enthusiasm?”

“I see every feminine quality in it, my dear.”

“What can it be that he is wanting in?”

“Masculine ambition.”

“I am not defending him,” said Vittoria hastily.

“Not at all; and I am not attacking him. I can excuse his dread of Republicanism. I can fancy that there is reason for him just now to fear Republicanism worse than Austria. Paris and Milan are two grisly phantoms before him. These red spectres are born of earthquake, and are more given to shaking thrones than are hostile cannonshot. Earthquakes are dreadfuller than common maladies to all of us. Fortune may help him, but he has not the look of one who commands her. The face is not aquiline. There’s a light over him like the ray of a sickly star.”

“For that reason!” Vittoria burst out.

“Oh, for that reason we pity men, assuredly, my Sandra, but not kings. Luckless kings are not generous men, and ungenerous men are mischievous kings.”

“But if you find him chivalrous and devoted; if he proves his noble intentions, why not support him?”

“Dandle a puppet, by all means,” said Laura.

Her intellect, not her heart, was harsh to the king; and her heart was not mistress of her intellect in this respect, because she beheld riding forth at the head of Italy one whose spirit was too much after the pattern of her supple, springing, cowering, impressionable sex, alternately ardent and abject, chivalrous and treacherous, and not to be confided in firmly when standing at the head of a great cause.

Aware that she was reading him very strictly by the letters of his past deeds, which were not plain history to Vittoria, she declared that she did not countenance suspicion in dealing with the king, and that it would be a delight to her to hear of his gallant bearing on the battle-field. “Or to witness it, my Sandra, if that were possible;—we two! For, should he prove to be no General, he has the courage of his family.”

Vittoria took fire at this. “What hinders our following the army?”

“The less baggage the better, my dear.”



“But the king said that my singing—I have no right to think it myself.” Vittoria concluded her sentence with a comical intention of humility.

“It was a pretty compliment,” said Laura. “You replied that singing is a poor thing in time of war, and I agree with you. We might serve as hospital nurses.”

“Why do we not determine?”

“We are only considering possibilities.”

“Consider the impossibility of our remaining quiet.”

“Fire that goes to flame is a waste of heat, my Sandra.”

The signora, however, was not so discreet as her speech. On all sides there was uproar and movement. High-born Italian ladies were offering their hands for any serviceable work. Laura and Vittoria were not alone in the desire which was growing to be resolution to share the hardships of the soldiers, to cherish and encourage them, and by seeing, to have the supreme joy of feeling the blows struck at the common enemy.



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The opera closed when the king marched. Carlo Ammiani's letter was handed to Vittoria at the fall of the curtain on the last night.

Three paths were open to her: either that she should obey her lover, or earn an immense sum of money from Antonio-Pericles by accepting an immediate engagement in London, or go to the war. To sit in submissive obedience seemed unreasonable; to fly from Italy impossible. Yet the latter alternative appealed strongly to her sense of duty, and as it thereby threw her lover's commands into the background, she left it to her heart to struggle with Carlo, and thought over the two final propositions. The idea of being apart from Italy while the living country streamed forth to battle struck her inflamed spirit like the shock of a pause in martial music. Laura pretended to take no part in Vittoria's decision, but when it was reached, she showed her a travelling-carriage stocked with lint and linen, wine in jars, chocolate, cases of brandy, tea, coffee, needles, thread, twine, scissors, knives; saying, as she displayed them, "there, my dear, all my money has gone in that equipment, so you must pay on the road."

"This doesn't leave me a choice, then," said Victoria, joining her humour.

"Ah, but think over it," Laura suggested.

"No! not think at all," cried Vittoria.

"You do not fear Carlo's anger?"

"If I think, I am weak as water. Let us go."

Countess d'Isorella wrote to Carlo: "Your Vittoria is away after the king to Pavia. They tell me she stood up in her carriage on the Ponte del Po -'Viva il Re d'Italia!' waving the cross of Savoy. As I have previously assured you, no woman is Republican. The demonstration was a mistake. Public characters should not let their personal preferences betrumpered: a diplomatic truism:—but I must add, least of all a cantatrice for a king. The famous Greek amateur—the prop of failing finances—is after her to arrest her for breach of engagement. You wished to discover an independent mind in a woman, my Carlo; did you not? One would suppose her your wife—or widow. She looked a superb thing the last night she sang. She is not, in my opinion, wanting in height. If, behind all that innocence and candour, she has any trained artfulness, she will beat us all. Heaven bless your arms!"

The demonstration mentioned by the countess had not occurred.

Vittoria's letter to her lover missed him. She wrote from Pavia, after she had taken her decisive step.

Carlo Ammiani went into the business of the war with the belief that his betrothed had despised his prayer to her.



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He was under Colonel Corte, operating on the sub-Alpine range of hills along the line of the Chiese South-eastward. Here the volunteers, formed of the best blood of Milan, the gay and brave young men, after marching in the pride of their strength to hold the Alpine passes and bar Austria from Italy while the fight went on below, were struck by a sudden paralysis. They hung aloft there like an arm cleft from the body. Weapons, clothes, provisions, money, the implements of war, were withheld from them. The Piedmontese officers despatched to watch their proceedings laughed at them like exasperating senior scholars examining the accomplishments of a lower form. It was manifest that Count Medole and the Government of Milan worked everywhere to conquer the people for the king before the king had done a stroke to conquer the Austrians for the people; while, in order to reduce them to the condition of Piedmontese soldiery, the flame of their patriotic enthusiasm was systematically damped, and instead of apprentices in war, who possessed at any rate the elementary stuff of soldiers, miserable dummies were drafted into the royal service. The Tuscans and the Romans had good reason to complain on behalf of their princes, as had the Venetians and the Lombards for the cause of their Republic. Neither Tuscans, Romans, Venetians, nor Lombards were offering up their lives simply to obtain a change of rulers; though all Italy was ready to bow in allegiance to a king of proved kingly quality. Early in the campaign the cry of treason was muttered, and on all sides such became the temper of the Alpine volunteers, that Angelo and Rinaldo Guidascarpì were forced to join their cousin under Corte, by the dispersion of their band, amounting to something more than eighteen hundred fighting lads, whom a Piedmontese superior officer summoned peremptorily to shout for the king. They thundered as one voice for the Italian Republic, and instantly broke up and disbanded. This was the folly of the young: Carlo Ammiani confessed that it was no better; but he knew that a breath of generous confidence from the self-appointed champion of the national cause would have subdued his impatience at royalty and given heart and cheer to his sickening comrades. He began to frown angrily when he thought of Vittoria. "Where is she now?—where now?" he asked himself in the season of his most violent wrath at the king. Her conduct grew inseparable in his mind from the king's deeds. The sufferings, the fierce irony, the very deaths of the men surrounding him in aims, rose up in accusation against the woman he loved.

CHAPTER XXXI

EPISODES OF THE REVOLT AND THE WAR

The treachery of Pericles—the white umbrella—the death of Rinaldo Guidascarpì

The king crossed the Mincio. The Marshal, threatened on his left flank, drew in his line from the farther Veronese heights upon a narrowed battle front before Verona. Here they manoeuvred, and the opening successes fell to the king. Holding Peschiera begirt, with one sharp passage of arms he cleared the right bank of the Adige and stood on the semicircle of hills, master of the main artery into Tyrol.



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The village of Pastrengo has given its name to the day. It was a day of intense heat coming after heavy rains. The arid soil steamed; the white powder-smoke curled in long horizontal columns across the hazy ring of the fight. Seen from a distance it was like a huge downy ball, kicked this way and that between the cypresses by invisible giants. A pair of eager-eyed women gazing on a battle-field for the first time could but ask themselves in bewilderment whether the fate of countries were verily settled in such a fashion. Far in the rear, Vittoria and Laura heard the cannon-shots; a sullen dull sound, as of a mallet striking upon rotten timber. They drove at speed. The great thumps became varied by musketry volleys, that were like blocks of rockboulder tumbled in the roll of a mountain torrent. These, then, were the voices of Italy and Austria speaking the devilish tongue of the final alternative. Cannon, rockets, musketry, and now the run of drums, now the ring of bugles, now the tramp of horses, and the field was like a landslip. A joyful bright black death-wine seemed to pour from the bugles all about. The women strained their senses to hear and see; they could realize nothing of a reality so absolute; their feelings were shattered, and crowded over them in patches;—horror, glory, panic, hope, shifted lights within their bosoms. The fascination and repulsion of the image of Force divided them. They feared; they were prostrate; they sprang in praise. The image of Force was god and devil to their souls. They strove to understand why the field was marked with blocks of men who made a plume of vapour here, and hurried thither. The action of their intellects resolved to a blank marvel at seeing an imminent thing—an interrogation to almighty heaven treated with method, not with fury streaming forward. Cleave the opposing ranks! Cry to God for fire? Cut them through! They had come to see the Song of Deborah performed before their eyes, and they witnessed only a battle. Blocks of infantry gathered densely, thinned to a line, wheeled in column, marched: blocks of cavalry changed posts: artillery bellowed from one spot and quickly selected another. Infantry advanced in the wake of tiny smokepuffs, halted, advanced again, rattled files of shots, became struck into knots, faced half about as from a blow of the back of a hand, retired orderly. Cavalry curved like a flickering scimitar in their rear; artillery plodded to its further station. Innumerable tiny smoke-puffs then preceded a fresh advance of infantry. The enemy were on the hills and looked mightier, for they were revealed among red flashes of their guns, and stood partly visible above clouds of hostile smoke and through clouds of their own, which grasped viscosly by the skirts of the hills. Yet it seemed a strife of insects, until, one by one, soldiers who had gone into yonder white pit for the bloody kiss of death, and had got it on their faces, were borne by Vittoria and Laura knelt in this horrid stream of mortal anguish to give succour from their stores in the carriage. Their natural emotions were distraught. They welcomed the sight of suffering thankfully, for the poor blotted faces were so glad at sight of them. Torture was their key to the reading of the battle. They gazed on the field no longer, but let the roaring wave of combat wash up to them what it would.



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The hill behind Pastrengo was twice stormed. When the bluecoats first fell back, a fine charge of Piedmontese horse cleared the slopes for a second effort, and they went up and on, driving the enemy from hill to hill. The Adige was crossed by the Austrians under cover of Tyrolese rifleshots.

Then, with Beppo at their heels, bearing water, wine, and brandy, the women walked in the paths of carnage, and saw the many faces of death. Laura whispered strangely, "How light-hearted they look!" The wounded called their comforters sweet names. Some smoked and some sang, some groaned; all were quick to drink. Their jokes at the dead were universal. They twisted their bodies painfully to stick a cigar between dead lips, and besprinkle them with the last drops of liquor in their cups, laughing a benediction. These scenes put grievous chains on Vittoria's spirit, but Laura evidently was not the heavier for them. Glorious Verona shone under the sunset as their own to come; Peschiera, on the blue lake, was in the hollow of their hands. "Prizes worth any quantity of blood," said Laura. Vittoria confessed that she had seen enough of blood, and her aspect provoked Laura to utter, "For God's sake, think of something miserable;—cry, if you can!"

Vittoria's underlip dropped sickly with the question, "Why?"

Laura stated the physical necessity with Italian naivete.

"If I can," said Vittoria, and blinked to get a tear; but laughter helped as well to relieve her, and it came on their return to the carriage. They found the spy Luigi sitting beside the driver. He informed them that Antonio-Pericles had been in the track of the army ever since their flight from Turin; daily hurrying off with whip of horses at the sound of cannon-shot, and gradually stealing back to the extreme rear. This day he had flown from Oliosi to Cavriani, and was, perhaps, retracing his way already as before, on fearful toe-tips. Luigi acted the caution of one who stepped blindfolded across hot iron plates. Vittoria, without a spark of interest, asked why the Signor Antonio should be following the army.

"Why, it's to find you, signorina."

Luigi's comical emphasis conjured up in a jumbled picture the devotion, the fury, the zeal, the terror of Antonio-Pericles—a mixture of demoniacal energy and ludicrous trepidation. She imagined his long figure, fantastical as a shadow, off at huge strides, and back, with eyes sliding swiftly to the temples, and his odd serpent's head raised to peer across the plains and occasionally to exclaim to the reasonable heavens in anger at men and loathing of her. She laughed ungovernably. Luigi exclaimed that, albeit in disgrace with the signor Antonio, he had been sent for to serve him afresh, and had now been sent forward to entreat the gracious signorina to grant her sincerest friend and adorer an interview. She laughed at Pericles, but in truth she almost loved the man for his worship of her Art, and representation of her dear peaceful practice of it.



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The interview between them took place at Oliosi. There, also, she met Georgiana Ford, the half-sister of Merthyr Powys, who told her that Merthyr and Augustus Gambier were in the ranks of a volunteer contingent in the king's army, and might have been present at Pastrengo. Georgiana held aloof from battle-fields, her business being simply to serve as Merthyr's nurse in case of wounds, or to see the last of him in case of death. She appeared to have no enthusiasm. She seconded strongly the vehement persuasions addressed by Pericles to Vittoria. Her disapproval of the presence of her sex on fields of battle was precise. Pericles had followed the army to give Vittoria one last chance, he said, and drag her away from this sick country, as he called it, pointing at the dusty land from the windows of the inn. On first seeing her he gasped like one who has recovered a lost thing. To Laura he was a fool; but Vittoria enjoyed his wildest outbursts, and her half-sincere humility encouraged him to think that he had captured her at last. He enlarged on the perils surrounding her voice in dusty bellowing Lombardy, and on the ardour of his friendship in exposing himself to perils as tremendous, that he might rescue her. While speaking he pricked a lively ear for the noise of guns, hearing a gun in everything, and jumping to the window with horrid imprecations. His carriage was horsed at the doors below. Let the horses die, he said, let the coachman have sun-stroke. Let hundreds perish, if Vittoria would only start in an hour-in two—to-night—to-morrow.

"Because, do you see,"—he turned to Laura and Georgiana, submitting to the vexatious necessity of seeming reasonable to these creatures,—“she is a casket for one pearl. It is only one, but it is *one*, mon Dieu! and inscrutable heaven, mesdames, has made the holder of it mad. Her voice has but a sole skin; it is not like a body; it bleeds to death at a scratch. A spot on the pearl, and it is perished—pfoof! Ah, cruel thing! impious, I say. I have watched, I have reared her. Speak to me of mothers! I have cherished her for her splendid destiny—to see it go down, heels up, among quarrels of boobies! Yes; we have war in Italy. Fight! Fight in this beautiful climate that you may be dominated by a blue coat, not by a white coat. We are an intelligent race; we are a civilized people; we will fight for that. What has a voice of the very heavens to do with your fighting? I heard it first in England, in a firwood, in a month of Spring, at night-time, fifteen miles and a quarter from the city of London—oh, city of peace! Sandra you will come there. I give you thousands additional to the sum stipulated. You have no rival. Sandra Belloni! no rival, I say”—he invoked her in English, “and you hear—you, to be a draggle-tail vivandiere wiz a brandy-bottle at your hips and a reputation going like ze brandy. Ah! pardon, mesdames; but did mankind ever see a frenzy like this girl's? Speak, Sandra. I could cry it like Michiella to Camilla—Speak!”



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Vittoria compelled him to despatch his horses to stables. He had relays of horses at war-prices between Castiglione and Pavia, and a retinue of servants; nor did he hesitate to inform the ladies that, before entrusting his person to the hazards of war, he had taken care to be provided with safe-conduct passes for both armies, as befitted a prudent man of peace—"or sense; it is one, mesdames."

Notwithstanding his terror at the guns, and disgust at the soldiery and the bad fare at the inn, Vittoria's presence kept him lingering in this wretched place, though he cried continually, "I shall have heart-disease." He believed at first that he should subdue her; then it became his intention to carry her off.

It was to see Merthyr that she remained. Merthyr came there the day after the engagement at Santa Lucia. They had not met since the days at Meran. He was bronzed, and keen with strife, and looked young, but spoke not over-hopefully. He scolded her for wishing to taste battle, and compared her to a bad swimmer on deep shores. Pericles bounded with delight to hear him, and said he had not supposed there was so much sense in Powys. Merthyr confessed that the Austrians had as good as beaten them at Santa Lucia. The tactical combinations of the Piedmontese were wretched. He was enamoured of the gallantry of the Duke of Savoy, who had saved the right wing of the army from rout while covering the backward movement. Why there had been any fight at all at Santa Lucia, where nothing was to be gained, much to be lost, he was incapable of telling; but attributed it to an antique chivalry on the part of the king, that had prompted the hero to a trial of strength, a bout of blood-letting.

"You do think he is a hero?" said Vittoria.

"He is; and he will march to Venice."

"And open the opera at Venice," Pericles sneered. "Powys, mon cher, cure her of this beastly dream. It is a scandal to you to want a woman's help. You were defeated at Santa Lucia. I say bravo to anything that brings you to reason. Bravo! You hear me."

The engagement at Santa Lucia was designed by the king to serve as an instigating signal for the Veronese to rise in revolt; and this was the secret of Charles Albert's stultifying manoeuvres between Peschiera and Mantua. Instead of matching his military skill against the wary old Marshal's, he was offering incentives to conspiracy. Distrusting the revolution, which was a force behind him, he placed such reliance on its efforts in his front as to make it the pivot of his actions.

"The volunteers North-east of Vicenza are doing the real work for us, I believe," said Merthyr; and it seemed so then, as it might have been indeed, had they not been left almost entirely to themselves to do it.



These tidings of a fight lost set Laura and Vittoria quivering with nervous irritation. They had been on the field of Pastrengo, and it was won. They had been absent from Santa Lucia. What was the deduction? Not such as reason would have made for them; but they were at the mercy of the currents of the blood. "Let us go on," said Laura. Merthyr refused to convoy them. Pericles drove with him an hour on the road, and returned in glee, to find Vittoria and Laura seated in their carriage, and Luigi scuffling with Beppo.



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“Padrone, see how I assist you,” cried Luigi.

Upon this Beppo instantly made a swan’s neck of his body and trumpeted: “A sally from the fortress for forage.”

“Whip! whip!” Pericles shouted to his coachman, and the two carriages parted company at the top of their speed.

Pericles fell a victim to a regiment of bersaglieri that wanted horses, and unceremoniously stopped his pair and took possession of them on the route for Peschiera. He was left in a stranded carriage between a dusty ditch and a mulberry bough. Vittoria and Laura were not much luckier. They were met by a band of deserters, who made no claim upon the horses, but stood for drink, and having therewith fortified their fine opinion of themselves, petitioned for money. A kiss was their next demand. Money and good humour saved the women from indignity. The band of rascals went off with a ‘Viva l’Italia.’ Such scum is upon every popular rising, as Vittoria had to learn. Days of rain and an incomprehensible inactivity of the royal army kept her at a miserable inn, where the walls were bare, the cock had crowed his last. The guns of Peschiera seemed to roam over the plain like an echo unwillingly aroused that seeks a hollow for its further sleep. Laura sat pondering for hours, harsh in manner, as if she hated her. “I think,” she said once, “that women are those persons who have done evil in another world: “The “why?” from Vittoria was uttered simply to awaken friendly talk, but Laura relapsed into her gloom. A village priest, a sleek gentle creature, who shook his head to earth when he hoped, and filled his nostrils with snuff when he desponded, gave them occasional companionship under the title of consolation. He wished the Austrians to be beaten, remarking, however, that they were good Catholics, most fervent Catholics. As the Lord decided, so it would end! “Oh, delicious creed!” Laura broke out: “Oh, dear and sweet doctrine! that results and developments in a world where there is more evil than good are approved by heaven.” She twisted the mild man in supple steel of her irony so tenderly that Vittoria marvelled to hear her speak of him in abhorrence when they quitted the village. “Not to be born a woman, and voluntarily to be a woman!” ejaculated Laura. “How many, how many are we to deduct from the male population of Italy? Cross in hand, he should be at the head of our arms, not whimpering in a corner for white bread. Wretch! he makes the marrow in my bones rage at him. He chronicled pig that squeaked.”

“Why had she been so gentle with him?”

“Because, my dear, when I loathe a thing I never care to exhaust my detestation before I can strike it,” said the true Italian.



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They were on the field of Goito; it was won. It was won against odds. At Pastrengo they witnessed an encounter; this was a battle. Vittoria perceived that there was the difference between a symphony and a lyric song. The blessedness of the sensation that death can be light and easy dispossessed her of the meaner compassion, half made up of cowardice, which she had been nearly borne down by on the field of Pastrengo. At an angle on a height off the left wing of the royal army the face of the battle was plain to her: the movements of the troops were clear as strokes on a slate. Laura flung her life into her eyes, and knelt and watched, without summing one sole thing from what her senses received.

Vittoria said, "We are too far away to understand it."

"No," said Laura, "we are too far away to feel it."

The savage soul of the woman was robbed of its share of tragic emotion by having to hold so far aloof. Flashes of guns were but flashes of guns up there where she knelt. She thirsted to read the things written by them; thirsted for their mystic terrors, somewhat as souls of great prophets have craved for the full revelation of those fitful underlights which inspired their mouths.

Charles Albert's star was at its highest when the Piedmontese drums beat for an advance of the whole line at Goito.

Laura stood up, white as furnace-fire. "Women can do some good by praying," she said. She believed that she had been praying. That was her part in the victory.

Rain fell as from the forehead of thunder. From black eve to black dawn the women were among dead and dying men, where the lanterns trailed a slow flame across faces that took the light and let it go. They returned to their carriage exhausted. The ways were almost impassable for carriage-wheels. While they were toiling on and exchanging their drenched clothes, Vittoria heard Merthyr's voice speaking to Beppo on the box. He was saying that Captain Gambier lay badly wounded; brandy was wanted for him. She flung a cloak over Laura, and handed out the flask with a naked arm. It was not till she saw him again that she remembered or even felt that he had kissed the arm. A spot of sweet fire burned on it just where the soft fulness of a woman's arm slopes to the bend. He chid her for being on the field and rejoiced in a breath, for the carriage and its contents helped to rescue his wounded brother in arms from probable death. Gambier, wounded in thigh and ankle by rifle-shot, was placed in the carriage. His clothes were saturated with the soil of Goito; but wounded and wet, he smiled gaily, and talked sweet boyish English. Merthyr gave the driver directions to wind along up the Mincio. "Georgiana will be at the nearest village—she has an instinct for battle-fields, or keeps spies in her pay," he said.

“Tell her I am safe. We march to cut them (the enemy) off from Verona, and I can’t leave. The game is in our hands. We shall give you Venice.”



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Georgiana was found at the nearest village. Gambier's wounds had been dressed by an army-surgeon. She looked at the dressing, and said that it would do for six hours. This singular person had fully qualified herself to attend on a soldier-brother. She had studied medicine for that purpose, and she had served as nurse in a London hospital. Her nerves were completely under control. She could sit in attendance by a sick-bed for hours, hearing distant cannon, and the brawl of soldiery and vagabonds in the street, without a change of countenance. Her dress was plain black from throat to heel, with a skull cap of white, like a Moravian sister. Vittoria revered her; but Georgiana's manner in return was cold aversion, so much more scornful than disdain that it offended Laura, who promptly put her finger on the blot in the fair character with the word 'Jealousy;' but a single word is too broad a mark to be exactly true. "She is a perfect example of your English," Laura said. "Brave, good, devoted, admirable—ice at the heart. The judge of others, of course. I always respected her; I never liked her; and I should be afraid of a comparison with her. Her management of the household of this inn is extraordinary."

Georgiana condescended to advise Vittoria once more not to dangle after armies.

"I wish to wait here to assist you in nursing our friend," said Vittoria.

Georgiana replied that her strength was unlikely to fail.

After two days of incessant rain, sunshine blazed over 'the watery Mantuan flats. Laura drove with Beppo to see whether the army was in motion, for they were distracted by rumours. Vittoria clung to her wounded friend, whose pleasure was the hearing her speak. She expected Laura's return by set of sun. After dark a messenger came to her, saying that the signora had sent a carriage to fetch her to Valeggio. Her immediate supposition was that Merthyr might have fallen. She found Luigi at the carriage-door, and listened to his mysterious directions and remarks that not a minute must be lost, without suspicion. He said that the signora was in great trouble, very anxious to see the signorina instantly; there was but a distance of five miles to traverse.

She thought it strange that the carriage should be so luxuriously fitted with lights and silken pillows, but her ideas were all of Merthyr, until she by chance discovered a packet marked I chocolate, which told her at once that she was entrapped by Antonio-Pericles. Luigi would not answer her cry to him. After some fruitless tremblings of wrath, she lay back relieved by the feeling that Merthyr was safe, come what might come to herself. Things could lend to nothing but an altercation with Pericles, and for this scene she prepared her mind. The carriage stopped while she was dozing. Too proud to supplicate in the darkness, she left it to the horses to bear her on, reserving her energies for the morning's interview,



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and saying, "The farther he takes me the angrier I shall be." She dreamed of her anger while asleep, but awakened so frequently during the night that morning was at her eyelids before they divided. To her amazement, she saw the carriage surrounded by Austrian troopers. Pericles was spreading cigars among them, and addressing them affably. The carriage was on a good road, between irrigated flats, that flashed a lively green and bright steel blue for miles away. She drew down the blinds to cry at leisure; her wings were clipped, and she lost heart. Pericles came round to her when the carriage had drawn up at an inn. He was egregiously polite, but modestly kept back any expressions of triumph. A body of Austrians, cavalry and infantry, were breaking camp. Pericles accorded her an hour of rest. She perceived that he was anticipating an outbreak of the anger she had nursed overnight, and baffled him so far by keeping dumb. Luigi was sent up to her to announce the expiration of her hour of grace.

"Ah, Luigi!" she said. "Signorina, only wait, and see how Luigi can serve two," he whispered, writhing under the reproachfulness of her eyes. At the carriage-door she asked Pericles whither he was taking her. "Not to Turin, not to London, Sandra Belloni!" he replied; "not to a place where you are wet all night long, to wheeze for ever after it. Go in." She entered the carriage quickly, to escape from staring officers, whose laughter rang in her ears and humbled her bitterly; she felt herself bringing dishonour on her lover. The carriage continued in the track of the Austrians. Pericles was audibly careful to avoid the border regiments. He showered cigars as he passed; now and then he exhibited a paper; and on one occasion he brought a General officer to the carriage-door, opened it and pointed in. A white-helmeted dragoon rode on each side of the carriage for the remainder of the day. The delight of the supposition that these Austrians were retreating before the invincible arms of King Carlo Alberto kept her cheerful; but she heard no guns in the rear. A blocking of artillery and waggons compelled a halt, and then Pericles came and faced her. He looked profoundly ashamed of himself, ready as he was for an animated defence of his proceedings.

"Where are you taking me, sir?" she said in English.

"Sandra, will you be a good child? It is anywhere you please, if you will promise—"

"I will promise nothing."

"Zen, I lock you up in Verona." In Verona!"

"Sandra, will you promise to me?"

"I will promise nothing."



“Zen I lock you up in Verona. It is settled. No more of it. I come to say, we shall not reach a village. I am sorry. We have soldiers for a guard. You draw out a board and lodge in your carriage as in a bed. Biscuits, potted meats, prunes, bon-bona, chocolate, wine—you shall find all at your right hand and your left. I am desolate in offending you. Sandra, if you will promise—”



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"I will promise—this is what I will promise," said Vittoria.

Pericles thrust his ear forward, and withdrew it as if it had been slapped.

She promised to run from him at the first opportunity, to despise him ever after, and never to sing again in his hearing. With the darkness Luigi appeared to light her lamp; he mouthed perpetually, "To-morrow, to-morrow." The watch-fires of Austrians encamped in the fields encircled her; and moving up and down, the cigar of Antonio-Pericles was visible. He had not eaten or drunk, and he was out there sleepless; he walked conquering his fears in the thick of war troubles: all for her sake. She watched critically to see whether the cigar-light was puffed in fretfulness. It burned steadily; and the thought of Pericles supporting patience quite overcame her. In a fit of humour that was almost tears, she called to him and begged him to take a place in the carriage and have food. "If it is your pleasure," he said; and threw off his cloak. The wine comforted him. Thereupon he commenced a series of strange gesticulations, and ended by blinking at the window, saying, "No, no; it is impossible to explain. I have no voice; I am not, gifted. It is," he tapped at his chest, "it is here. It is, imprisoned in me."

"What?" said Vittoria, to encourage him.

"It can never be explained, my child. Am I not respectful to you? Am I not worshipful to you? But, no! it can never be explained. Some do call me mad. I know it; I am laughed at. Oh! do I not know zat? Perfectly well. My ancestors adored Goddesses. I discover ze voice of a Goddess: I adore it. So you call me mad; it is to me what you call me—juste ze same. I am possessed wiz passion for her voice. So it will be till I go to ashes. It is to me ze one zsing divine in a pig, a porpoise world. It is to me—I talk! It is unutterable—impossible to tell."

"But I understand it; I know you must feel it," said Vittoria.

"But you hate me, Sandra. You hate your Pericles."

"No, I do not; you are my good friend, my good Pericles."

"I am your good Pericles? So you obey me?"

"In what?"

"You come to London?"

"I shall not."

"You come to Turin?"

"I cannot promise."



“To Milan?”

“No; not yet.”

Ungrateful little beast! minx! temptress! You seduce me into your carriage to feed me, to fill me, for to coax me,” cried Pericles.

“Am I the person to have abuse poured on me?” Vittoria rejoined, and she frowned. “Might I not have called you a wretched whimsical money-machine, without the comprehension of a human feeling? You are doing me a great wrong—to win my submission, as I see, and it half amuses me; but the pretence of an attempt to carry me off from my friends is an offence that I should take certain care to punish in another. I do not give you any promise, because the first promise of all—the promise to keep one — is not in my power. Shut your eyes and sleep where you are, and in the morning think better of your conduct!”



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“Of my conduct, mademoiselle! “Pericles retained this sentence in his head till the conclusion of her animated speech,—“of my conduct I judge better than to accept of such a privilege as you graciously offer to me;” and he retired with a sour grin, very much subdued by her unexpected capacity for expression. The bugles of the Austrians were soon ringing. There was a trifle of a romantic flavour in the notes which Vittoria tried not to feel; the smart iteration of them all about her rubbed it off, but she was reduced to repeat them, and take them in various keys. This was her theme for the day.

They were in the midst of mulberries, out of sight of the army; green mulberries, and the green and the bronze young vine-leaf. It was a delicious day, but she began to fear that she was approaching Verona, and that Pericles was acting seriously. The bronze young vine-leaf seemed to her like some warrior’s face, as it would look when beaten by weather, burned by the sun. They came now to inns which had been visited by both armies. Luigi established communication with the innkeepers before the latter had stated the names of villages to Pericles, who stood map in hand, believing himself at last to be no more conscious of his position than an atom in a whirl of dust. Vittoria still refused to give him any promise, and finally, on a solitary stretch of the road, he appealed to her mercy. She was the mistress of the carriage, he said; he had never meant to imprison her in Verona; his behaviour was simply dictated by his adoration—alas! This was true or not true, but it was certain that the ways were confounded to them. Luigi, despatched to reconnoitre from a neighbouring eminence, reported a Piedmontese encampment far ahead, and a walking tent that was coming on their route. The walking tent was an enormous white umbrella. Pericles advanced to meet it; after an interchange of opening formalities, he turned about and clapped hands. The umbrella was folded. Vittoria recognized the last man she would then have thought of meeting; he seemed to have jumped out of an ambush from Meran in Tyrol:—it was Wilfrid. Their greeting was disturbed by the rushing up of half-a-dozen troopers. The men claimed him as an Austrian spy. With difficulty Vittoria obtained leave to drive him on to their commanding officer. It appeared that the white umbrella was notorious for having been seen on previous occasions threading the Piedmontese lines into and out of Peschiera. These very troopers swore to it; but they could not swear to Wilfrid, and white umbrellas were not absolutely uncommon. Vittoria declared that Wilfrid was an old English friend; Pericles vowed that Wilfrid was one of their party. The prisoner was clearly an Englishman. As it chanced, the officer before whom Wilfrid was taken had heard Vittoria sing on the great night at La Scala. “Signorina, your word should pass the Austrian Field-Marshal himself,” he said, and merely requested Wilfrid to state on his word of honour that he was not in the Austrian service, to which Wilfrid unhesitatingly replied, “I am not.”



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Permission was then accorded to him to proceed in the carriage.

Vittoria held her hand to Wilfrid. He took the fingers and bowed over them.

He was perfectly self-possessed, and cool even under her eyes. Like a pedlar he carried a pack on his back, which was his life; for his business was a combination of scout and spy.

“You have saved me from a ditch to-day,” he said; “every fellow has some sort of love for his life, and I must thank you for the odd luck of your coming by. I knew you were on this ground somewhere. If the rascals had searched me, I should not have come off so well. I did not speak falsely to that officer; I am not in the Austrian service. I am a volunteer spy. I am an unpaid soldier. I am the dog of the army—fetching and carrying for a smile and a pat on the head. I am ruined, and I am working my way up as best I can. My uncle disowns me. It is to General Schoneck that I owe this chance of re-establishing myself. I followed the army out of Milan. I was at Melegnano, at Pastrengo, at Santa Lucia. If I get nothing for it, the Lenkensteins at least shall not say that I abandoned the flag in adversity. I am bound for Rivoli. The fortress (Peschiera) has just surrendered. The Marshal is stealing round to make a dash on Vicenza.” So far he spoke like one apart from her, but a flush crossed his forehead. “I have not followed you. I have obeyed your brief directions. I saw this carriage yesterday in the ranks of our troops. I saw Pericles. I guessed who might be inside it. I let it pass me. Could I do more?”

“Not if you wanted to punish me,” said Vittoria.

She was afflicted by his refraining from reproaches in his sunken state.

Their talk bordered the old life which they had known, like a rivulet, coming to falls where it threatens to be e, torrent and a flood; like flame bubbling the wax of a seal. She was surprised to find herself expecting tenderness from him: and, startled by the languor in her veins, she conceived a contempt for her sex and her own weak nature. To mask that, an excessive outward coldness was assumed. “You can serve as a spy, Wilfrid!”

The answer was ready: “Having twice served as a traitor, I need not be particular. It is what my uncle and the Lenkensteins call me. I do my best to work my way up again. Despise me for it, if you please.”

On the contrary, she had never respected him so much. She got herself into opposition to him by provoking him to speak with pride of his army; but the opposition was artificial, and she called to Carlo Ammiani in heart. “I will leave these places, cover up my head, and crouch till the struggle is decided.”



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The difficulty was now to be happily rid of Wilfrid by leaving him in safety. Piedmontese horse scoured the neighbourhood, and any mischance that might befall him she traced to her hand. She dreaded at every instant to hear him speak of his love for her; yet how sweet it would have been to hear it,—to hear him speak of passionate love; to shape it in deep music; to hear one crave for what she gave to another! “I am sinking: I am growing degraded,” she thought. But there was no other way for her to quicken her imagination of her distant and offended lover. The sights on the plains were strange contrasts to these conflicting inner emotions: she seemed to be living in two divided worlds.

Pericles declared anew that she was mistress of the carriage. She issued orders: “The nearest point to Rivoli, and then to Brescia.”

Pericles broke into shouts. “She has arrived at her reason! Hurrah for Brescia! I beheld you,” he confessed to Wilfrid,—“it was on ze right of Mincio, my friend. I did not know you were so true for Art, or what a hand I would have reached to you! Excuse me now. Let us whip on. I am your banker. I shall desire you not to be shot or sabred. You are deserving of an effigy on a theatral grand stair-case!” His gratitude could no further express itself. In joy he whipped the horses on. Fools might be fighting—he was the conqueror. From Brescia, one leap took him in fancy to London. He composed mentally a letter to be forwarded immediately to a London manager, directing him to cause the appearance of articles in the journals on the grand new prima donna, whose singing had awakened the people of Italy.

Another day brought them in view of the Lago di Garda. The flag of Sardinia hung from the walls of Peschiera. And now Vittoria saw the Pastrengo hills—dear hills, that drove her wretched languor out of her, and made her soul and body one again. The horses were going at a gallop. Shots were heard. To the left of them, somewhat in the rear, on higher ground, there was an encounter of a body of Austrians and Italians: Tyrolese riflemen and the volunteers. Pericles was raving. He refused to draw the reins till they had reached the village, where one of the horses dropped. From the windows of the inn, fronting a clear space, Vittoria beheld a guard of Austrians surrounding two or more prisoners. A woman sat near them with her head buried in her lap. Presently an officer left the door of the inn and spoke to the soldiers. “That is Count Karl von Lenkenstein,” Wilfrid said in a whisper. Pericles had been speaking with Count Karl and came up to the room, saying, “We are to observe something; but we are safe; it is only fortune of war.” Wilfrid immediately went out to report himself. He was seen giving his papers, after which Count Karl waved his finger back to the inn, and he returned. Vittoria sprang to her feet at the words he uttered. Rinaldo Guidascarpi was one of the prisoners. The others Wilfrid professed not to know. The woman was the wife of Barto Rizzo.

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In the great red of sunset the Tyrolese riflemen and a body of Italians in Austrian fatigue uniform marched into the village. These formed in the space before the inn. It seemed as if Count Karl were declaiming an indictment. A voice answered, "I am the man." It was clear and straight as a voice that goes up in the night. Then a procession walked some paces on. The woman followed. She fell prostrate at the feet of Count Karl. He listened to her and nodded. Rinaldo Guidascarpì stood alone with bandaged eyes. The woman advanced to him; she put her mouth on his ear; there she hung.

Vittoria heard a single shot. Rinaldo Guidascarpì lay stretched upon the ground. and the woman stood over him.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

As the Lord decided, so it would end! "Oh, delicious creed!"
By our manner of loving we are known
Every church of the city lent its iron tongue to the peal
Fast growing to be an eccentric by profession
I always respected her; I never liked her
Too well used to defeat to believe readily in victory
Will not admit the existence of a virtue in an opposite opinion