The Memoirs Of Count Carlo Gozzi; Volume The First

By

Count Carlo Gozzi

Freeditorial

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I.

My Pedigree and Birth.

THERE are people foolish enough to make every family history the object of their ridicule and satire. For the sake of wits of this sort I shall give a short but truthful account of my ancestry, in order that they may have something to quiz.

Our stock springs in the fourteenth century from a certain Pezòlo de'Gozzi. This is proved by an authentic genealogy, which we possess; the authority of which has never been disputed, and which has been accepted as evidence in law-courts, although it is but a dusty document, worm-eaten and be-cobwebbed, not framed in gold or hung against the wall. Since I am no Spaniard, I never applied to any genealogist to discover a more ancient origin for our race. There are historical works, however, which derive us from the family de'Gozze, extant at the present epoch in Ragusa, and original settlers of that venerable republic. The chronicles of Bergamo relate that the aforesaid Pezòlo de'Gozzi was a man of weight and substance in the district of Alzano, and that he won the gratitude of the most serene Republic of Venice for having imperilled his property and person against the Milanese in order to preserve that district for her invincible and clement rule. His descendants held office as ambassadors and podestàs for the city of Bergamo, which proves that they were members of its Council; while two privileges of the sixteenth century show that two separate branches of the family obtained admission to the citizenship of Venice. They erected houses for the living and provided tombs for their dead in the quarter and the Church of San Cassiano, as may be seen at the present day. One of these branches was honoured with adoption into the patrician families of Venice in the seventeenth century, and afterwards expired. The branch from which I am descended remained in the class of Cittadini Originari, on which they certainly brought no discredit whatsoever.

None of my ancestors aspired to the honourable and lucrative posts which are open to Venetian citizens. They were for the most part men of peaceful

unambitious temper, contented with their lot in life, or perhaps averse from the disturbances of competition. Had they entered upon a political career, I am quite sure that they would have served their Prince faithfully, without pride and without vain ostentation.

About two centuries ago, my great-great-grandfather purchased some six hundred acres of land, together with buildings, in Friuli, at the distance of five miles from Pordenone. A large portion of these estates consists of meadow-land, and is held by feudal tenure. All the heirs-male are bound to renew the investiture, which costs some ducats. Upon this point the officials of the Camera de' Feudi at Udine are extremely vigilant. If the fine is not paid immediately after the death of the last feudatory, they confiscate the crops derived from the meadows subject to this tenure. That happened to me after my father's decease. A few months' negligence cost me a considerable sum in excess of the customary fine. It is probably by right of some old parchment that we own the title of Count, conceded to our family in public acts and in the addresses of letters. I should feel no resentment, if this title were refused me; but it would anger me extremely, if my hay were withheld.

My father was Jacopo Antonio Gozzi; a man of fine and penetrative intellect, of sensitive and delicate honour, of susceptible temper, resolute, and sometimeseven formidable. His father Gasparo died while he was yet a child, leaving this only son to the guardianship of his mother, the Contessa Emilia Grampo, a noble woman of Padua. The estate was sufficient to sustain his dignity with credit; but he indulged dreams of magnificence. Sole heir, and educated by a tender mother, who humoured every fancy of her son, he early acquired the habit of following his own inclinations. These led him into lordly extravagances—stables full of horses; kennels of hounds; hunting-parties; splendid banquets—nor did he reflect upon the consequences of a marriage, which he made without deliberation in his early manhood, to indulge a whim of the heart. My mother was Angela Tiepolo, the daughter of one branch of that patrician house, which expired in her brother Almorò Cesare. He died, a Senator of the Republic, about the year 1749.

I shall perhaps have wearied my readers with these facts about my pedigree and birth. Satirists will not, however, find in them anything to excite ambition in myself or to wing their pen with ridicule. Social ranks have always been regarded by me as accidental, though necessary for the proper subordination on which our institutions depend. As for my birth, I think less of whence I came than of whither I am going. Conduct unworthy of a decent origin might cause sorrow to my deceased parents, whose memory I hold in honour, and might cover myself and all my posterity with shame.

My name is Carlo. I was the sixth child born by my mother into the light, or shall I say the shadows of this world. I am writing on the last day of April in the year 1780. I have passed fifty, and not yet reached the age of sixty. I shall not put the sacristan to trouble in order to view the register of my baptism, being quite sure that I was christened, and not having the stupid vanity to pass for a curled dandy. That is obvious, and has been always obvious, from the fashion of my clothes and the way I dress my hair. Besides, I set no value on the age of men. Human beings die at all ages; and I have seen boys who are adult, while grown-up men or grey-beards are often nothing better than peevish and ridiculous children.

II.

My Education and Circumstances down to the Age of Sixteen—Concerning the Art of Improvisation, and my Literary Studies.

Our family consisted of eleven children, male and female. I could record nothing but what is creditable of my brothers and sisters, had I proposed to write their memoirs. But this is not my thought; and they are capable of writing their own, if the whim should take them; for the epidemic of literature was always chronic in our household.

A succession of priests with little learning were our domestic pedagogues up to a certain age. I say a succession advisedly; each in turn having earned his dismissal by impertinent behaviour and intrigues with the serving-maids.

From early childhood I was always a silent observer of men and things, by no means insolent, of imperturbable serenity, and extremely attentive to my lessons. My brothers used my taciturn and peaceable temper to their own advantage. They accused me to our common tutor of all the naughtinesses of which they had been guilty. I did not condescend to excuse myself or to accuse them, but bore my unjust punishments with stoicism. I venture to affirm that no boy was ever more supremely indifferent than I was to the terrible penalty of being sent away from table just as we were sitting down to dinner. Smiling obedience was my only self-defence. Enemies may conclude from these traits of character that I was a stupid lout, and friends that I was a philosopher in embryo. Nothing is rarer than the eye of equal justice. Yet any one who takes the trouble to inquire of my acquaintances and servants, will learn that my taciturnity, my tolerance, my stoical endurance, have not changed with years—that I continue to view the events of this life with a smile, and that only those have nettled me which touched my honour.

The growing disorder in our family affairs did not at first deprive us boys of a sound education. My two elder brothers, Gasparo and Francesco, went to public schools, and were in time to drink at all the fountains of the regular curriculum. Extravagant expenditure, however, combined with the needs of a numerous progeny, soon rendered anything like an adequate

course of studies impossible for the younger children. I was intrusted for some years to a learned country-parson, and then to a priest in Venice, of decent acquirements and excellent morality. After this I entered the academy of two Genoese priests, who supplied instruction to some youths of noble birth, and to some of no nobility whatever. There were about twenty-five pupils in this academy. We pursued the same studies, with some difference according to our classes. Here I had the opportunity of observing that teachers are very valuable guides to youths who love learning, and mere images of ineffectual deities to such as hate it. For my part, being fond of books and eager for information, I imbibed my fill of such instruction as a boy can acquire before the age of fourteen. But sloth and vicious habits extirpate the seeds of learning planted by preceptors in the minds of ill-conditioned lads. Therefore I saw, and still see, more than two-thirds of my fellow-pupils sunk in a slough of baseness. Grammar, the classics, and rhetoric only taught them to get drunk in taverns, to carry sacks for hire upon their shoulders, and to cry "Baked apples, plums, and chestnuts!" about the streets, with a basket on their heads and a pair of scales slung round their waists. Wretched fate to be a father!

When I became aware that our domestic difficulties would prove an obstacle to my remaining long at school, I determined to utilise the little I had already learned, and to carry on my education by myself. My elder brother Gasparo's example, whose passion for study had won public recognition, and my own good-will, kept me nailed to books of all sorts; nor could I imagine any pleasure worth a thought, beyond reading, meditating, and writing.

Poetry, choice Italian, and correct style were then in vogue. The young men of Venice met to discuss these three topics, which have now been utterly forgotten—possibly for the greater advantage and convenience of our citizens. I see crowds of young people, hair-brained, conceited, idle, frivolous, presumptuous, and harmful to society. Heaven knows what their studies are! Not poetry, not the niceties of the Italian language, not correction of style. And then, forsooth, I am to admire a hurly-burly of well-born persons, who claim in their foolhardiness to be omniscient, who

produce nothing whatsoever, who cannot write three lines of a letter which shall express their sentiments, and which shall not swarm with revolting faults of grammar and of spelling!

I will omit to observe that respect for nobles in a state is necessary; but that the respect shown simply for their birth and wealth is not respect but false feigned adulation. I will refrain from asserting that a daily correspondence, maintained with a large variety of persons—people who may not perhaps be scientific, but who understand whether a letter is well written or ridiculous—may be capable of securing a large part of the regard, or of occasioning a large part of the contempt, bestowed on nobles. I make no mention of the rich man in Signor Mercier's comedy of Indigence, who found it impossible to write a letter of the utmost importance because his secretary was away from home. I will say nothing to those scientific tutors of the scions of our aristocracy, who instil derision and disdain for polite literature and the art of elegance in diction into the brains of their pupils, moulding them into geometricians, mathematicians, philosophers, physicists, astronomers, algebraical professors, naturalists, a whole deluge of sciences, but who cannot after all their labour express in writing what they have taught or what the common business of life requires.

All these things, and everything which imposture has presented to my senses and impressed upon my mind, must remain unwritten in my pen. I have no wish to make enemies.

Yet we cannot prevent drops of ink from falling sometimes from the pen and making blots upon our papers. Just so, while I am dictating these memoirs of my life, I shall not be able to avoid splutterings, however out of place and inconvenient.

I am almost ashamed to confess the intense assiduity with which I applied myself to those frivolous literary studies of which I have been speaking. They brought on a hæmorrhage from the nostrils, so violent and so frequent, that I was more than once or twice given up for dead in the manner of Seneca. In their anxiety about my health, my friends hid away all my books, and deprived me of paper and inkstand; but I was the cleverest of thieves in searching for them, and went on doggedly reading

and writing by stealth in the uninhabited attics of our mansion. After relating this fact about my boyhood, malicious people may think that I am claiming to be considered worthy of a panegyric. They are quite mistaken. I fix them with my eyeglass, and assure them that it is rather my intention to provide them with another good reason for quizzing me. The famous Doctor Tissot angrily rebukes excessive application to those studies which are universally esteemed as useless. He reserves his praise for folk who ruin their health in pursuits considered beneficial to humanity; and such, I do not doubt, are the studies affected by himself and his admirers.

The Abbé Giovan Antonio Verdani, keeper of the select and extensive library of the patrician family Soranzo, was a man of vast literary erudition. He felt compassion for my weakness, which coincided with his own, and directed my reading by lending me the rarest books, masterpieces of pure Italian diction in prose and poetry. To estimate the quantities of paper which I covered with my thoughts in verse and prose, would be beyond my powers. I tried to imitate the style of all the early Tuscan writers who are most admired. Assuredly I never approached the perfection of their language; but I am none the less sure that the diligent and attentive perusal of a mass of the best works, treating of a vast variety of subjects, cannot fail to furnish a better head than mine with instruction and ideas, with the power of making just reflections and probable conjectures, and with the principles of sound morality. I am also convinced that the imitation of style in writing, pursued methodically, enables a man to express his own thoughts with facility, propriety of colouring, exactitude of phrase and term, according to the variety of images, grave or gay, familiar or dignified, which we desire to develop and to communicate under their true aspect in prose or poetry.

Without attaining to the mastery of style at which I aimed, I acquired the miserable satisfaction of finding myself in the very select group of persons who know this truth. I also earned the wretchedness of being forced to read with insuperable aversion and disgust the works of many modern Italian authors, which are full of false fancies and sophisms, the rhetoric and diction of which never vary however the subject-matter changes,

which are defiled by all manner of gibberish, bombast, nonsense, with periods involved in unintelligible vortices, and with preposterous phraseology. The sciences, the discoveries, the branches of new knowledge which are now so loudly vaunted, ought to be accepted as useful, and are worthy of respect. For this reason it is wrong to profane them and to render them contemptible by barbarous impurity and impropriety of diction. Francesco Redi, that great man, great philosopher, great physician, great naturalist, confirms my doctrine by his written works. As regards the literature of art and wit and fancy, it is obvious that without correction of style this is absolutely worthless and condemned to merited oblivion. No one could count the fine and ample sentiments which perish, smothered in the mire of inartistic writing. Not less numerous, on the other hand, are the small but brilliant thoughts, duly coloured with appropriate terms, and placed at the right point of view by a master-hand, which sparkle before the eyes of every reader, be he learned or simple.

There is no disputing about tastes. Yet I think it could be easily maintained that our century has lapsed into a shameful torpor with regard to these things. I have written and printed quite enough upon the subject; without effect, however; and now I see no reason why I should not utter a last funeral lament over the mastery of art I longed to possess. That mastery, which nowadays is reckoned among the inutilities of existence, has been freely conceded to me by the verdict of contemporaries—blind judges, governed not by intelligence but by ignorant assumption—so that their opinion does not sustain me with the sure conviction of having attained my purpose. Nevertheless I am grateful even to the blind and deaf, who see and hear what gives them pleasure in my writings.

My pursuit of culture advanced on the lines I have described, whether for my happiness or my misfortune it is worthless to inquire. I read continually, and wasted enormous quantities of ink; paid close attention to men and manners; profited by the encouragement of the Abbé Verdani and Antonio Federigo Seghezzi; walked in the steps of my brother Gasparo; and frequented a literary society which met daily at our house. From a Piedmontese, who knew how to read and nothing more, I learned the first

rudiments of French; not that I wished to talk French in Italy, an affectation which I loathed; but because it was my desire, by the help of grammar and dictionary, to study the books, most excellent in part, in part injurious to society, which issue daily from the French press. It was thus that I formed those literary tastes, to which I have always clung for innocent and disinterested amusement, and which, now that my hairs are grey, will be my solace till the hour of death. The giants of science, to whom I dare not raise my quizzing-glass for fear of committing an unpardonable sin, will perceive that in describing the scanty sources of my education, I am only painting the portrait of a literary pigmy in all humility.

As regards my moral training, it is only necessary to observe that the family of which I was a member has always cherished a deep and fervent reverence for the august image of religion, and that my father, careless as he was in matters of economy, never neglected religious duties or the good ensample of honourable conduct. He was a bitter enemy of falsehood. His delicate susceptibility detected a lie by the inflection of the voice, and he punished it upon the spot with sounding boxes on the ears of his offspring.

Being a bold rider and passionately fond of horses, he taught us to ride, and liked to see us every day on horseback during our summer visits to the country. It was useless to plead timidity, or to shrink from the snortings and jibbings of some half-broken beast he wanted us to back. Up we went; a cut or two of the switch across our legs set us off at a gallop; and there we were in full career, without a thought for broken shins or necks. Some jockeys, who came to break in vicious colts, put me up to tricks for mastering a hard-mouthed bolting animal. One of these tricks stood me in good stead upon an occasion I shall afterwards relate. Indeed, I may say that I owe my life to a jockey.

We had a little theatre of no great architectural pretensions in our country-house; and here we children used to act. Brothers and sisters alike were gifted with some talent for comedy; and all of us, before a crowd of rustic spectators, passed for players of the first quality. Beside tragic and comic pieces learned by heart, we frequently improvised farces with a slight plot upon some laughable motive. My sister Marina and I had the knack of

imitating certain married couples notorious in the village for their burlesque humours. We used to interpolate our farces with scenes and dialogues in which the famous quarrels of these women with their drunken husbands were reproduced to the life. Our clothes were copied from the originals; and the imitation was so exact that our bucolic audience hailed it with Homeric peals of laughter, measuring their applause by the delight it afforded their coarse natures. My father and mother took a fancy to see themselves represented in this way. My sister and I were shy at first, but we had to obey our parents. Finally, we regaled them with a perfect reproduction of their costume, their gestures, their way of talking, and some of their familiar household bickerings. Their astonishment was great, and their laughter was the only punishment of our dutiful temerity.

I learned to twang the guitar with a certain amount of skill, and vied with my brother Gasparo in improvising rhymed verses, which I sang to music in our hours of recreation. This was done with all the foolhardiness inseparable from a display which the vulgar are only too apt to regard as miraculous. Since I have touched upon the point, I will digress a little on this so-called miracle. In my opinion, the immense crowds of people hanging with open mouths upon the lips of animprovisatore only prove that, in spite of the contempt into which poetry has fallen, it still possesses that power over the minds and the brains of men which their tongues deny it. Cristoforo Altissimo, a poet of the fifteenth century, is said to have publicly improvised his epic in octave stanzas on the Reali di Francia; the words were taken down from his lips, just as he composed them at the moment. The book was published; and though it is extremely rare, I have read it through the kindness of the Abbé Verdani. Only a few stanzas, out of all that ocean of verse, are worthy of the name of poetry; and yet we may believe that before the work was given to the press, some pains had been bestowed upon it. I have listened to many extempore versifiers, male and female, the most famous of our century. It has always struck me that if the deluges of verses which they spout forth with face on fire, to the applause of frantic multitudes, were written down, they would have very little poetical value, and that nobody would have the patience to read the twentieth part of them. Padre Zucchi, of the Olivetan Order, whom I heard

in my youth, surpassed his rivals; now and then he produced sensible stanzas; but he improvised so slowly that reflection may have had some part in the result. I do not deny that these extempore rhymesters may be people of culture and learning, qualified to discourse well upon the themes proposed to them. Yet they would not be listened to, if they spoke ever so divinely in prose. In order to draw a crowd, they are forced to express their thoughts and images, just as they come, with voluble rapidity, in bad rhymed verses, which often are no better than a gabble of words without sense. This throws their audience into a trance of astonishment. Humanity has always quested after the marvellous like a hound. If a painter sought to depict foolhardiness or imposture wearing the mask of poetry, I could recommend nothing better than the portrait of an improvisatore, with goggle-eyes and arms in air, and a multitude staring up at him in stupid dumb amazement. These being my sentiments, I am willing, out of mere politeness and good manners, to approve the coronation of a Cavaliere Perfetto or a Corilla on the Capitol. But I can only accept with cordial and serious enthusiasm the honours of that sort paid to a Virgil, a Petrarch, and a Tasso.

The Arcadians will laugh when I proceed to speak about an improvisatore, whom I knew and whom I have listened to a hundred times. Yet I should be committing an injustice if I did not mention him, and declare my opinion that he was the single really wonder-worthy artist in this kind, with whom I ever came in contact. He used to pour forth anacreontics, octave stanzas, any and every metre, extempore, to the music of a well-touched guitar. His verses rhymed, but had noClio, Euterpe, Plettro, Parnaso, Aganippe, Ruscelletto, Zefiretto, and such stuff, in them. They composed a well-developed discourse, flowing evenly, not soaring, but with abundance of well-connected images, and natural, lively, graceful thoughts. He invariably used either the Venetian or the Paduan dialect; which will augment the derisive laughter of Arcadia, and make the Campidoglio ring. On one occasion, while he was improvising on the theme: diligite inimicos vestros, it happened that two enemies were present. At another time, he dilated on his own grief for a cavaliere who had been kind to him, and who was then dying, given over by the doctors.

Not only did the audience hang upon his lips with rapt attention; but in the former case, the enemies were reconciled, while in the latter tears were freely shed for the poet's expiring benefactor. Such influence over the passions of the heart reveals a true poet; for such a man I reserve the laurel crown upon my Campidoglio. His name was Giovanni Sibiliato, brother of the celebrated professor of literature in the University of Padua.

Returning from this digression, I will resume the narrative of my boyhood. I learned to fence and to dance; but books and composition were my chief pastime. Before a numerous audience in our literary assemblies I felt no shyness. In private visits, among people new to me, the reserve of my demeanour often passed for savagery. My first sonnet of passable quality was written at the age of nine. Beside the applause it won me, I was rewarded with a box of comfits; and for this reason I have never forgotten it. The occasion of its composition was as follows. A certain Signora Angela Armano, midwife by trade, had a friend at Padua whose pet dog died and left her inconsolable. Signora Angela wished to comfort her friend; indulged in condolements for her loss; and sent a little spaniel of her own, called Delina, to replace the defunct pet. Delina was to be given as a present, and a sonnet was to accompany the gift, expressing all the sentiments which a lady of Signora Angela's profession might entertain in a circumstance of such importance. Though our family was a veritable lunatic asylum of poets, no one cared to translate the good creature's gossipping garrulity into verse. Moved by her entreaties, I undertook the task; and the following Bernesque sonnet was the result:—

"Madama io vi vorrei pur confortare

Con qualche graziosa diceria,

Ma la sciagura vuole, e vostra, e mia,

Che in un sonetto la non vi può stare.

Non vi state, mia cara, a disperare,

Che la sarebbe una poltroneria,

L'entrar per un can morto in frenesia;

Chi nasce muor, convien moralizzare.

Vi sovvenite, ch' egli avrà pisciato

Alcuna volta in camera, o in cucina,

Che in quell' istante lo avreste ammazzato.

Io vi spedisco intanto la Delina

Che più d'un cane ha d'essa innamorato,

E può farvi di cani una dezina.

È bella, e picciolina;

Di lei non voglio più nuova, o risposta,

Servitevi per razza, o di supposta."

Two years later, a new edition of the poems of Gaspara Stampa appeared in Venice, at the expense of Count Antonio Ramboldo di Collalto of Vienna, a prince distinguished for his birth and writings. Scholars know that this sixteenth-century Sappho sighed her soul forth in love-laments to a certain Count Collaltino di Collalto, doughty warrior and polished versifier, and that she was reputed to have died of hopeless passion in her youth. The ladies of our century will hardly believe her story; for Cupid has changed temper since those days, and kills his victims with far different and less honourable weapons. Some verses by contemporary writers in praise of our literary heroine were to be appended to this edition of her works. I dared to enter the lists, and wrote a sonnet in the style of the earliest Tuscan poets. Such as it is, the sonnet may be found printed in the book which I have indicated. It appears from this juvenile production that I already acknowledged a mistress of my heart; compliance with fashion was alone responsible for my precocity.

This trifling composition was read by the famous Apostolo Zeno. He deigned to inquire for the author, who had reproduced the antique simplicity of Cino da Pistoja, Guittone d'Arezzo, and Guido Cavalcanti. On my presenting myself, Signor Zeno politely expressed surprise at discovering a mere boy in the learned writer of the sonnet, treated me with kind attention, and placed his choice library at my disposal. The

encouragement of this distinguished poet, true lover of pure style, and foe to seventeenth-century conceits, added fuel to the fire of my literary passion. From that day forward not one of those collections of verses appeared, in which marriages, the entrance of young ladies into convents, the election of noblemen to offices of state, the deaths of people, cats, dogs, parrots, and such events, are celebrated in Venice and other towns of Italy, but that it contained some specimen of my Muse in grave or playful verse.

Books, paper, pens and ink formed the staple of my existence. I was always pregnant, always in labour, giving birth to monsters in remote corners of our mansion. I scribbled furiously, God knows how, up to my seventeenth year. Besides innumerable essays in prose and multitudes of fugitive verses, I wrote four long poems, entitled Berlinghieri, Don Quixote, Moral Philosophy (based upon the talking animals of Firenzuola), and Gonella in twelve cantos. The Abbé Verdani took a fancy to this last, and wished to see it printed. Signor Giulio Cesare Beccelli, however, had published a poem at Verona on the same subject, which robbed my work of novelty; and though mine was richer in facts drawn from good old sources, I did not venture to enter into competition with him. The three years' absence from home, which I shall presently relate, and the revolution in our domestic affairs which surprised me on my return, exposed these boyish literary labours to ruin and dispersion. It is probable that pork-butchers and fruit-vendors exercised condign justice on the children of my Muse.

III.

The Situation of my Family, and my Reasons for Leaving Home.

In the course of these years, the early deaths of a brother and a sister had reduced our numbers from eleven to nine. Meanwhile, our annual expenditure exceeded the resources at our command, and left but little for the needs of a numerous offspring, too old to be contented with a toy or plaything. Some lawsuits, which we lost, diminished the estate. Clouds of doubt and care began to obscure the horizon, and in a few years the family was plunged in pecuniary embarrassment.

My brother Gasparo had taken a wife in a fit of genial poetical abstraction. Even poetry has its dangers. This man, who was really singular in his absolute self-dedication to books, in his indefatigable labours as an author, and in a certain philosophical temper or indolence, which made him indifferent to everything which was not literary, learned to fall in love from Petrarch. A young lady, ten years older than himself, named Luigia Bergalli, better known among the shepherdesses of Arcady as Irmenia Partenide, a poetess of romantic fancy, as her published works evince, was my brother's Laura. Not being a canon, like Petrarch, he married her in Petrarch's spirit, but with due legal formalities. This woman, of fervent and soaring imagination, which fitted her for high poetic flights, undertook to regulate the disorder in our affairs. Impelled by the instincts of a good nature, with something of ambition and a flattering belief in her own practical ability, she did the best that in her lay. Yet all her projects and administrative measures revolved within a circle of romantic raptures and Pindaric ecstasies. Thirsting with soul-passion after an ideal realm, she found herself the sovereign of a state in decadence. It was the desire of her heart to make us all happy, in the most disinterested way. Yet she accomplished nothing beyond involving every one, and herself to boot, in the meshes of still greater misfortune. Her husband, poring perpetually upon his books, could only oppose her at the sacrifice of ease and quiet. This he was incapable of doing.—In order to judge people equitably, it is necessary that character, temperament, and circumstances should be thoroughly explained.

I know how unphilosophical it is to ascribe the discords of a family to malignant planetary influences. Our domestic circle consisted of a father, a mother, four brothers, and five sisters, all of them good-hearted, honourable, mutually well-inclined; and yet it became the very mirror of infelicity at every moment and in each of the persons who composed it. Minute investigation into the causes of this painful fact would probably reveal them. But it is better to adopt the language of the vulgar, and to say that a bad star pursued our family. Otherwise, analysis might lead one into acts of unkindness, and involve one in hatred.

The confusion in which we lived at that period, and the bitter discomforts we had to bear, were augmented by expenses due to my brother's increasing progeny. Our worst disaster, however (and this wound I carry in my heart even to the present day), was a cruel stroke of apoplexy which laid my beloved father low. He continued to exist, an invalid, for about seven years after the sad event; dumb and paralytic, but in possession of all his mental faculties—a circumstance which rendered his deplorable condition almost unbearable to a man of my father's extreme sensibility.

The tears of five sisters, the births of nephews and nieces, a house swarming with female go-betweens, brokers, and the Hebrew ministers of our decaying realm—all this whirlpool of economical extravagance and folly, to utter one word against which was reckoned mutiny or treason, drove my second brother, Francesco, into exile. He went into the Levant with the Provveditore Generale di Mare, his Excellency the Cavaliere Antonio Loredano, of happy memory. At that period I was about thirteen.

Letters written from Corfu by this brother describing the kindness shown him by his Provveditore, and the rank of ensign to which he soon attained, awoke in me a burning desire to escape like him from those domestic turmoils, the gravity of which I felt in experience and measured by anticipation, but which my state of boyhood rendered me unable to remedy. Our uncle on the mother's side, Almorò Cesare Tiepolo, recommended me to his Excellency Girolamo Quirini, Provveditore Generale elect for Dalmatia and Albania. Furnished with a modest outfit, in which my book-box and guitar were not forgotten, I bade farewell to my

parents at the age of seventeen, and went across seas as volunteer into those provinces, to study the ways and manners of my fellow-soldiers, and of the peoples among whom we were quartered.

IV.

I was not slow to perceive that I had adopted a career by no means suited to my character, the proper motto for which was always the following verse from Berni:

"Voleva far da se, non commandato."

My natural dislike of changeableness kept me, however, from showing by outward signs of any sort that I repented of my choice; and I reflected that abundant opportunities were now at least offered for observations on the men of a world new to me. This thought sufficed to keep me in good spirits and a cheerful humour through all the vicissitudes of my three years' sojourn in Illyria.

According to orders received from his Excellency, the Provveditore Generale Quirini, I embarked before him on a galley called Generalizia, which was riding at the port of Malamocco. There I was to wait for his arrival. A band of military officers received me with glances of courtesy and some curiosity. In a Court where all the members are seeking fortune, each newcomer is regarded with suspicion. Whether he has to be reckoned with or may be disregarded on occasions of promotion, concerns the whole crew of officials, who, like him, are dependent on the will of the Provveditore. It was perhaps insensibility which made me indifferent to these preoccupations; this the sequel of my narrative will show; and yet such thoughts are very wood-worms in the hearts of courtiers.

I had to swallow a great quantity of questions, to which I replied with the laconic brevity of an inexperienced lad upon his guard. Some of those gentlemen had known my brother Francesco at Corfu. When they discovered who I was, they seemed to be relieved of all anxiety on my account, and welcomed me with noisy demonstrations of soldierly comradeship. I expressed my thanks in modest, almost monosyllabic phrases. They set me down for an awkward young fellow, unobliging, and proud. This was a mistake, as they freely confessed a few months later on. I had retired into myself, with the view of studying their characters and sketching my line of action. The quick and penetrative intuition with which I was endowed at birth by God, together with the faculty of imperturbable

reserve, enabled me in the course of a few hours to recognise in that little group some men of noble birth and liberal culture, some nobles ruined by the worst of educations, and some plebeians who owed their position to powerful protection.

Gaming, intemperance, and unbridled sensuality were deeply rooted in the whole company. I laid my plans of conduct, and found them useful in the future. My intimacies were few, but durable. The vices I have named, clung like ineradicable cancers to the men with whom I associated. Sound principles engrafted on me in my early years, regard for health, and the slenderness of my purse helped me to avoid their seductions. At the same time, I saw no reason why I should proclaim a crusade against them. Holding a middle course, I succeeded in winning the affection of my comrades. They invited me to take part in their orgies. I did not play the prude. Without yielding myself to the transports of brutal appetite, I proved the gayest reveller at all those lawless meetings. Some of my seniors, on whom a career of facile pleasure had left its inevitable stigma, used to twit me with being a reserved young simpleton. I did not heed their raillery, but laughed at the inebriation of my comrades, studied the bent of divers characters, observed the animal brutality of men, and used our uproarious debauches as a school for fathoming the depths of human frailty.

Now I will return to the point of my embarkation on the galley Generalizia in the port of Malamocco. While awaiting the arrival of the Provveditore, I had two whole days and nights to spend in sad reflections on humanity. These were suggested by the spectacle of some three hundred scoundrels, loaded with chains, condemned to drag their life out in a sea of miseries and torments, each of which was sufficient by itself to kill a man. An epidemic of malignant fever raged among these men, carrying away its victims daily from the bread and water, the irons, and the whips of the slavemasters. Attended in their last passage by a gaunt black Franciscan friar, with thundering voice and jovial mien, these wretches took their flight—I hope and think—for Paradise.

The Provveditore's arrival amid the din of instruments and roar of cannon roused me from my dismal reveries. I had visited this gentleman ten times at least in his own palace, and had always been received with that playful welcome and confidential sweetness which distinguish the patricians of Venice. He made his appearance now in crimson—crimson mantle, cap, and shoes—with an air of haughtiness unknown to me, and fierceness stamped upon his features. The other officers informed me that when he donned this uniform of state, he had to be addressed with profound and silent salaams, different indeed from the reverence one pays at Venice to a patrician in his civil gown. He boarded the galley, and seemed to take no notice whatever of the crowd around him, bowing till their noses rubbed their toes. The affability with which he touched our hands in Venice had disappeared; he looked at none of us; and sentenced the young captain of the guard, called Combat, to arrest in chains, because he had omitted some trifle of the military salute. My comrades stood dumbfounded, staring at one another with open eyes. This singular change from friendliness to severity set my brains at work. By the light of my boyish philosophy I seemed to comprehend why the noble of a great republic, elected general of an armament and governor of two wide provinces, on his first appearance in that office, felt bound to assume a totally different aspect from what was natural to him in his private capacity. He had to inspire fear and a spirit of submission into his subordinates. Otherwise they might have taken liberties upon the strength of former courtesy displayed by him, being for the most part presumptuous young fellows, apt to boast about their favour with the general. For my own part, since I was firmly bent on doing my duty without ambitious plans or dreams of fortune, this formidable attitude and the harsh commands of the great man made a less disheartening impression on me than on my companions. I whispered to myself: "He certainly inspires me with a kind of dread; but he has taken immense trouble to transform his nature in order to produce this effect; I am sure the irksomeness which he is suffering now must be greater than any discomfort he can cause me."

The general retired to his cabin in the bowels of our floating hell, and sent Lieutenant-Colonel Micheli, his major in the province, to make out a list of

all the officers and volunteers on board, together with the names of their protectors. Nobody expected this; for we had been personally presented to the general at Venice, and had explained our affairs in frequent conversations. Once more I reflected that this was his way of damping the expectations which might have been bred in scheming brains before he exchanged the politenesses of private life for the austerities of office. The Maggiore della Provincia Micheli—a most excellent person and very fat—bustled about his business, sweating, and scribbling with a pencil on a sheet of paper, as though the matter was one of life or death. Everybody began to shy and grumble and chafe with indignation at passing under review in this way. When my turn came, I answered frankly that I was called Carlo Gozzi, and that I had been recommended by the patrician Almorò Cesare Tiepolo. I withheld his title of senator and the fact that he was my maternal uncle, deeming it prudent not to seem ambitious.

The Generalizia, convoyed by another galley named Conserva and a few light vessels of war, got under way for the Adriatic; and the night fell very dark upon the waters. I shall not easily forget that night, because of a little incident which happened to me, and which shows what a curious place of refuge a galley is for young men leaving their homes for the first time. A natural necessity made me seek some corner for retirement. I was directed to the bowsprit; on approaching it, an Illyrian sentinel, with scowling visage, bushy whiskers, and levelled musket, howled his "Who goes there?" in a tremendous voice. When he understood my business, he let me pass. My next step lighted on a soft and yielding mass, which gave forth a kind of gurgling sound, like the stifled breath of an asthmatic patient, into the dark silent night. Retracing my path, I asked the sentinel what the thing was, which responded with its inarticulate gurgling voice to the pressure of my feet. He answered with the coldest indifference that it was the corpse of a galley-slave, who had succumbed to the fever, and had been flung there till he could be buried on the sea-shore sands in Istria. The hair on my head bristled with horror. But my happy disposition for seeing the ludicrous side of things soon came to my assistance.

After twelve days of much discomfort, and twelve noisome nights, passed in broken slumbers under the decks of that galley, which only too well deserved its name, our little fleet entered the port of Zara. We went on shore at first privately and quietly; and after a few days the public ceremonies of official disembarkation were gone through. The Provveditore Generale Jacopo Cavalli handed his baton of command over to the Provveditore Generale Girolamo Quirini with all the formalities proper to the occasion. This solemnity, which is performed upon the open sea, to the sound of military music, the thunder of artillery, and the crackling of musket-shots, deserves to be witnessed by all who take an interest in imposing spectacles. An old man, fat and short of stature, with a pair of moustachios bristling up beneath his nostrils, a merry and most honest fellow to boot, who bore the name of Captain Girolamo Visinoni, was appointed master of these ceremonies, on account of his intimate acquaintance with their details. I had no other duty that day but to wear my best clothes, which did not cost much trouble.

V.

When the new Regency had been established and the Court settled, I had but eight days to learn my duties as volunteer or adjutant to his Excellency, as it is called there, before I fell ill of a fever which was declared to be malignant. Alone among people whom I hardly knew, at the commencement of my career, poorly provided with money, and lying in a wretched room, the windows of which were closed with torn and rotten paper instead of glass, I could not but compare my present destitution with the comforts of our home. Here I was battling with a mortal disease in solitude. There, at the least touch of illness, I enjoyed the tender solicitude of a sister or a servant at my pillow, to brush away the flies which settled on my forehead. Fortunately, I was not so strongly attached to life as to be rendered miserable by unavailing recollections and gloomy forebodings.

It happened one day, as I lay there burning, that a convict presented himself at the door of my miserable den, and asked me if I wanted anything which he could fetch me. He was one of those men who prowl around the officers' quarters, wrapped in an old blanket with a bit of rope about the waist, ready to do any dirty business and to pilfer if they find the opportunity. I gave him a few farthings and told him to send me a confessor—an errand very different from what he had expected. Before long a good Dominican appeared, who prepared me to die with the courage of an ancient Roman. Our modern sages may laugh at this plebeian wish of mine to make my peace with Heaven; but I have never been able to dissociate philosophy from religion. Satisfied to remain a little child before the mysteries of faith, I do not envy wise men in their disengagement from spiritual terrors.

The chief physician, Danieli, a man of prodigious corpulence and blackness, who had been sent to my assistance by the Governor, spared no attentions and no remedies. As usual, they proved unavailing; and he bade me prepare myself for death by receiving the holy sacrament. I summoned what remained to me of vital force, and went through this ceremony with devotion. There seemed to be so little difference between a sepulchre and the room in which my body lay, that I felt no disgust at relinquishing my

corpse to the grave-diggers. I was now ready for the last unction, when an attack of hemorrhage from the nostrils, like those which had already nearly brought me to death's door, recalled me for the nonce to life. All the ordinary remedies—ligatures, powders, herbs, astringent plasters, sympathetic stones, muttered charms, old wives' talismans—were exhibited in vain. After filling two basons with blood, I lapsed into a profound swoon, which the doctor styled a syncope. To all appearances I was dead; but the blood stopped; in a quarter of an hour I revived; and three days afterwards I found myself, weak indeed, but wholly free from fever and on the road to recovery. My ignorance could not reconcile this salutary crisis with Danieli's absolute prohibition of blood-letting in my malady. But I suppose that a score of learned physicians, each of them upon a different system of hypotheses, conjectures, well-based calculations, and trains of lucid argument, would be able to demonstrate the phenomenon to their own satisfaction and to the illumination or confusion of my stupid brain. Stupendous indeed are the mental powers which Almighty God has bestowed on men!

The readers of these Memoirs will hardly need to be informed that my slender purse had nothing in it at the termination of this illness. Under these painful circumstances I found a cordial and open-hearted friend in Signor Innocenzio Massimo, nobleman of Padua, and captain of halbardiers at the Dalmatian Court. This excellent gentleman, of rare distinction for his mental parts, the quickness of his spirit, his courage, energy, and honour, was the only intimate friend whom I possessed during my three years' absence from home. When they were over, our friendship continued undiminished by lapse of time, distance, and the various vicissitudes of life. I have enjoyed it through thirty-five years, and am sure that it will never fail me. Some qualities of his character have exposed him to enmity; among these I may mention a particular sensitiveness to affronts, an intolerance of attempts to deceive him, and a quick perception of fraud, together with a firm resolve to stem the tide of extravagance and fashionable waste in his own family. His many virtues, the decent comfort of his household, his hospitality to friends and acquaintances, his careful provision for the well-being of his posterity, his benevolence to the poor

and afflicted, his successful efforts as a peacemaker among discordant fellow-citizens, his expenditure of time and trouble upon all who come to him for advice or assistance, have not sufficed to disarm the malignity of a vulgar crowd, corrupted by the false philosophy of our century, which goes from bad to worse in dissolution and ill manners.

VI.

Short Studies in the Science of Fortification and Military Exercises.—Some Reflections which will pass for Foolishness.

On the restoration of my health, his Excellency placed me under Cavaliere Marchiori, Lieutenant-Colonel of Engineers, to learn mathematics as applied to fortification. This gentleman sent for me, and said that he had heard from my uncle of my aptitude for study, adding that the subject he proposed to teach me was of the greatest consequence to a soldier. I perceived at once that I was being treated on a different footing from the other volunteers, and that the studied forgetfulness of the Provveditore had been, as I suspected, a politic device to humble ambitious schemers. I thanked Signor Marchiori, and followed his instructions with pleasure, without however abandoning my own interest in literature.

He questioned me regarding my knowledge of arithmetic, which was only elementary; and when I saw that I must master it, in order to pursue the higher branch of study, I gave my whole head to the business. In the space of a month, I could cipher like a money-lender, and was ready to receive my master's teaching. My friend Massimo possessed a good collection of instruments for engineering draughtsmanship, and a library of French works on geometry, mathematics, and fortification, both of which he placed at my disposal. Signor Marchiori's lectures, long discussions with Signor Massimo, perusal of Euclid, Archimedes, and the French books, soon plunged me in the lore of points and lines and calculations. I burned with the enthusiasm, droll enough to my way of looking at the world, which inspires all students of this science. Yet I did not, like them, regard moral philosophy and humane literature as insignificant frivolities. I bore in mind for what good reasons the Emperor Vespasian dismissed the mathematicians who offered their assistance in the building of his Roman edifices. I knew that innumerable vessels, fabricated on the principles of science, have perished miserably in the tempests; that hundreds of fortresses, built by science, have been destroyed and captured by the same science; that inundations are continually sweeping away the dykes erected by science, to the ruin of thousands of families, and that the inundations

themselves are attributable to the admired masterpieces of science bequeathed to us by former generations; that, in spite of science and her creative energy, the buildings she erects are not secured from earthquakes, conflagrations, and the thunderbolt. It remains to be seen whether Professor Toaldo's lightning-conductors will prove effectual against the last of these disasters. Then I reckoned up the blessings and curses which this vaunted science has conferred on humanity, arriving at the conclusion that the harm which she has done infinitely exceeds the good. I shuddered at the hundreds of thousands of human beings ingeniously massacred in war or drowned at sea by her devices; and took more pleasure in consulting my watch, her wise invention, for the dinner-hour than at the hour of keeping an appointment with my lawyer. Without denying the utility of sciences, I stuck resolutely to the opinion that moral philosophy is of more importance to the human race than mechanical inventions, and deplored the pernicious influence of modern Lyceums and Polytechnic schools upon the mind of Europe.

Signor Massimo and I kept house together in a little dwelling on the city walls, facing the sea. The sun, in his daily revolutions, struck this habitation on every side; and there was not an open space of wall or window-sill without its dial, fabricated by my skill, and adorned with appropriate but useless mottoes on the flight of time. A lieutenant named Giovanni Apergi, upright and pious, especially when the gout he had acquired in the world's pleasures made him turn his thoughts to Heaven, gave me friendly lessons in military drill. I soon learned to handle my musket, pike, and ensign; and sweated a shirt daily, fencing with Massimo, who was ferociously expert in that fiendish but gentlemanly art. We also spent some hours together over a great chessboard of his, covered with wooden soldiers, which we moved from square to square, forming squadrons, and studying the combinations which enable armies to kill with prodigality and to be killed with parsimony,—fitting ourselves, in short, for manuring cemeteries in the most approved style.

I was already half a soldier, and meant to make myself perfect in my profession; not, however, without a firm resolve to quit the army at the

expiration of my three years' service. Twelve months spent in studying my comrades convinced me that, though some worthy fellows might be found among them, their society as a whole was uncongenial to my tastes. I had neither the ambition nor the greed of gain which might have sapped this resolution; and my persistence during the appointed time was mainly due to a dislike of seeming fickle. I wanted to gain the respect of my relatives, whom I hoped to help one day with my counsel, my credit, and the example of my perseverance.

After eight months spent in the study of fortification, I lost my poor master. He died suddenly of a fit of spleen a few days after winning his company in a regiment called Lagarde. This promotion he obtained by competition; and some insulting words dropped upon the occasion, which he was unable to resent, caused his mortal illness. Every one deplored the death of Marchiori; but no one more than I did. His goodness, sweetness, affability, and friendly patience left a powerful impression on my memory. Gradually my interest in geometry declined, and I resumed my former studies with fresh ardour, attending meanwhile to my military duties, and waiting philosophically till the three years should be over.

VII.

This Chapter proves that Poetry is not as useless as people commonly imagine.

I am bound to confess that my weakness for poetry and Italian literature was great. In the Venetian service, and particularly in Dalmatia, there were very few indeed who shared these tastes. I wrote and read my compositions to myself, without seeking the applause of an audience or boring my neighbours with things they do not care for, as is the wont of most scribblers.

The secretary of the Generalate, Signor Giovanni Colombo, took some interest in literature. I may mention, by the way, that he afterwards rose to high dignity, which involved a calamity for him, sweetened, however, by a splendid funeral; in other words, he died Grand Chancellor of our most serene Republic. This man, of gentle spirit and jovial temper, knowing the epidemic of poetry which possessed the Gozzi family, encouraged me to read him some of my trifles, and seemed to take pleasure in listening to them. He owned a small but well-chosen library, which he courteously allowed me to use. My verses, satirical for the most part and descriptive of characters—without scurrility indeed, though based on accurate observation of both sexes—were communicated to him and Massimo alone.

The town of Zara was bent on testifying its respect for our Provveditore Generale Quirini by a grand public display. A large hall of wood was accordingly erected on the open space before the fort, and hung with fine damask. Tickets of invitation were then distributed to various persons, who were to compose an Academy upon the day of the solemnity. Every academician had to recite two compositions in prose or verse, as he thought fit. The subjects were set forth on the tickets, and were as follows:—First, Is a prince who preserves, defends, and improves his dominions in peace, more praiseworthy than one who seeks to extend them by force of arms? The second was to be a panegyric of the Provveditore Generale. An old nobleman of Zara, named Giovanni Pellegrini, was chosen to preside in the Academy and to dispense the invitations. He wore

a black velvet suit and a huge blonde wig, done up into knotted curls, and possessed a fund of eloquence in the style of Father Casimir Frescot.

I did not receive an invitation, which proves either that I was an amateur of poetry unknown to fame, or that Signor Pellegrini, in his gravity and wisdom, judged me a mere boy, unworthy of consideration in an enterprise which he treated with true Illyrico-Italian seriousness. Signor Colombo and my friend Massimo urged me to prepare two compositions on the published themes; but I reminded them that I had no right to appear uninvited. Nevertheless, I amused myself by scribbling a couple of sonnets, which I consigned to the bottom of my pocket. As may be imagined, I defended peace in the one, and did my best to belaud his Excellency in the other.

The Provveditore Generale, attended by his officers and by the magnates of the city, entered the temporary hall, and took his seat upon a rich fauteuil raised many steps above the ground. A covey of literary celebrities, collected Heaven knows where, ranged their learned backs along a row of chairs, which formed a semicircle round him.

Strolling outside the damasked tabernacle, I saw some servants who were preparing beverages and refreshments with a mighty bustle. I was thirsty, and thought I should not be committing a crime if I asked one of them for a lemonade. He replied that express orders had been given not to quench the thirst of anybody who was not a member of the Academy. This discourteous rebuff, repeated to the sitio of several officers, raised a spirit of silent revolt among us. I resolved to put a bold face on the matter, and to proclaim myself an academician, thinking that the title of poet might win for me the lemonade which was denied to the dignity and the weapons of an officer.

This little incident confirmed my opinion of the usefulness of poetry against the universal judgment which regards it as an inutility. Poetry stood me in good stead by procuring me a lemonade and saving me from dying of thirst. Having swallowed the beverage, I proceeded to one of the seats in the assembly, exciting some surprise among its members, who were, however, kind enough to tolerate my presence. For three whole

hours the air resounded with long inflated erudite orations and poems not remarkable for sweetness. A yawn from the General now and then did honour to the Academy and the academicians. I must in justice say that some tolerable compositions, superior to what I had expected, struck my ears. A young abbé in holy orders gushed with poetic eloquence. I have heard that he is now become a bishop. Who knows whether poetry was not as serviceable to him in the matter of his mitre, as she was to me in the matter of my lemonade!

I declaimed my sonnets in their turn; the second of which, by Apollo's blessing, pleased his Excellency, and consequently was received with general approval. It established my reputation among the folk of Zara, and led to a comic scene two days later. The Provveditore Generale was in the habit of riding in the cool some four or five miles outside the city; a troop of officers galloped at his heels, and I galloped with them. While we were amusing ourselves in this way, his Excellency took a fancy to hear my sonnet over again; for it had now become famous, as often happens with trifles, which go the round of society upon the strength of adventitious circumstances. He called me loudly. I put spurs to my horse, while he, still galloping, ordered me to recite. I do not think a sonnet was ever declaimed in like manner since the creation of the world. Galloping after the great man, and almost bursting my lungs in the effort to make myself heard, with all the trills, gasps, cadences, semitones, clippings of words, and dissonances, which the movement of a horse at full speed could occasion, I recited the sonnet in a storm of sobsand sighs, and blessed my stars when I had pumped out the fourteenth line. Knowing the temper of the General, who was haughty and formidable in matters of importance, but sometimes whimsical in his diversions, I thought at the time that he must have been seeking a motive for laughter. And indeed, I believe this was the case. Anyhow, he can only have been deceived if he hoped to laugh more at the affair than I did. Yet I was rather afraid of becoming a laughing-stock to my riding-companions also. Foolish fear! These honest fellows, like true courtiers, vied with each other in congratulating me upon the partiality of his Excellency and the honour he had done me. They were even jealous of a

burlesque scene in which I played the buffoon, and sorry that they had not enjoyed the luck of performing it themselves.

VIII.

Confirmation of a hint I gave in the Second Chapter of these Memoirs relating to a great danger which I ran.

I related in the second chapter of this book that I once owed my life to a trick taught me by a jockey. The incident happened during one of our cavalcades with the Provveditore Generale.

At the hour appointed for riding out, all the officers of the Court sent their saddles and bridles to the General's stables, and each of us mounted the animal which happened to be harnessed with his own gear. Now the Bashaw of Bosnia had presented the governor with a certain Turkish stallion, finely made, but so vicious that no one liked to back the brute. One day I noticed that the grooms had saddled this untamable Turk for me. Who knows what motives determine the acts of stable-boys? I am not accustomed to be easily dismayed; besides, I had ridden many dangerous horses in my time, and this was not the minute to show the white feather before a crowd of soldiers. I leapt upon the animal like an antique paladin, without looking to see whether the bit and trappings were in order. Our troops started; but my Bucephalus reared, whirled round in the air, and bolted toward his stable, which lay below the ramparts. Pulling and working at the reins had no effect upon the brute; and when I bent down to discover the cause, I found that the bit had not been fastened, either through the negligence or the malice of the grooms.

Rushing at the mercy of this demon through the narrow streets and low doors of the city, I began to reflect that I was not likely to reach the stables with my head upon my shoulders. Then I remembered the jockey's advice, and rising in my stirrups, leaned forwards, and stuck my fingers into the two eyes of the stallion. Suddenly deprived of sight, and not knowing whither he was going, he dashed furiously up against a wall, and fell all of a heap beneath me. I leapt to earth with the agility of a practised rider, and made the Turk get up; he was trembling like a leaf, while I with shaky fingers fastened the bit firmly; then I mounted again, and rejoined my company among the shouts of applause which always greet dare-devil

escapades of this kind. The middle finger of my left hand had been flayed by striking against the wall. I still bear the scar of this glorious wound.

IX.

Little incidents, trifling observations, moral reflections of no value, gossip which is sure to make the reader yawn.

Our forces had little to occupy them in those provinces, so that my sonnet in praise of peace exactly fitted. Some interesting incidents, and several journeys which I undertook, furnished me, however, with abundant matter for reflection. I shall here indulge myself by setting down a few observations which occur to my memory.

The regular troops which garrison the fortresses of Dalmatia had been recalled to Italy, in order to defend the neutrality of Venice during the wars which then prevailed among her neighbours. In these circumstances the Senate commissioned our Provveditore Generale to levy new forces from the subject tribes, not only for maintaining the military establishment of Dalmatia, but also for drafting a large number of Morlacchi into Italy. It was a matter of no difficulty to enrol garrisons for the Illyrian fortresses; but the exportation of the Morlacchi cost his Excellency the greatest trouble. These ruffianly wild beasts, wholly destitute of education, are aware that they are subjects of Venice; yet their firm resolve is to indulge lawless instincts for robbery and murder as they list, refusing obedience in all things which do not suit their inclinations. To reason with them is the same as talking in a whisper to the deaf. They simply resisted the command to form themselves into a troop and leave their lairs for Italy.

Their chiefs, who were educated men, brave and loyal to their prince, strained every nerve to carry out these orders. It was found needful to recall the bandits, who swarm throughout those regions, outlawed for every sort of crime—robberies, homicides, arson, and such-like acts of heroism. Bribes too were offered of bounties and advanced pay, in order to induce the wild and stubborn peasants to cross the seas. I was present at the review of these Anthropophagi; for indeed they hardly merited a more civilised title. It took place on the beach of Zara under the eyes of the Provveditore, with ships under sail, ready for the embarkation of the conscripts. Pair by pair, they came up and received their stipend; upon which they expressed their joy by howling out some barbarous chant, and

dancing off together with uncouth gambols to the transport ships. I revered God's handiwork in these savages while deploring their bad education, and felt a passing wish to explore the Eden of eternal beatitude in which the Morlacchi dwell.

It is certain that the Italian cities under our benign government were more disturbed than guarded by these brutal creatures. At Verona, in particular, they indulged their appetite for thieving, murdering, brawling, and defying discipline, without the least regard for orders. At the close of a few months, they had to be sent back to their caves, in order to deliver the Veneto from an unbearable incubus. Even at the outset, their spirit of insubordination let itself be felt. Scarcely had the transports sailed, when the sight of the Illyrian mountains made them burn to leap on shore. The seamen did their best to restrain the unruly crew; but finding that they ran a risk of being cut in pieces, they finally unbarred the pens before this indomitable flock of rams.

What I am now writing may seem to have little to do with the narrative of my own life, and may look as though I wished to calumniate the natives of Dalmatia. The rulers of those territories will, however, bear me out in the following remarks. I have visited all the fortresses, many districts, and many villages of the two provinces. In some of the cities I found well-educated people, trustworthy, cordial, and liberal in sentiment. In places far removed from the Provveditore Generale's Court the manners of the population are incredibly rough. All the peasants may be described as cruel, superstitious, and irrational wild beasts. In their marriages, their funerals, their games, they preserve the customs of pagan antiquity. Reading Homer and Virgil gives a perfect conception of the Morlacchi. They hire a troop of women to lament over their dead. These professional mourners shriek by turns, relieving one another when voice and throat have been exhausted by dismal wailings tuned to a music which inspires terror. One of their pastimes is to balance a heavy piece of marble on the lifted palm of the right hand, and hurl it after taking a running jump. The fellow who projects this missile in a straight line to the greatest distance,

wins. One is reminded of the enormous boulders hurled by Diomede and Turnus.

In their mountain homes the Morlacchi are fine fellows, useful to the State of Venice on occasions of war with the Turks, their neighbours, whom they cordially detest. The inhabitants of the coast make bold seamen, apt for fighting on the waters. Toward Montenegro the tribes become even more like savages. Families, who have been accustomed for some generations to die peaceably in their beds or kennels, and cannot boast of a fair number of murdered ancestors, are looked down upon by the rest. On the beach outside the city walls of Budua, for which these men and brothers leave their hills in summer-time to taste the coolness of sea-breezes, I have witnessed their exploits with the musket and have seen three corpses stretched upon the sands. A member of one of the pacific families I have described, being taunted by some comrade, burned to wipe out the shame of his kindred, and opened a glorious chapter in their annals by slaughtering and being slaughtered. Fierce battles and armed encounters between village and village are frequent enough in those parts. The men of one village who kill a man of the next village, have no peace unless they pay a hundred sequins or discharge their debt by the death of one of their own folk. Such is the current tariff, fixed without consulting their sovereign, among these people, who regard brutality as justice. I learned much about these traits of human nature from a village priest of Montenegro, who conversed with me nearly every day upon the beach at Budua. He talked a strange Italian jargon, narrated the homicides of his flock with complacency, and let it be understood that a gun was better suited to his handling than the vessels of the sanctuary.

The thirst for vengeance is never slaked there. It passes from heir to heir like an estate in tail. Among the Morlacchi, who are less bloodthirsty than the Montenegrins, I once saw a woman of some fifty years fling herself at the feet of the Provveditore Generale, extract a mummied head from a game-bag, and cast it on the ground before him, weeping as though her heart would burst, and calling aloud for pity and justice. For thirty years she had preserved this skull, the skull of her mother, who had been

murdered. The assassins had long ago been brought to justice, but their punishment was insufficient to lay the demon of ferocity in this affectionate daughter. Accordingly, she presented herself indefatigably through a course of thirty years before each of the successive Provveditori Generali, with the same maternal skull in her game-bag, with the same shrieks and tears and cries for justice.

I liked seeing the Montenegrin women. They clothe themselves in black woollen stuffs after a fashion which was certainly not invented by coquetry. Their hair is parted, and falls over their cheeks on either shoulder, thickly plastered with butter, so as to form a kind of large shiny bonnet. They bear the burden of the hard work of the field and household. The wives are little better than slaves of the men. They kneel and kiss the men's hands whenever they meet; and yet they seem to be contented with their lot. Perhaps it would not be amiss if some Montenegrins came to Italy and changed our fashions with regard to women; for ours are somewhat too marked in the contrary direction.

Climate renders both the men and women of those provinces extremely prone to sensuality. Legislators, recognising the impossibility of controlling lawless lust here, have fixed the fine for seduction of a girl with violence at a trifle above the sum which a libertine in Venice bestows on the purveyor of his venal pleasures. At the period of my residence in Dalmatia, the cities retained something of antique austerity. This did not, however, prevent the fair sex from conducting intrigues by stealth. It is possible that, since those days, enlightened and philosophical Italians, composing the courts of successive Provveditori Generali, may have removed the last obstacles of prejudice which gave a spice of danger to love-making.

In Dalmatia the women are handsome, inclining for the most part toward a masculine robustness; among the Morlacchi of the villages, a Pygmalion who chose to expend some bushels of sand in polishing the fair sex up, would obtain fine breathing statues for his pains. These women of Illyria are less constant in their love than those of Italy; but merit less blame for their infidelity than the latter. The Illyrian is blinded and constrained by her fervent temperament, by the climate, by poverty and credulity; the

Italian errs through ambition, avarice, and caprice. I consider myself qualified for speaking with decision on these points, as will appear from the chapter I intend to write upon the love-adventures of my youth.

The land of those provinces is in great measure mountainous, stony, and barren. There are, however, large districts of plain which might be extremely fertile. Neither the sterile nor the fertile regions are under cultivation, but remain for the most part fallow and unfruitful. Onions and garlic constitute the favourite delicacies of the Morlacchi. The annual consumption of these vegetables is enormous; and it would not be difficult to raise a large supply of both at home. They insist, however, on importing them from Romagna; and when one takes the peasants to task for this sluggish indifference to their own interests, they reply that their ancestors never planted onions, and that they have no mind to change their customs. I often questioned educated inhabitants of those regions upon the indolence and sloth which prevail in rural Dalmatia. The answer I received was that nobody, without exposing his life to peril, could make the Morlacchi do more than they chose to do, or introduce the least reform into their agriculture. I observed that the proprietors might always import Italian labour and turn those fertile plains into a second Apulia. This remark was met with bursts of laughter; and when I asked the reason, my informants told me that many Dalmatian gentlemen had brought Italian peasants over, but that a few days after their arrival, they were found murdered in the fields, without the assassins having ever been detected. I perceived that my project was impracticable. Yet I wondered at my friends laughing rather than shedding tears, when they gave me these convincing answers.

It is a pity that Illyria and Dalmatia cannot be rendered fertile and profitable to the State. As it is, they cost our treasury more than they yield, through the expenses incidental to their forming our frontier against Turkey. But I never made it my business to meddle in affairs of public policy; and perhaps there are good reasons why these provinces should be left to their sterility. The opinion I have continually maintained and published, that we ought to begin by cultivating heads and hearts, has

raised a swarm of hostile projectors against me. Such men take the truths of the gospel for biting satires, if they detect the least shadow of opposition to their views regarding personal interest, personal ambition, or particular prejudice. Yet the real miseries which I noticed in Dalmatia, the wretched pittance which proprietors draw from their estates, and the dishonesty of the peasants, suffice to demonstrate my principles of moral education beyond the possibility of contradiction.

During my three years in Dalmatia I used to eat superb game and magnificent fish for a mere nothing; often against my inclination, and only because theopportunity could not be neglected. When you are in want of something, you rarely find it there. The fishermen, who live upon the rocky islands, ply their trade when it pleases them. They take no thought for fasts, and sell fish for the most part on days when flesh is eaten. The fish too is brought to market stuffed into sacks. I could multiply these observations; but let what I have already said suffice. It is my firm opinion that the economists of our century are at fault when they propose material improvements and indulge in visions of opulence and gain, without considering moral education. Wealth is now regarded by the indigent with eyes of envy and the passions of a pirate; rich people act as though they knew not what it was to possess wealth, and make a shameless abuse of it in practice. The one class need to learn temperance, moderation, and obedience to duty; the other ought to be trained to reason and subordination. The sages of the present day entertain very different views from these. In their eyes nothing but material interest has any value; and instead of deploring bad morals and manners, they seem to glory in them.

X.

I am enrolled in the Cavalry of the Republic.—What my military services amounted to.

Some fifteen months of my three years' service had elapsed, when the recall of our regular troops and the enrolment of fresh forces in Dalmatia, which have been described by me above, took place. I have now to mention that the Provveditore Generale chose this moment for placing me upon the roll of the Venetian service.

He had me inscribed as a cadet noble of cavalry. Accordingly I blossomed out into a proper soldier at the age of about eighteen. Signor Giorgio Barbarigo, the paymaster, a short, fat, honest fellow, informed me that my commission was registered, and that I was qualified to draw the salary of thirty-eight lire in good Venetian coin monthly at his office. The news surprised me, and I went at once to pay my acknowledgments to his Excellency.

He told me that, nearly all the regular troops having been recalled to Italy, he saw no prospect of awarding me a higher rank during the term of hisadministration, a considerable part of which had already elapsed. To this he added some ironical remarks to the following effect—"Although, indeed, I do not think you mean to follow a military career, having observed from many points in your behaviour that you are rather inclined to assume the clerical habit." I chose to interpret the irony of my chief to my advantage, and answered cheerfully that although I felt little inclination for the military profession, nothing would ever induce me to become an ecclesiastic; meanwhile I was glad to have studied human nature as one finds it in an army and in those provinces; above all things, I recognised the advantage of having been allowed to serve his Excellency during the three years of his office. I perceived that this reply had not been unacceptable, and retired after making the regulation bow.

I discharged my military duties with punctuality; and if my courage had been put to the test, I feel sure that I should have faced death with romantic enthusiasm. Yet I cannot boast of having earned my monthly pay by any particular services. In addition to the daily and nightly routine of

discipline, I attended his Excellency upon visits of inspection by sea and land to the various fortified places of the territory. When the plague broke out, I spoiled my shirts and ruffles in fumigating the mass of correspondence which used to reach the Provveditore Generale from infected villages. I delivered sentences of arrest by word of mouth to Venetian patricians, noblemen, and officers—always much against the grain. I lay, together with several of my comrades, under arrest on a false charge of malpractice, and owed my liberation after a few hours to the intercession of a gentle lady of the Veniero family. While enumerating these martial deserts, I ought not perhaps to include the sufferings endured upon my journeys, whether riding the worst of nags under a fierce sun and sleeping in jackboots upon the open fields, or rocking at sea all night aboard some galley on a coil of cable, half devoured by myriads of bugs. Great as these sufferings were, I must admit that I endured greater in the disorderly garrison amusements which I joined of my own accord. Some account of these I intend to give in another chapter.

It will be observed that my services to the State were but slender. Yet many men have gained promotion or a pension on the strength of nothing better. And now I think upon it, I will mention one notable achievement, which, though it be not martial, might have put some other soldier laddie in the way of rising to his colonelcy. I hardly expect to be believed, but I am telling the truth, when I affirm that I acquired renown throughout Dalmatia as a soubrette in improvised comedy upon the boards of a theatre.

XI.

My theatrical talents; athletic exercises; imprudences of all kinds; dangers to which I exposed myself; with reflections which are always frivolous.

All through the carnival, tragedies, dramas and comedies used to be performed by amateurs in the Court-theatre, for the amusement of his Excellency, the patricians on the civil staff, officers of the garrison, and the good folk of Zara.

Our troop was composed exclusively of male actors, as is the case in general with unprofessional theatres; and young men, dressed like women, played the female parts. I was selected to represent the soubrette.

On weighing the tastes of my audience, and taking into account the nation for whom I was to act, I invented a wholly new kind of character. I had myself dressed like a Dalmatian servant-girl, with hair divided at the temples, and done up with rose-coloured ribbands. My costume corresponded at all points to that of a coquettish housemaid of Sebenico. I discarded the Tuscan dialect, which is spoken by the soubrettes of our theatres in Italy, and having learned Illyrian pretty well by this time, I devised for my particular use a jargon of Venetian, altering the pronunciation and interspersing various Illyrian phrases. This produced a very humorous effect, and lent itself both in dialogue and improvised soliloquies to the expression of sentiments in keeping with my part. Courage and loquacity were always at my service; after studying the plot of a comedy, which had to be performed extempore, I never found my readiness of wit at fault. Accordingly, the new and unexpected type of the soubrette which I invented was welcomed with enthusiasm alike by Italians and natives. It created a furore in my audience, and won for me universal sympathy.

My sketches of Dalmatian manners studied from the life, my satirical repartees to the mistresses I served, my piquant sallies upon incidents which formed the talk of town and garrison, my ostentatious modesty, my snubs to impertinent admirers, my reflections and my lamentations, made the Provveditore Generale and the whole audience declare with tears of laughter running down their cheeks that I was the wittiest and most

humourous soubrette who ever trod the boards of a theatre. They often bespoke improvised comedies, in order to enjoy the amusing chatter and Illyrico-Italian jargon of Luce; for I ought to add that I adopted this name, which is the same as our Lucia, instead of Smeraldina, Corallina, or Colombina.

Ladies in plenty were eager to know the young man who played Luce with such diablerie and ready wit upon the stage. But when they met him face to face in society, his reserve and taciturnity were so unlike the sprightliness of his assumed character, that they fairly lost their temper. Now that I am well stricken in years, I recognise that their disappointment was anything but a misfortune for me. The conduct of those few who concealed their feelings and pretended that my self-control and seriousness had charms to win their heart, justifies this moral reflection. Meanwhile my talent for comedy relieved me of all military duties so long as carnival lasted. Each year, at the commencement of this season, the Provveditore Generale sent for me, and affably requested me to devote my time and energy to his amusement in the Court-theatre.

During summer he set the fashion of pallone-playing, which had hitherto been unknown at Zara. I had made myself an adept in this game at our Friulian country-seat. Accordingly his Excellency urged me to display my accomplishments for the entertainment of the public. In a short time my seductive costume of fine white linen, with a waistband of black satin and fluttering ribands, cut a prominent figure among the competitors in this noble sport. My turn for study, literary talent, grave demeanour, and seriousness of character made far less impression on the fair sex than my successes on the stage and the pallone-ground. It was these and these alone which put my chastity to the test and conquered it, as will appear in the chapter on my love-adventures. I might here indulge in a digression hardly flattering to women. But I prefer to congratulate them on their emancipation from the ideality of Petrarch's age. Now they are at liberty to float voluptuously on the tide of tender and electrical emotions, in company with youths congenial to their instincts, who have abandoned

tedious studies for occupations hardly more exacting than a game at ball or the impersonation of a waiting-maid.

The truth of history compels me to touch upon some incidents which put my boyish courage to the proof; yet I must confess that my deeds of daring in Dalmatia were nothing better than mad and brainless acts of folly. While recording them, I dare hardly hope—although I should sincerely like to do so—that they will prove useful to parents by exposing the kind of life which young men lead on foreign service, or to sons by pointing out the errors of my ways.

We had no war on hand, and our valour was obliged to find a vent for itself. I should have passed for a poltroon if I had not joined the amusements and adventures of my comrades. These consisted for the most part in frantic gambling, serenading houses which returned our serenades with gunshots, entertaining women of the town at balls and supper-parties, brawling in the streets at night, disguising ourselves to frighten people, and breaking the slumbers of the good folk of the towns and fortresses where the Court happened to be fixed. I remember that one summer night in the city of Spalato, eight or ten of us dressed up for the latter purpose. Each man put on a couple of shirts, thrusting his legs through the sleeves of one and his arms through the other, with a big white bonnet on his head and a pole in his hand. Thus attired, we scoured the town like spectres from the other world, knocking at doors, uttering horrid shrieks to rouse the population, and striking terror into the breasts of women and children. Now it is the custom there to leave the stable-doors open, because of the great heat at night. Accordingly we undid the halters of some fifty horses, and drove them before us, clattering our staves upon the pavement. The din was infernal. Folk leaped from their beds, thinking that the Turks had made a raid upon the town, and crying from their windows: "Who the devil are you? Who goes there? Who goes there?" They screamed to the deaf, while we went clattering and driving on. In the morning the whole city was in an uproar, discussing last night's prodigy and skurrying about to catch the frightened animals.

My guitar-playing accomplishments made me indispensable in these dare-devil escapades of hair-brained boys, which by some miracle never seemed to reach the Provveditore Generale's ears. Had they done so, I suppose they would have been punished, as they deserved; for he was a man who knew how to maintain discipline. The Italians and Illyrians do not dwell together without a certain half-concealed antipathy. This leads to frequent trials of strength and valour, in which the Italians are most to blame. They insult the natives and pick quarrels with a people famous for their daring and ferocity. The courage displayed in maintaining these quarrels and facing their attendant dangers deserves the name of folly rather than of bravery. After stating this truth, to which indeed I was never blind, I dare affirm that no one met musket-shots and menaces with a bolder front than I did. Physicians versed in the anatomy of the human frame may be able to explain my constitutional imperturbability under all circumstances of peril. I am content to account for it as sheer stupidity.

We were at Budua, toward Montenegro, my friend Massimo and I. In this city women are guarded with a watchful jealousy of which Italians have no notion; while homicides occur with facility and frequency. Massimo began a gallant correspondence from the window of our lodging with a girl who was our neighbour. She belonged to one of the noblest families of the place, and was engaged to a gentleman of the city. Nevertheless, she returned my friend's advances with the eagerness of one who has been kept in slavery. I must add that the future bridegroom obtained some inkling of this aërial intrigue. He was a rough Illyrian of no breeding. One morning this fellow opened conversation with us officers in a little square, where we were seated together on stone benches. With much circumlocution and a kind of awkward sprightliness, addressing himself to Massimo, and smiling half-sourly and half-sillily, he expressed his own stupid contempt for Italian customs with regard to women. The long and the short of this involved discourse was simply that all the men in Italy were cuckolds, and all the women no better than they should be. Massimo took care not to emphasise the meaning of the fellow's innuendoes, which would have called for blood and vengeance; but contented himself with bluntly defending our social institutions. In the course of his argument he proved that the barbarity and

tyranny of men toward women, who are always sharp of wit and full of cleverness in every climate, caused more of immorality and intrigue in Illyria than freedom of intercourse between the sexes caused in Italy. To my mind, he spoke what was partly true and partly false; for it cannot be maintained that the facilitation and toleration of licentiousness remove it from our midst. The Illyrian, however, lacked eloquence, and felt ill at ease in carrying on a wordy warfare. So he did not attempt to confute Massimo; but rolled his head and knit his brows, and told him that he might soon be taught at his own cost how badly the Italians conduct themselves in this respect.

Nothing more was wanted in the way of challenge to set us Italians on our mettle. A trifle of this sort turned us at once into knights-errant, championing our nation's cause among half-savages, who murder men with the same indifference as they kill quails or fig-peckers. Massimo turned to me and said that, when night fell, I must take my guitar and follow him. Obeying the rash romantic impulse of my heart, I replied that nothing should prevent me from attending on him. The other Italians who were present at this interview, with more prudence than ourselves, affected to hear nothing.

It happened that a young Florentine named Steffano Torri was at this time clerk in the secretary's office of the Generalato. He played female parts in our comedies and tragedies with much ability, and sang like a nightingale. In order to give our nocturnal enterprise the character of a serenade—a thing quite alien to the customs of that district—Massimo invited this poor lad to warble, without informing him of what, had happened. He was only too glad to let his fine voice be heard; and being besides an obliging creature, he gave his promise on the spot.

Night came. It was September; the season warm, and the moon shining brightly. We girt our swords, stuck a brace of pistols in our belts, and took up our station in the principal street, which was long and straight, beneath the windows of Massimo's Dulcinea. Torri sent melody after melody forth into the silent air, while I twanged my guitar-strings for a good hour's space. Suddenly a window, belonging to the mansion we were honouring

with our duet, flew violently open. A great black head appeared, from which there issued a hoarse voice like that of Charon in Dante's Inferno. "What insolence!" it uttered with a bad Italian accent. We knew that the huge skull was consecrate, and belonged to a certain Canon, uncle of the girl. But something more was needed than the big bovine voice of an ecclesiastic to disturb our tranquillity. Torri, however, being a civilian and no soldier, began to be aware that his melodious airs were out of place. The prudence which is born of fear made him reflect upon the situation, and he asked leave to retire. We persuaded him to stay awhile, pointing out that the street was public, that our amusement was lawful and innocuous, and that it conferred an honour on our nation. He resumed his singing; but from this moment the melodies had a certain quaver in them, which the composer had not calculated. The first assault by the Canon was sustained and repulsed; for after roaring out "What insolence!" three or four times, he shut the window in our faces with a crash.

The second attack upon our obstinacy was something very different and far more formidable than a priest's voice, however horrible. It effectually shut the mouth up of our young musician. By the light of the moon we could discern six men at a distance entering the street with six lowered and gleaming muskets; the cowls of their cloaks concealed their faces, and they advanced at a slow pace toward us. At this apparition our musician took to his heels, and did not stop running till he reached his lodging. Massimo and I stood our ground like Orlando and Rodomonte. I went on playing; my friend, to keep the singing up, howled out some rustic ditties in a bold voice, which was however, I am bound to say, even less agreeable than the Canon's. His discords were enough to cast eternal shame upon Italian music; and if the young lady heard them, they must have frightened her out of her wits instead of giving her the pleasure of a serenade.

Observing our determination to stand firm, the six cowled men advanced to within twenty paces. We heard the click of their six gunlocks, as they cocked them, ready to give fire. At this point our intrepidity deserved no other name than madness; it called for the lancet, hellebore, strait-jackets, a good drubbing. Without budging an inch, we raised our pistols at the

muffled band. They looked at us, we looked at them, for good two minutes. Then they made their minds up to defile past, leaving us at a little distance, but always keeping their eyes fixed with a haughty defiance on our faces. We, on our part, made our minds up to let them pass, returning no less haughty glances. Perhaps they wished to give us time for repentance, or for wholesome reflections, which should make us quit our post. Anyhow, they moved onward till they reached the end of the street, when once again they turned and faced us.

Little did those cowled and mantled fellows know the length and breadth of our stupidity! We recommenced our duet with a more hideous din than ever. They retraced their steps, and advanced steadily toward us. But when they found the pair of little fighting-cocks still standing with raised pistols on the watch, they judged it wiser to pursue their course and disappear. The removal of the Court from Budua, which took place one day after this memorable exploit, probably saved us from being shot down by an ambuscade. I also imagine that the men only wished to frighten us away. Possibly our expected departure from the city, or else respect for our staff-uniform, restrained their fingers on the trigger. Such considerations had certainly more weight with those fierce natives than the insane bravado of two insects armed with pistols. Anyhow, I have always regarded our courage in this danger as fool-hardiness rather than magnanimity.

I could relate an infinity of such adventures, in all of which we risked our lives on some puerile point of honour, or in pursuit of some impertinence which called for castigation. One night at Spalato our serenading party was welcomed with a storm of heavy stones, which made us skip like kids, but could not drive us from our post. We were paying this compliment to a handsome girl of Ragusa, the mistress of one of the chief nobles of the city, and we maintained our station for the honour of Italy, with skulls unbroken, till the day rose.

In the society of unemployed and lazy officers, a young man may be said to have worked miracles who preserves the good principles implanted in him at home. Unless he conforms to the tone and fashion of his comrades, he is sure to be derided and despised. If he does conform, he is likely to lose

substance, health and reputation at cards, with women, or by drinking. Besides this, he constantly risks life and limb in the so-called pastimes I have just described.

I am able to boast without exaggeration that I never played for high stakes, that I never surrendered myself to debauchery, that I preserved the sound principles of my home education, and yet that I was popular with all my comrades, owing to the clubbable and fraternal attitude which I assumed at some risk, it is true, yet always with the firm determination to leave a good character behind me when my term of service ended.

XII.

Shows how a young Cadet of Cavalry is capable of executing a military stratagem.

Having described the dangers to which my system of conduct in the army exposed me, I ought in justice to myself to show that I was able on occasion to reconcile our absurd code of honour with prudence and diplomacy. With this object I will relate an incident, which is neither more nor less insignificant than the other events of my life.

The city of Zara is traversed by a main street of considerable length, extending from the piazza of San Simeone to the gate called Porta Marina. Several lanes and alleys, leading downwards from the ramparts on the side toward the sea, debouch into this principal artery. It so happened that some of the officers, wishing to traverse one of these lanes on their way to the promenade upon the ramparts, had been intercepted by a man muffled in a mantle, who levelled an eloquent enormous blunderbuss at their persons, and forced them to change their route. This act of violence ought to have been reported to the Provveditore Generale, and he would have speedily restored order and freedom of passage. Our military code of honour, however, forbade recourse to justice as an act of cowardice; albeit some of my comrades found it not derogatory to their courage to recoil before a blunderbuss.

My readers ought to be informed that a girl of the people, called Tonina, one of the loveliest women whom eyes of man have ever seen, lived in this lane. She had multitudes of admirers; and the cozening tricks she used to wheedle and entice a pack of simpletons, made her no better than any other cheap and venal beauty. Yet she contrived to sell her favours by the sequin. A gentleman, whom I shall mention lower down, was madly in love with this little baggage. Wishing to keep the treasure to himself, he adopted a truly Dalmatian mode of testifying his devotion, and stood sentinel in her alley. On two consecutive evenings the passage was barred; we talked of nothing else in the ante-chamber of the General, and laid plans how to reassert our honour. A number of officers agreed to face the

blunderbuss; I received an invitation to join the band; and acting on my system of good-fellowship, I readily consented.

Our discussion took place in the ante-chamber; silence was enjoined; we settled that each of the conspirators should wear a white ribband on his hat, and that three hours after nightfall we should assemble under arms at our accustomed mustering-place. This was a billiard-saloon, whence we were to sally forth to the assault of Budua.

An Illyrian nobleman, Signor Simeone C——, of handsome person, honourable carriage, and a resolute temper, which inspired even soldiers with respect, although he held no military grade, was sitting in a corner of the ante-chamber, half-asleep, and apparently inattentive to our project. I knew him to be frank and genial, and he had often professed sentiments of sincere friendship for myself. After our scheme had been concerted, I passed into the reception-room of the palace. He followed, and opened a conversation on indifferent topics, in the course of which he drew me aside, changed his tone, and began to speak as follows:—

"The moment has arrived for me to testify the cordial friendship which I entertain for you. I regret that you have promised to join those fire-eaters this evening. On your honour and secrecy I know that I can count. I am sure that you will not reveal what I am about to disclose; else the higher powers, whom we are bound to regard, might be involved, and cowardice might be suspected in those whose courage is indisputable. This preamble will enable you to judge what I think of you, and to measure the extent of my friendship. I am the man in the mask. To-night there will be four blunderbusses in the alley. I shall lose my life; but several will lose theirs before the lane is forced. I am sorry that you are in the affair. Contrive to get out of your engagement. Let the rest come, and enjoy their fill of pastime at the cost of life or limb."

This blunderbuss of an oration took me by surprise. But I did not lose my senses or my tongue, and answered to the following effect:—

"I am amazed that you should have begun by professing friendship and preaching caution. You do not seem to understand the first elements of the

one or the simple meaning of the other. I am obliged to you for one thing only, your belief that I am incapable of divulging what you have just told me. Upon this point alone your discernment is not at fault. I would rather die than expose you. Yet you want me, under threats, to break my word, and to render myself contemptible in the eyes of all my comrades. This you call a proof of friendship. It is as clear as day, too, that you have yielded to a hussy's importunities, risking your own life and the lives of your friends upon a silly point of honour in a shameful quarrel. This is the proof of your prudence. If you withdraw from the engagement, no harm will be done, and cowardice will only be imputed to a nameless mask. But if I break my word, you cannot free me from the imputation of having proved myself a renegade and a dastard. I shall become an object of scorn and abhorrence to the whole army. If I act as you desire, my oath of secrecy to you will violate the laws of friendship, prudence, everything which men hold sacred. Your promise of secrecy again puts my honour in peril. How can you be sure that one of your accomplices will not privily inform his Excellency of your name and your mad enterprise? Where shall I then be? No: it is clearly your duty to obey the counsels dictated by my loyal friendship and my sound prudence. Leave the alley open; and then you will in truth oblige me. Make love to your Tonina with something more to the purpose than a blunderbuss. Her physical shape excuses your weakness for her; her mind deserves your scorn; but I am not going to preach sermons on objects worthy or unworthy of love; I feel compassion for human frailty."

It was obvious that Signor Simeone C— — felt the force of these arguments. But he writhed with rage under them, and showed no sign of consenting. In his fierce Dalmatian way he burst into bare protestations, swore that he would never quit the field, and wound up with a vow to sell his life as dearly as man ever did.

At this point I judged it needful to administer a dose of histrionic artifice. After gazing at him for some seconds with eyes which spoke volumes, I assumed the declamatory tone of a tragedian, and exclaimed: "Well then, I promise to be the first to enter the lane this evening, and, without attacking you, I shall offer my breast to your fire. I have only this way left of proving

to you that you are in no real sense of the word my friend." Then I turned my back with a show of passion, taking care, however, to retire at a slow pace. Except for the ferocity instilled by education, he was at bottom an excellent good-hearted fellow. Seizing me by the arm, he begged me wait a moment. I saw that he was touched, and maintaining the tragic tone, I persuaded him to leave the access to the alley free, without resigning his exclusive right to the Tonina. For my part, I undertook never to reveal our secret. This promise I have kept for thirty-five years. Lapse of time and the probability of his decease—for he was much older than I—excuse me for now breaking it.

On three following nights I joined the allied forces at the billiard-room, armed to the teeth, and with a white ribbon flying from my hat-band. I was always the first to brave the blunderbusses, being sure that no resistance would be offered. Indeed, the victory, on which we piqued ourselves, had been won beforehand in my battle of words. The culpable conduct of Tonina, a girl of the people, who had exposed so many gentlemen to serious danger, remained fixed in my mind. I shall relate the sequel to this incident, which took a comic turn, in the next chapter. For the present, it is enough to add that Signer Simeone C——'s infatuation for this corsair of Venus rapidly declined, as is the wont of passions begotten by masculine appetite and feminine avarice. Tonina, however, did not lack lovers, and the badness of her nature continued to spread discord and foment disorder in our circle.

XIII.

The fair Tonina is rudely rebuked by me upon an accidental occasion in the theatre.—My reconciliation with the young woman.—Reflections on my life in Dalmatia.

One evening during the last carnival of my three years' service, the Provveditore Generale bespoke an improvised comedy at the Court-theatre. The officers arranged a supper-party and a ball in private rooms, intending to pass the night gaily when the farce was over. I had to play the part of Luce, married to Pantalone, a vicious old man, broken in health and fortune. I was reduced to extreme poverty, with a daughter in the cradle, the fruit of my unhappy marriage.

There was a night-scene, in which I had to soliloquise, while rocking my child and singing it to sleep with some old ditty. This lullaby I interrupted from time to time with the narrative of my misfortunes and with sallies which made the audience die of laughter. Bursts of applause brought the house down as I told my story, enlarged upon my reasons for marrying an old man, related the incidents of my life, alluded in modest monosyllables to what I had to bear, described what a fine figure of a woman I had been, and what a scarecrow matrimony had made me. I complained of cold, hunger, evil treatment. I did not make milk enough to suckle my baby; and what I made was sour, nay, venomous from fits of rage and all the sufferings I had to go through. This bad milk gave my darling, the fruit of my womb, the stomach-ache. It kept bleating all night like a lamb, and would not let me close an eye. The night was far advanced. I was waiting for my old fool of a husband. What could be keeping him abroad? He must surely be in the Calle del Pozzetto, notorious at Zara for its evil fame. I had a presentiment of coming troubles, moralised upon the woes of life, and burst into a flood of tears, which made everybody laugh. The truth was that one of our officers, Signor Antonio Zeno, who played the part of Pantalone excellently, had not turned up at the proper time to enter into dialogue with me. Until he arrived, I was forced to continue my soliloquy, which had already occupied the attention of the audience full fifteen minutes. A good extempore actor ought never to lose presence of mind, or

to be at a loss for material. In order to prolong the scene, I pretended that my baby was crying, and that it would not go to sleep for all my lullabies and cradle-rocking. In a fit of impatience I took it up, unlaced my dress, and laid it with endearing caresses to my breasts to quiet it. This fresh absurdity, together with my lamentations over the non-existent teats I said the greedy little thing was biting, kept my audience in good-humour. From time to time I turned my eyes to the sides, being really disturbed at Signor Zeno-Pantalone's non-appearance, and racking my brains in vain for some new matter to sustain the soliloquy.

Just then I happened to catch sight of Tonina seated in one of the front boxes of the theatre, resplendent with beauty, and attired in a gala dress which cast a glaring light upon her dubious career. She was laughing with more assurance and sense of fun than anybody at my jokes. The catastrophe which she had nearly caused flashed suddenly across my mind. I felt that I had discovered a treasure; and plunged like lightning into a new subject. What I proceeded to do was bold, I admit, yet quite within the limits of good taste upon our amateur stage, where personal allusions were allowed perhaps a little too liberally. I called my doll-baby by the name of Tonina, and addressed my speech to it. I caressed it, admired its features, flattered my maternal heart with the hope that Tonina would grow up a lovely girl. So far as I was concerned. I vowed to give her a good education, by example, precepts, chastisement, and watchful care. Then, taking a tone of gravity, I warned her that if, in spite of all my trouble, she fell into such and such faults, such and such acts of imprudence, such and such immoral ways, and caused such and such disturbances, she would be the worst Tonina in the world, and I prayed God to cut her days short rather in the cradle. All the evil things I mentioned were faithfully copied from anecdotes about Tonina in the front box, with which my audience were only too well acquainted.

Never in my whole life have I known an improvised soliloquy to be so tumultuously applauded as this of mine was. The spectators at one point of the speech turned their faces with a simultaneous movement towards Tonina in her gala dress, clapping their hands and laughing till the theatre

rang again. His Excellency, who had some inkling of the siren's ways, honoured my unexpected satire with explosions of unconcealed merriment. Tonina backed out of her box in a fit of fury, and escaped from the theatre, cursing my soliloquy and the man who made it. Pantalone finally arrived, and the comedy ended without any episode more mirthful than the scene between me and my baby.

Do not imagine that I have related this incident to brag about it. Although the young woman in question was a girl of the people, whose dissolute behaviour and ill-nature had been the cause of many misadventures, and though the Provveditore Generale applauded my performance, I blamed myself, when it was over, for yielding to a mere impulse of vanity, and exhibiting my power as a comedian at the cost of committing an act of imprudence and indiscretion. Much has to be condoned to youth which is never conceded to maturity.

I have mentioned that a ball and supper-party had been arranged by us officers after the play, and that I was a member of the company. I went in my costume of Luce, partly to save time, and partly to carry on the joke. Tonina was among the guests. She did not expect me, and was sitting in a corner, angry and out of spirits. When she saw me, one would have thought she had set eyes on the fiend; she looked as though she meant to leave the room. I took her hand, and protested I would rather go than that the company should lose its loveliest ornament. I vowed that she was adorably beautiful, and that it was a pity she was not equally good. I begged her in gentle terms to take the accident of the evening into account, to reflect upon the universal verdict given by the audience on her ways of life, and to guard against the private flatterers who blinded her to the truth. I told her that God had meant to send in her an angel, and not a devil into this world. I interwove so many praises with so many insolences, and with such complete frankness, that she could not but laugh. Everybody laughed, down to her very lovers. She expressed a wish to dance with me. I accepted the invitation. This looked like a token of peace; but it was only treachery. While dancing, she exerted all the charms, enticements, captivating

humours, pressures of the hand, and so forth, which her bad vindictive and seductive nature could suggest to enslave me.

A woman's coquetries directed to some purpose of revenge are always blind, and give the best advantage to a clever roué. The reason is that the woman, piqued to the point of seeking a victory at any price, lowers herself to the utmost, without being aware of what she is conceding. I was not a roué; and woe to me if I had let myself be snared by the wiles and artifices of that viper smarting under the sense of recent insult!

Our pleasure party was resumed soon after supper, during which my fair foe kept me at her side. We broke up about sunrise; and Tonina never ceased to call me her accursed little devil; that was the sweet Dalmatian term of endearment which she used. Compelled by these compliments, I promised to pay her a visit, but I did not keep my word.

I have now given some general notion of my ways of thinking and acting, my character and conduct, up to the age of eighteen on to twenty. Nothing but the truth has dictated these reminiscences, from which I have undoubtedly omitted many things of similar importance. I am sure that if I had been guilty of anything really wrong during this period, it would not have escaped either my memory or my pen. I have never hardened my heart against the stings of remorse, and I would far rather frankly record facts to my discredit than bear the stings of conscience by suppressing what is true. Reviewing the veracious picture of myself which I have painted, friends will see in me a somewhat eccentric young man, but of harmless disposition; enemies will take me for a worthless scapegrace; the indifferent, who know me superficially by sight, will discover some one very different from their conception based on my external qualities. At the proper place and time I shall account for this not unreasonable and yet fallacious conception formed of me by strangers. The reasons will appear clearly in the detailed portrait I intend to execute of myself, and which will surpass the best work of any painter.

XIV.

The end of my three years' service.—I cast up my accounts, and reckon debts; calculate upon the future, with a sad prevision of the truth.—My arrival in my home at Venice.

The three years of my military service were nearly at an end, when I contracted a slow fever, not dangerous to life, but tedious. The time had come for settling accounts, and seeing how I stood. My family, since I left home, had furnished me with only two bills of exchange, one for fourteen, the other for six sequins. My useless duties to the State had brought me thirty-eight lire per month. Against these receipts I balanced my expenses: so much for my daily food; so much for my lodging, clothing, and washing; so much for a servant, indispensable in my position; so much for two illnesses, together with the small sums spent on unavoidable pleasures of society. The result was that I found myself in debt to my friend Massimo for exactly the sum of fifty-six sequins and sixteen lire, or 200 ducats.

If the necessities of life are not to be considered vices, this debt was certainly a modest one. Still it weighed upon my mind. I consoled myself by recalling my friend's nobleness of nature, and felt sure that I should be able to repay him on reaching home. I computed that the gross sum I had received during those three years amounted to 480 ducats; and I did not think I had been a spendthrift in consuming about 150 ducats a year on my total expenditure. I could indeed have saved something by attending the table which the Provveditore Generale kept daily for the officers of his Court and guard, but which his sublime Excellency never honoured with his presence. Little did he know what a gang of ruffians, with the exception of a few patient souls constrained by urgent need, defiled his table, or what low tricks were perpetrated at it. Since the day of my arrival I had heard the infamous and compromising talk which went on there, had watched the squabbles between guest and guest, and guests and serving-men, had seen the cups and platters flying through the air—and, like a naughty boy perhaps, I preferred to contract a debt of 200 ducats rather than accept a hospitality so prostituted to vile uses. I attended this table of Thyestes, as it

seemed to me, only when I could not help it, on the days when I had to mount guard.

The financial statement I have just made will appear to many of my readers a mere trifle, unworthy of recording here. They are mistaken. When they have learned in what a state of desolation I found my father's house, and how I strove to stem the tide of prodigality and waste which was bringing our family to ruin, they will understand my reasons for insisting on these trifles. Heads heated by anger and resentment are only too ready to invent false accusations; and I shall soon be made to appear a prodigal, a reckless gambler, a consumer of the substance of my family during the three years I spent abroad. This is why I am so scrupulous in telling the plain truth about my cost of living in Dalmatia. I have never been ashamed of letting the whole world know how modest are my fortunes. I should think it a greater shame to pretend to possess more than I really own. Riches have always seemed to me to be a name, and to reside in the imagination. If I cast my eyes on a carpenter, then raise them to a duke, and finally lift them to a king, I obtain convincing demonstration of the fact that he alone is rich who has the mental wealth—to be contented with his lot. Alas! that only I and many millions upon their deathbed recognise this truth.

My three years were over. The new Provveditore Generale, Jacopo Boldù, arrived in Dalmatia, and received the staff of office with the usual formalities from his Excellency Quirini. In my moments of leisure I had composed several poems in honour of the latter, and had procured others from Venice. These I copied out in the beautiful handwriting which I then possessed, sewed them together, added a respectful dedication, and had them bound in a fine velvet cover. Then I paid my respects to his Excellency in company with my friend Massimo, and laid my literary tribute at his feet. I was no Virgil, nor was I born in the golden age of Augustus. Only my fanaticism for the art of poetry made me imagine that verses could be anything worth offering as a gift.

The Cavaliere accepted my donation with affability. He said: "I thank you. At least I have the wherewithal to show that, while a member of my Court, you have remained at school."

Afterwards I learned that he made a present of this book to the Very Eminent Cardinal, his uncle, Bishop of Brescia. His Excellency inquired whether I preferred to return to Venice or to stay in Dalmatia, occupying the post of cadet noble of cavalry on my promotion. I begged him to take me in his train to Venice, and he graciously accepted.

Some one else than I would have looked around for testimonials little to be trusted, which might have kept me fraudulently drawing pay upon the muster-roll of Venice from a too indulgent Government. But I had renounced the military career, and had no mind to spunge upon the public treasury. Our Prince I regarded as a common father, but did not think it just to saddle him with thievish sons, each one of whom by coaxed protections, adulations, hypocrisies, and the vilest offices, eats into the common patrimony of the nation, which ought to be reserved for urgent needs. I was a poor lad, with a debt of 200 ducats; but I knew that the services rendered to the State by me constituted no claim upon the public purse. If I was poor, this came from our being too many in our family and from the maladministration of our property.

My wants were moderate. I flattered myself that I could satisfy them by attending to the management of the estate; and I felt sure that my father, paralysed and speechless as he was, would never refuse to pay the trifling debt I had contracted. Meanwhile it is not improbable that my name remained upon the muster-roll long after I left Dalmatia. Somebody may have pocketed my pay and pilfered from the treasury to this extent. I was not responsible for this, and had no right to inquire into the matter, since I never asked to be cashiered in form. Poor I was, poor I am, and poor I expect to die. At any rate, I am sure that I should die in desperation if I felt on my deathbed that I had earned a fortune by deceit, injustice, and intrigue.

It was in the month of October when at last I embarked for Venice on the galley of his Excellency. Wind and weather were against us. After a painful voyage of twenty-two days, we came in sight of home, and I drew breath again. After paying my respects and returning thanks to the Cavaliere who had brought me back, I set off for our ancestral mansion at San Cassiano,

accompanied by Signor Massimo, whom I had invited to stay with me upon his way to Padua. There I hoped to be able to pay my friend some attention by giving him good quarters during his sojourn in Venice.

XV.

Disagreeable discoveries relating to our family affairs, which dissipate all illusions I may have formed.

Leaving the horrors of the galley for the ancient home of my ancestors, I palpitated between pleasure at escaping into freedom, hope of being able to make my friend comfortable, and uneasiness lest this hope might prove ill-founded.

We reached the entrance, and my companion gazed with wonder at the stately structure of the mansion, which has really all the appearance of a palace. As a connoisseur of architecture, he complimented me upon its fine design. I answered, what indeed he was about to discover by experience, that attractive exteriors sometimes mask discomfort and annoyance. He had plenty of time to admire the façade, while I kept knocking loudly at the house-door. I might as well have knocked at the portal of a sepulchre. At last a woman, named Eugenia, the guardian-angel of this wilderness, ran to open. To my inquiries she answered, yawning, that the family were in Friuli, but that my brother Gasparo was momently expected. Our luggage had now been brought from the boat, and we began to ascend a handsome marble staircase. No one could have expected that this fine flight of steps would lead to squalor and the haunts of indigence. Yet on surmounting the last stair this was what revealed itself. The stone floors were worn into holes and fissures, which spread in all directions like a cancer. The broken window panes let blasts from every point of the compass play freely to and fro within the draughty chambers. The hangings on the walls were ragged, smirched with smoke and dust, fluttering in tatters. Not a piece remained of that fine gallery of pictures which my grandfather had bequeathed as heirlooms to the family. I only saw some portraits of my ancestors by Titian and Tintoretto still staring from their ancient frames. I gazed at them; they gazed at me; they wore a look of sadness and amazement, as though inquiring how the wealth which they had gathered for their offspring had been dissipated.

I have hitherto omitted to mention that our family archives contain an old worm-eaten manuscript, in which are registered the tenths paid to the

public treasury. From this document it appears that the father of my great-grandfather was taxed on upwards of ten thousand ducats of income. It is perhaps a folly to moralise on such things; yet the recollection of those mournful portraits gazing down upon me in the squalor of our ancient habitation prompts me to tell an idle truth. Nobody will be the wiser for it; certainly none of our posterity in this prodigal age. My grandfather left an only son and a good estate settled in tail on heirs-male in perpetuity. Four excellent residences, all of them well-furnished, one in Venice, another in Padua, another in Pordenone, another in the Friulian country-town of Vicinate, were included in this entail, as appears from his last will and testament. Little did he think that the solemn appointments of the dead would be so lightly binding on the living.

I had informed my friend Massimo of the exact state of our affairs at home, so far as these were known to me. I could not acquaint him with the grave disasters which had happened in my three years' absence, being myself in blessed ignorance as yet. The news that my two elder sisters had been married inclined me to expect that our domestic circumstances were improving. Cruel deception wrapped me round, and a hundred speechless but eloquent mouths were now proclaiming, from the walls and chambers of my home, how utterly deceived I had been.

Before long I broke, as usual, into laughter, and gaily begged my comrade's pardon for bringing him to such a wretched hostelry. I assured him that my heart, at any rate, was not so ruined as my dwelling, and engaged him in conversation, while we roamed around its chambers, every nook of which increased my mirth by some new aspect of dilapidation. Then I bade him refresh his spirits with a survey of the noble façade; till at last we settled down as well as circumstances permitted. Two days afterwards, my brother Gasparo arrived. I presented the stranger I had brought to share our hospitality, frankly expressing my sense of his worth and my obligations to him as a friend. Upon this we established ourselves in a little society of three, enlivened by the conversation of my brother, who, even with a fever on him, never failed to be witty.

Gasparo and I were anxiously awaiting an opportunity to talk alone like brothers after my long absence. When the moment came, I inquired after my poor father, our mother, and the circumstances of the family. What I had already seen on my arrival prepared me for the disagreeable news I had to hear. With his usual philosophy, but not without an occasional sign of painful emotion, he gave me the following details. The family was reduced to really tragic straits. Our father lived on, but speechless and paralytic, in the same state as when I left him. My two elder sisters, Marina and Giulia, were married respectively to the Conte Michele di Prata and the Conte Giovan-Daniele di Montereale. About ten thousand ducats had been promised for their dowries. To raise this sum, such and such portions of the estate had been sold, and a debt of more than two thousand ducats had been contracted. A lawsuit was pending between the family and the Conte Montereale concerning part of the dowry still due to him. Our other three sisters, Laura, Girolama, and Chiara, were growing into womanhood, and gave much to think of for their future.

I saw, to my great annoyance, that it would be impossible to liquidate my debt upon the spot. But all these terrifying details did not make me regret my resignation of the post of cadet noble in the cavalry. A few days later, Signor Massimo left for Padua, with the assurance that his two hundred ducats would be paid in course of time by me. Upon this matter he only expressed the sentiments of cordial friendship.

It was not too late in the season for a visit to the country. I felt a strong desire to reach Friuli, and to kiss the hands of my unhappy father. Thither then I went, together with my brother, armed with a giant's fortitude, which was not long in being put to proof.

XVI.

Fresh discoveries regarding the condition of our family.—Vain hopes and wasted will to be of use.—I abandon myself to my old literary studies.

Our country-house had been originally constructed on an old-fashioned, roomy, and convenient scale, with numbers of out-buildings. It was now reduced to one of those dilapidated farms, which I have described in my burlesque poem La Marfisa Bizzarra, canto xii., stanza 126. Two-thirds of the edifice had been demolished, and the materials sold. The remaining fragments were inhabited, but bore written on their front: "Here once was Troy."

Prepared as I was by the misery of our town-house for the desolation of this rural mansion, I hardly cared to cast a glance upon it. What I noticed on arriving was a certain air of jollity and gladness, breathing health, betokening contentment, which all the faces of the village people wore. Amid the jubilations of relatives, guests, serving-folk and lads about the farm, not omitting a pack of barking dogs, I descended from the calèche with my brother. A whole crowd of people, whom I did not know and could not number, fell upon my neck to bid me welcome. Something of a military carriage, which I had picked up abroad, but which had no relation to my real self, made our farm-folk stare upon me like a comet.

Then I raised my eyes, and saw my poor father at a window in the upper storey, with trembling limbs, dragging himself forward on his stick to catch a glimpse of me. All the blood turned suddenly and galloped through my veins. I rushed up the stairs, burst into the room where he was standing, seized one of his hands, and kissed it in a transport of filial affection. He fell upon my shoulder, more paralytic than he had been when I last embraced him, and, in his inability to speak, broke into a piteous fit of weeping. The effort I made to restrain my own tears, lest they should add to his unhappiness, made me feel as though my lungs would burst. Leaning on my arm, he slowly tottered after me, and little by little we reached another room which he frequented. October was nearly over, and the cold in that Friulian climate was very sensible. A good fire burned on the hearth, near which stood the arm-chair of my father, who for seven

years had dragged his life out in this wretched state. All the resources of medical science had been tried in vain. Physicians sometimes agreed and sometimes differed about his treatment. But their concord and their discord were equally impotent to effect a cure; and he had not yet reached the age of fifty-five.

I found my mother in the same apartment. She uttered sentiments which were not inappropriate to her maternal character, but in a frigid tone and with an air of stately self-control. I always loved and respected her, not merely from a sense of duty, but with a true filial instinct. She, on her side, used frequently to protest when there was no need for protestation, that she loved all her nine children with exactly the same amount of affection. She often repeated the following words with gravity, raising her eyebrows as she spoke: "Cut off one of my fingers and I suffer pain; cut off a second and I suffer;" and so on through nine fingers, amputated by the same figure of speech, with equal agony in each case. Notwithstanding this, I believe that the loss of eight fingers would not have given her the same pain as that of the first-born finger, in other words, of my brother Gasparo. He is still alive, a man of honour, and a sage if ever sage existed; and I feel sure that he would admit the truth of this statement, if called on to confirm it.

In my long and anxious study of human nature, I have seen so many mothers with the weakness of my own, that I never dreamed of blaming her. It seemed right to me that my brother's mental gifts and noble qualities should earn for him more of her love than she bestowed on all her other eight children. Mothers, however, who are so devoted to a son generally spoil him, notably by extolling what is good in his character, but also by defending his natural frailties. Acting thus, my mother favoured Gasparo's marriage, which subjected her beloved son to a real martyrdom. Her lifelong devotion to him, and the prejudice displayed in his favour by her will, only served to increase the unhappiness of a man whom I always loved, loved still, and shall love as friend and brother till the end of my days on earth. This digression was rendered necessary by what will follow in my Memoirs.

The room was soon full of relatives and intimate friends, all curious about me. My father strove to ply me with questions, but his tongue refused its office, and he relapsed into weeping. Sad at heart as I was for him, I contrived to relate the most amusing anecdotes I could remember concerning my life in Dalmatia and my travels. In this way I kept him laughing, together with the whole company, through the rest of that day.

The perfect country air; a table abundantly served with rural dainties, though somewhat deficient in elegance; the joviality, wit, and pleasant sallies which never failed in our domestic circle,—all this prevented me from attending to the defects of our establishment. Next day I began to discover that the real cause of trouble was not in the building, but in the minds of its inhabitants. I could not have explained why, but I seemed to be a person of importance in the eyes of everybody. My three sisters confided to me in secret that my brother Gasparo's wife, in close alliance with my mother, who doted on her as the consort of her favoured first-born, ruled all the affairs of the family, which were rapidly going from bad to worse. My father's authority as head of the house had ceased to be more than a mere instrument for carrying out what my sister-in-law advised and my mother sanctioned. Unless I managed to stem the tide of extravagance, we should all be plunged into an abyss of ruin. One of my sisters, Girolama, a girl devoted to reading, writing, and translating from the French—for she too was bitten with our family cacoethes—spoke like a sibyl, gravely and eloquently, on these painful topics. At the same time, my brother's wife contrived secret interviews, in which she explained to me that her husband was indolent, torpid, drowned in fruitless studies, devoted to the company of a certain clever person, and wholly averse from thoughts or cares about domestic matters. She had done everything in her power—God knew she had. She would go on doing her best—God should see she would. Then she described her plans and projects, which, to tell the truth, were pure poetical stupidities. She vowed that she was not in any sense the mistress of the establishment, the administrator of the estate, or the disposer of its revenues; she merely gave advice, made suggestions, and exerted herself for the common benefit and to supply the needs of the family in general. She exhorted me to speak seriously to her husband; I was

to make him abandon his unprofitable studies, make him,above all things, give up those visits of taste and soul, which did so much harm; in fine, I was to force him to sustain his wife in her stupendous labours, and to concentrate his thoughts upon his children, who were five in number.

When I came to analyse the curious compound of truths, lies, and fancies which issued from the fevered brains of this poor lady—always hard at work, always embarrassed in a labyrinth of business—I seemed to perceive that what moved her most was the fear of being made herself responsible for our financial failure. It was also clear that her original ambition of acting the part of prime minister in a realm which only existed in her own imagination, kept her always on the stretch; while a certain little devil of feminine jealousy against her husband added to her disquietude. He, good fellow, had forgotten the long collection of Petrarchan poems written by him for her honour in the past, and which she had repaid with the gift of five children. Not the least little sonnet issued from his pen to celebrate her now. His lyrics were addressed to another idol of the moment.

Meanwhile she set great store upon her personal importance. Every member of our family, who wanted a ducat, a pair of shoes, or something of the sort, came to her with humble supplications, imploring her good offices at head-quarters—and Heaven knew where head-quarters were. This honour and glory made up to her for all her heroic labours in the little realm, which she administered with real authority, though her right to do so was contested, and her schemes were pindarically unpractical.

My younger brother, Almorò, was also at our villa, on a holiday from school—the non-existent school he never went to. His education seemed to have been of the slightest, and his wardrobe left even more to be desired. A boy of good heart and parts, however; gay-spirited and innocent; he was not old enough and had not time to reflect upon our troubles; setting snares for little birds was all his pastime, and when he talked to me, I heard only of the number and the kinds of birds he caught, and the important adventures he had met with in his fowling expeditions.

My father did not converse with me, because he could not; my mother, because she would not. Gasparo's five children with their quarrels and

their games broke in upon the only solace which I had, that of reading and writing.

To all the complaints I heard, to all the exhortations which were daily heaped upon me, I gave one only answer: we will see and think it over.

One thing emerged with distinctness from this hurlyburly of our family. If I attempted any salutary innovation in the wasp's nest of my relatives, I should find no difficulty in gaining supporters to assist me in my opposition to the government; but the government was in the hands of women, under the shadow of my father's authority; I should therefore be misrepresented to him, prejudiced as he was by education, susceptible and hot-blooded by temperament, enfeebled by chronic illness; and he was still the master, still my father, loved and respected by me. I doubted whether anything which I could do would not prove ineffectual or worse. I was afraid of becoming the object of everybody's hatred; for I observed that personal considerations, rather than wise reflection and moderate ambitions, were the motive principles of all the folk I had to deal with. Finally I dreaded giving such a shock to my father's declining frame as would cut short the few days of life which still remained to him. The sequel will show that these anticipations were not ill-founded.

In these circumstances I determined to exercise the strictest self-control, and to bear with everything during my father's lifetime. Literature and my favourite studies of the world meanwhile would suffice to entertain me. Knowing that my uncle Almorò Cesare Tiepolo was in the country on an estate of his not far from where we lived, I went to pay him my respects. He inquired how I had been treated in Dalmatia by his Excellency Quirini. I answered that he had treated me very well indeed, but that he could not give me any permanent commission, because our troops had been drafted into Italy. He then proposed to recommend me to his Excellency the Provveditore Generale at Verona. I replied that I was grateful for his interest on my behalf, but that Mars had not inspired me with a vocation for military service. I foresaw that I should have to employ all my energies upon the affairs of my family, which were calling loudly for my assistance.

Shaking his head and pursing up his lips, he answered that what I said was only too true.

XVII.

Return from Friuli to Venice with my family.—I pursue my chosen path in life, and open new veins of experience.—Yet further painful discoveries as to our circumstances.—The beginnings of domestic discord.

The month of November was wearing away when our family began to think of Venice. It amused me to watch the preparations for our journey and our luggage, which in no wise resembled that of the General's suite I had been used to. My father, an invalid; my mother, serious and diplomatical; my sister-in-law, the woman of business; my brother Gasparo, wool-gathering; our little sisters, intent upon the custody of their old-fashioned bonnets; Almorò, plunged in grief at leaving his birds and cages, which he consigned by something like a last will and testament to the bailiff; I, giving myself military airs, quite out of season; some serving-maids and men in worn-out livery; a few cats and dogs; these composed our travelling party, which might have been compared to a troupe of comedians upon the march.

I shall perhaps be told that there was no reason to enumerate these humiliating circumstances. But I have never had to blush for unworthy actions in my family; and it seems to me a poor philosophy that feels ashamed where no shame is. Such as it was, our caravan arrived in Venice, joking and laughing all the way. There we installed ourselves with as much disorder and as little comfort as was proper to a fine large mansion with nothing to fill its empty spaces.

For my own use I chose out a little room at the top of the house, where I set up a rickety table, provided myself with a huge inkstand and plenty of pens and paper, and spent at least six hours a day in reading and scribbling poetic nonsense. This was my best amusement; but I ought to add that I devoted some of my time to the cafés, studying types of character and listening to conversation; nor did I neglect our theatres, where I saw the various tragedies and comedies which appeared. My brother Gasparo had already given several serious pieces to the stage. They pleased the public then; and though they may be out of fashion now, they would not fail to

please me still. I know the instability of taste too well to change my old opinions.

I had mixed with all sorts of men and learned to know their characters—generals, admirals, noblemen, great lords, officers, soldiers, the people of Illyrian cities, the Morlacchi of the villages, Mainotti, Pastrovicchi, convicts, galley-slaves. It was time, I thought, to become acquainted with my own Venetians. I began by cultivating a set of men who go in Venice by the name of Cortigiani. My companions of this kind were chiefly shopkeepers and handicraftsmen, with a priest or two among the number; clever fellows, respectable, and versed in all the ways of our Venetian world. Their courage and readiness to take part in quarrels won them the respect of the common people, and they carried the art of getting the maximum of pleasure at a minimum of outlay to perfection. On certain holidays I joined their boating-parties, and went to shoot birds on the marshes with them. Or else we lunched together on the Giudecca, at Campalto, Malcontenta, Murano, Burano, and other neighbouring islands. My share of the expense on these occasions was not much above sixpence, and I gained the hearty good-will of my companions by contributing some slices of excellent Friulian ham to our common table. The characters and manners of these men delighted me; I took pleasure in listening to the stories of their quarrels, reconciliations, love-adventures, misfortunes, accidents of all kinds, told in racy Venetian dialect, with the liveliness which is natural to our folk. What is more, I learned much from them. Alas! the race of Cortigiani has degenerated, like everything else in this corrupt age. When I chance to meet a survivor of the honest jolly crew, he strikes his forehead, and confesses that the good days of his youth are irrecoverable, and that the Cortigiano is an extinct species.

Meanwhile I took good care to interfere with nobody and nothing in the household. This I did for my poor father's sake. But I kept my eyes open to observe the intrigues, schemes, and movements of the government. Some Jews, some brokers, and a crowd of women were always coming and going on secret conferences with my sister-in-law. These attracted my attention, and formed the subject of my earnest cogitations. It grieved me to see my

brother Gasparo immersed in his philosophy and poetry, never for one moment giving the least thought to domestic economy. It grieved me; but I grieved in silence. There was one circumstance, however, which fairly put me out of patience. We had three sisters in the house; and a swarm of drones, hulking young fellows of the freest manners, kept buzzing round them. When I came home and found these visitors at their accustomed chatter, I used to scowl at them, lift my hat and put it on again, turn my back, and climb the stairs to my own den, with the fixed intention of making the gentlemen perceive how little their company attracted me. This manœuvre had its effect. My sister-in-law took it upon her to read me a matronly lecture on the impropriety of insulting friends of the family by my rough ways. I replied that I knew very well what friendship was, but that I could distinguish the false from the true; I was not conscious of having been rude to anybody; my father was the master, and if he did not mind some things which seemed to my inexperience imprudent and irregular, a mere lad's opinions were not worthy of consideration. This hint of my displeasure made all the women of the house regard me like a serpent. Even my three sisters, who loved me sincerely, and were excellent creatures, imbued with the soundest religious principles, could not help harbouring a trifle of suspicion in their feminine brains. For the rest, I said what I thought when I was consulted upon affairs of no importance. My advice in such matters pleased nobody. I ran on little errands if these were intrusted to me; and above all, I devoted some hours of every eveningto my father, who always received me with tenderness and tears.

From conversation with my sisters I learned that the five thousand ducats raised by sale of lands in Friuli, ostensibly to make up portions for my married sisters, had either not been paid by the purchasers or had only reached the hands of the husbands in part. The same had happened with the drapery, linen, and jewels, for which a large debt had been contracted with a company of merchants. These and similar confidences made it clear to my mind that the marriages of my two sisters had not been arranged for their settlement in life so much as with the view of raising money under colourable pretexts, and of alienating entailed property with some show of legality. In fact, I scented disastrous dealings of the sort which are known

at Venice by the name of stocchi. As natural consequences of this crookedpolicy, urgent needs for ready money and embarrassments of all sorts had ensued, which led to fresh expedients and ever-growing financial distress.

Without attributing malice to any one, I merely blamed the bad luck of our family, owing to which my grandfather's fine estate had passed into the hands of women under two administrations, and had been wasted by a course of insane irregularities. I took care to send an accurate report of our domestic circumstances to my brother Francesco at Corfu. And now I must embark upon the sea of my worst troubles.

XVIII.

I become, without fault of my own, quite unjustly, the object of hatred to all members of my household.—Resolve to return to Dalmatia.—My father's death.

It had not escaped my notice that my mother and sister-in-law were in the habit of going abroad together in the mornings. During the five winter months they wore masks, and their proceedings had all the appearance of some secret business. Now Carnival was over. We had reached the month of March 1745, a date which will be always painful to my recollection. Every morning the two ladies left the house together, no longer masked, but wearing the zendado. I asked my sisters if they knew the object of these daily expeditions. They answered to the following effect: all they knew for certain was that my father's invalid condition made a residence in Venice irksome to him; now that the spring was advancing, he wished to go into Friuli with my mother, leaving our sister-in-law at the head of affairs in Venice; meanwhile the treasury was empty, the barns and cellars of our country-house had nothing left in them. I shrugged my shoulders, and kept silence.

A few days afterwards, while I was attempting to drive away care by study in my little upper chamber, my three sisters entered. They were weeping, and my first fear was lest my father should have died. Reassuring me upon this point, they passionately besought me to interpose between the family and shameful ruin. I alone was capable of doing this. The secret expeditions of my mother and sister-in-law had resulted in a contract with a certain Signor Francesco Zini, cloth merchant. He undertook to pay down six hundred ducats in exchange for our ancestral mansion, agreeing, moreover, to hand over a little dwelling of his own in the distant quarter of San Jacopo dall' Orio. They added that my father was ready to give his assent to this bargain, and my brothers Gasparo and Almorò would offer no opposition. I felt deeply moved by the distress of these poor girls as well as by my own keen sense of humiliation; and when they concluded by enjoining the strictest secrecy upon myself in the transaction, a gulf of dissensions, disagreeableness, and misery of all kinds seemed to yawn

before my feet. Our pressing want of money, the contract verbally completed by my mother and sister-in-law, my father's consent, the adhesion of my brothers to the scheme, the obligation to secrecy laid upon me by my sisters, my own bad reputation in the household as a disturber of domestic quiet, my lack of friends and supporters in Venice, all filled me with terror. Yet I resolved to try what I could do to gratify my father's desire for the country, and to put a stop to this humiliating contract. With that object in view I also undertook a secret mission and went to visit Signor Francesco Zini.

I laid myself open to him in terms of flattering politeness, appealing to his excellent disposition, and pointing out that he was about to enter on a business which would expose him to risk and us to notable humiliation. I told him that my father had been an invalid for many years, that our ancestral mansion was subject to a strict entail, that on my father's death he would lose his money and the house, that all the sons of the family were not prepared to sanction the contract, that one of them was in the Levant, that I had not the least intention of assenting, and that the utmost I could do would be to abandon the house at my father's express command. Then I passed to the pathetic. I described a numerous family departing with their scanty bundles from the loved paternal nest, bowed down with grief and shame before the eyes of all their neighbours, who would be exclaiming: "See those gentlefolk upon the move, because their home has been sold over their heads!" I proved to him that if he gained a fine house to live in, he would also gain an odious and ugly reputation. Finally, I besought him, as a man of worth, to seize some plausible pretext for breaking a bargain which, happily for his advantage and our own, had not been ratified.

Over the fat, red, small-pox-pitted features of Signor Zini spread amazement and perplexity. He did not understand my rigmarole, he said; he was an honest man, pouring out his blood, not water, to obtain the house; my mother and sister-in-law, together with the broker of this honourable bargain, had assured him that my father wished to conclude it, and that all his sons were prepared to emancipate themselves from the paternal authority, in order to be able to sign the contract, thus giving it

validity, and securing the rightful interest of the innocent purchaser. The affair had been settled, the necessary deeds were waiting on the bureau of Marchese Suarez, his advocate. Most assuredly, unless my father's male heirs procured their emancipation, in order to give validity to the contract in perpetuity, he would not unbutton his pockets to disburse a penny; he was not a fool, to be imposed upon with fibs and fables.

I commended the fat gentleman's perspicacity and caution; repeated that I had no intention of procuring my emancipation, and that nothing on earth would force me to consent; once more I begged him to find some excuse for breaking off the bargain; and wound up by imploring him to keep silence upon my interference in the matter. I made it clear that only a brute, devoid of Christian charity, would reject a son's entreaties, and render him odious to mother and father without any advantage to himself. He promised to respect my secrecy, wagging his huge scarlet jowl and lifting his night-cap, with so many protestations of being touched to the heart, that I ought to have been put upon my guard. I did not yet know human nature, and retired as happy as if I had taken Gibraltar by assault, feeling confident that my prudence and discretion had averted a lamentable catastrophe.

Nothing was said by me about the course which I had followed, even to my three sisters. I reflected that they were women, and awaited a quiet termination of the affair, trusting to Signor Zini's humanity. Meanwhile I ruminated how to procure my father's removal to the country, and how to help the family without waiting for the harvest, which would be finished in three months. I computed the value of my clothes, my watch, my snuff-box; prepared as I was then, to sell everything I possessed. But these calculations only reduced me to despair. My one real friend was Signor Massimo, then at Padua. I remembered that I already owed him two hundred ducats, and that he was living on an allowance from his father. Yet I knew that both father and son, as well as a brother of my comrade, were no less generous toward persons on whose character for loyalty and friendship they relied, than they were suspicious of intriguers and impostors. I was also aware that they were in a position to render me

substantial services. How often, during the tempestuous vicissitudes of my existence, have I not had the opportunity to verify this fact!

While thus engaged in studying ways and means, Signor Zini broke rudely in upon my meditations. Possessed with the desire to obtain our dwelling for his own, he divulged the secret of my visit, and exposed what I had said to him in terms of his own choosing. My belief is that his communication amounted to this:—unless the hot-headed impetuous young fellow, who had come to treat with him, were brought to reason, and compelled to sign the contract, he refused to disburse two shillings.

I was in my upper chamber, studying as usual, and talking with my brother Almorò about his wretched schooling, when my mother appeared one day. Something of philosophical severity in her toilette, something imposing in her manner, which concealed, however, an internal irritation, proclaimed the gravity of her mission. She addressed herself pointedly to me, with the features of a judge rather than a mother, and began a long narration of the straits to which we were reduced. She said that, God be blessed, she had been inspired and assisted to discover six hundred ducats in the hands of a benevolent merchant, which would be placed immediately at her disposal upon such and such conditions. The notary was ready to engross the necessary deeds; and she begged me to declare what I thought about this special providence.

At the bottom of her heart I read Signor Zini's act of treason, and saw that I was lost. However, I answered respectfully that a contract of this kind struck me as anything but providential; still my father had full power to do what he thought fit, without rendering an account of his actions to his sons. She flamed up, and cried with a threatening air that my consent was also needed; she could not believe that I should be so rash and headstrong as to prevent a plan which would relieve my father and the family in our present painful circumstances. I could have uttered several truths without a wish to wound; but certain truths, once spoken, wound incurably. Therefore, I contented myself with observing that I was ready to shed my blood for my father, but that I could not assent to a contract so humiliating and ruinous, the last of a whole series dictated by suicidal policy. People

who understood economy were in the habit of calculating and making provision for the future, not of selling or mortgaging their property to meet embarrassments created by their own extravagance. The latter course was rapidly bringing our whole family to the workhouse. Under a disastrous financial system our income had been reduced to three thousand ducats; yet I could not comprehend how we were in such straits as she had described. When people were unable to maintain a decent state in the capital, they could live at ease in the country at one-third of the same cost. Houses ought to be let, and not sold. Still my father had the power to make any contract he thought right; only I did not believe him capable of forcing me to give consent against my will and judgment.

The gestures of submission, respect, and supplication with which I accompanied this speech had no power to mollify the pungency of its significance. My mother rose, with her arms akimbo, and inquired who it was I meant to blame for our misfortunes. Instead of telling the bitter and irrefutable truth, I said that I only blamed fate and the misfortunes themselves. "I reckon," she replied with a smile of fury, "that you will give in your adhesion." "Indeed I shall not," was my answer; and the profound bow with which I spoke these words had the appearance of impertinent irony, although God knows I did not mean it. This was enough to fan the smothered flames into a Vesuvius in eruption. My mother bent her stormy brows upon me—upon the sixth finger of her maternal hands—and broke into the following declamation. "From the moment of my return she had prophesied, like Cassandra, that I should turn the household upside down. She did not know me for one of her own children. The intimacy of a certain friend to whom I had attached myself was ruining the family, as it had ruined me. (Poor innocent generous Signor Massimo!) If I had behaved well during my three years' service, his Excellency Quirini would certainly have rewarded me with some good military situation. As it was, my excursion into Dalmatia had been a source of burdensome expense. I had led a vicious life there ... she knew ... she did not mean to speak ... but ... enough ... and my debt of two hundred ducats to Massimo was merely a sum lost by me at basset."

Now this debt had not yet been paid, and had therefore been of no inconvenience to my family. Such extravagant accusations took me by surprise; and the reader will now perceive the reason of the accounts which I rendered in a former passage of these Memoirs. I should perhaps have flown into a fury alien to my real nature, if these reproofs had been based on truth. The wounding allusion to Signor Massimo nearly roused me, but I preserved my self-control. It was clear that my mother had been deeply prejudiced and cruelly instigated against me. The consciousness of my innocence and a sense of duty made me stand before her rigid and mute as a statue. With an impulse of affection, maternal as it seemed, my mother took my brother Almorò by the arm, and gazing at me with contempt, which strove to be compassionate, she addressed these words to him: "Come away, my dear boy; let us leave that madman to the error of his ways!" Then she turned her back and led him from the room, as though she were saving an innocent creature from some fearful danger.

Convinced by this tragi-comedy that I was the victim of a family cabal, I saw no other course open but to resume my commission as a cadet of cavalry. I left my room, went downstairs, and found all the family (except my father) assembled in commotion, listening to the commiserations of their usual friends enraged against me. It had been proclaimed aloud that I had called them all thieves, retorted against my mother with scandalous and impious audacity, and betrayed my determination to make myself the tyrant of the household. Even my three sisters, who had urged me into opposition, showed themselves sulkily scornful; and though I might have exposed them before the whole company, I did not deign to do so. Confirmed in my resolve to leave Venice for Dalmatia, I buckled on my sword, wasted no words about my intention, and repaired to the Riva dei Schiavoni, to see if I could find a ship for Zara. There I discovered that a trabacolo would set sail in four or five days. The captain was a certain Bernetich. I took down his name, and, wrapped up in my own dark thoughts, spent all that day in exile, wandering far from home.

On my return, I noticed that, though everybody wore a crabbed face against me, something had happened to their satisfaction. Signor Zini, it

appeared, was willing to execute the contract without requiring my consent. I did not know that my brother Francesco had left a power of attorney to act for him in Gasparo's hands. With voices of triumph they all exclaimed together that the great sacrifice was to be solemnly and legally performed next day. I did not care to inquire how things had been brought to this conclusion; but putting on as cheerful a face as possible, I went to keep my poor father company as usual for a few hours in the evening.

It will be as well at this point to describe the topography of our house. It was originally built for two separate residences, with double entrances upon the street and water-side, two staircases and two cisterns. At the time when it was planned, the Gozzis formed two families, which were afterwards reduced to one. We occupied the lower floor and some apartments in the highest storey. The second floor was let for 150 ducats a year to an honest iron-monger called Uccelli; but this portion of the mansion had also been sold upon my father's life, by one of those contracts which were only too frequent in our family, for the sum of 1200 ducats to his Excellency the Procuratore Sagredo.

I did all in my power to avoid the least allusion to the painful scenes of the preceding day; but my dear father kept gazing earnestly at me, and shedding tears from time to time. In vain I tried to inspire him with happier thoughts. Would that I could banish all recollection of that night, which was one of the most sombre, the most painful, in the whole course of my existence. Paralysed and dumb for seven long years, he yet retained his mental faculties in their full vigour. Summoning all his force, by signs and stammerings and tears, he made it only too clear how much he suffered from the miserable straits to which the family had been reduced. He also continued to express his sympathy with me for my dislike to sign the projected contract. To my surprise and grief, he intimated that I had only a brief time to wait; his swift approaching death would restore to us the upper dwelling, which had been sold upon his life, and which was much better than the one we occupied. This inarticulate but eloquent discourse ended in a flood of tears. Deeply moved to the bottom of my heart, I strove to tranquillise his mind, and direct his thoughts from such afflicting topics.

I perceived that no pains had been spared to make me odious in my father's eyes, and that this had been done without the least regard for his infirmity. Yet I did not attempt to justify my conduct, and said nothing about my firm resolve to leave home. His departure for Friuli had been fixed on the third day after this fatal evening, and I mentally decided to set out for Dalmatia two days later on. My assumed cheerfulness, and the merry turn I gave to all those dismal subjects of reflection, seemed to tranquillise him. Then he tried to lift himself from his arm-chair, as though to get to bed. I helped to raise him, but he tottered more than usual, and sank with his knees toward the ground. I took him in my arms to keep him from falling. Agonising moment! It was clear that a last stroke of apoplexy was carrying away my father from my arms. In a loud voice and with perfect articulation he pronounced the words: "I am dying!" They fell like lead upon my heart, with such cruel force that I nearly dropped. My mother, who was present, fled from the room. I called aloud for aid. Servants hurried in; one of these I dispatched for medical assistance, while the others helped me to place my poor dear father, now quite incapable of any movement, on his bed. A physician, Doctor Bonariva by name, had him bled at once. But nothing could be done to save his life. Assisted by Don Pietro Pighetti, now Canon of S. Marco, in the last religious duties of our creed, he displayed all the signs of Christian resignation and intelligence; and after eight hours of oppression, toilsome suffering, and the pangs of death, my unhappy parent closed his eyes upon the vast obscurity in which his family was plunged.

XIX.

My attempts at pacification defeated.—Useless philosophical reflections.—A terrible domestic storm begins to brew.

No sooner had my father breathed his last than my lady sister-in-law, all activity and bustle, issued from the room of mourning, and took upon her to console his sorrowing children with the convincing statement that he was the most lovely corpse which eyes of men had ever seen. This wholly unexpected statement, which had nothing of humanity, morality, or philosophy in it, and which she kept repeating and affirming upon oath for our relief, filled me then, and fills me now, with such fury, that I should be angry to think that any of my readers could laugh at it.

One disastrous thought kept breaking in upon our sorrow at this tragic moment. Am I to record it? We had neither the wherewithal to provide a decent interment for my father, nor the credit to obtain it. The habitués of the house gave words in abundance, but no pecuniary aid. I had only one friend, Massimo, my creditor, the object of my relatives' calumnies. Grief inspired me with the thought of writing to lay our difficulties before his generous mind. The special messenger by whom I sent this letter returned with a sum of money more than sufficient to defray the expenses of a becoming funeral. On receiving it, I took my brother Gasparo apart, placed the money in his hands, and told him who had given it. Then I begged him not to misinterpret what I was about to say. He was my elder, and I willingly acknowledged him to be the head of our family. He could not be blind to the deplorable condition into which we had declined. Duty required that he should take the reins with manly resolution, and should withdraw the management of our affairs from the hands of those who had brought us to utter shipwreck. My brother accepted the money and my speech as well as might have been expected from a man of his excellent disposition and superior intelligence. He admitted that he saw the necessity of a thorough economical reform, carried through with virile firmness. Some increase of income, owing to the expiration of contracts made upon my father's life, would facilitate the undertaking. He was willing to relinquish literary occupations, which were neither appreciated

nor remunerated in Italy, for thesake of being able to devote his energy and time to the administration of our common property.

I did not flatter myself that anything so much to be desired would come to pass. I knew how impossible it is for people to change their character and nature. I knew his wife's meddlesome, restless, imperious thirst for ruling—his own peaceable temperament, averse from opposition, addicted to the habits of a student. Yet I saw the necessity of taking the step I did, if only to correct the bad impression of myself, which had grown up under malevolent influences in the family.

I had no heart to follow my father to the grave, but shut myself up in my little chamber, where I gave way through three days and three nights to grief, not unmingled with remorse for having innocently helped to hasten his death. Nothing less than this tragedy was needed to cancel Signor Francesco Zini's contract.

I feel some repugnance at sitting down to write what happened at this epoch in my family. I wish that I could tell the tale without appearing to censure any of my relatives and without seeming to draw a vain-glorious picture of myself. The truth at any cost has to be reported; but I protest with emphasis, and this is also true, that I always experienced real pain when I beheld the disastrous consequences which the faults of others brought upon themselves, and that I neither took pleasure in revenge, nor cherished sentiments of ambition in doing good to my family—if indeed I did do good. The reader will be able to judge of that from the sequel of these Memoirs.

When a group of closely related persons in one household fall to quarrelling, all the causes which perpetuate faults of character and conduct begin to operate. Each member of the company is perfectly acquainted with the weak side of his neighbour, and knows exactly how to sting him to the quick. Exacerbated tempers and prejudiced minds judge everything awry, while partisans and flatterers add fuel to the fire. Zeal is misconstrued into craft and tyranny; no protestations and no arguments suffice to remove such false impressions. The torment of the hell in which one has to live blinds reason and enslaves the freedom of volition; years of unhappiness

pass by before the weapons of vindictive rage are blunted by constant acts of toleration and disinterested deeds of kindness, and the innocent are seen in their true light. To blame the doings of a family divided against itself is much the same as blaming the actions of somnambulists.

We had never used the outward demonstrations of affection, kisses and caresses, in our domestic circle. Yet we were bound together by real sentiments of friendliness and love on all sides. Unluckily the seeds of discord had already begun to germinate in our brains. Besides my mother, three brothers and three sisters, my sister-in-law was there, with her hot, headstrong, vindictive temperament, her aptitude for colouring everything to suit her own purpose, and her established dominion over the minds of my relations. During my father's long illness there had been no real head in the household. Everybody passed for master. No one learned the virtues of submission and filial obedience. Each member of the family had his own engagements, his own separate obligations, together with the passions proper to himself as a human being. There was no defect of intelligence or mental energy. But lacking a central authority which might have brought man's egotistic passions into wholesome subjection, self-love and caprice turned the individuals of the group into so many political agents, bent on achieving their own ends, without regard for the common interest. I must not omit the chronic malady under which we suffered—that predilection for poetry, which tinged all we thought and planned with romanticism. During a period of many years no records had been kept either of the income derived from our estate, or of the sales which had been made. With perfect justice each in turn denied that he had directed our affairs. In such circumstances the death of the father leaves a family exposed to direst intestine warfare; and I should be both indiscreet and inhuman if I were to lay the whole blame of what ensued upon any of the six relatives whom I have mentioned.

A young man like myself, of little more than twenty years, prone to thinking rather than to speaking, with a military air acquired abroad, when he found himself in the middle of so many working brains, and attempted to effect a total revolution, could not but raise irascibilities of all sorts and

expose himself to odious suspicions. The portrait which I mean to paint of my own physical and other qualities will perhaps reveal defects which rendered such suspicions, unjust as they are, at any rate excusable.

My mother was not so overwhelmed by the recent loss of her husband as to be unable to think of business. She demanded the repayment of her dowry, small as it was, like one who feels the coming shipwreck and seeks a skiff for his salvation. My sister-in-law, bent as usual on displaying her talent for affairs, called the brokers, Jews, and female go-betweens around her. My sisters were always conferring in secret among themselves, or with my sister-in-law, who kept promising them husbands and marriage-portions. My brother Gasparo, at the very moment when he solemnly promised to assume the reins of government, handed over the money I had got from Padua to his wife, to do as she thought best with, reserving only a few coins for his own purse. Then he relapsed into his ordinary ways of life, his literary studies, his society of wit and genius, and gave no signs of any firm intention to make himself the master.

About twenty days had passed since my father died, when I was summoned to a serious conference with my elder brother, my mother, and my sister-in-law. We seated ourselves upon four straw-bottomed rickety chairs, and my sister-in-law, with an air betokening the gravity of the occasion, moved the following resolution. Signor Massimo ought to be repaid (this, mark well, was meant to gain me over). With a view to discharging the debts we owed him, and for other urgent necessities, it would be advisable to sell the upper dwelling in our town-house for the sum of 1200 ducats on the lives of us four brothers. A purchaser was ready (possibly Signor Francesco Zini). The capital left over would enable us to put our affairs in order, and to go forward swimmingly upon a new and proper method of administration. My mother blinked approval of this fine idea. My brother declared that it was the only course left open to us. They all looked at me and waited for my assent. I did not comprehend by what right my mother and sister-in-law took part in the conference, or how my brother was not ashamed of cutting the figure he did there, and of following his wife's suggestions with such docility. A hell of squabbling

yawned before me, and I answered as coldly as I could that, so far as Signor Massimo was concerned, I could trust his generous indulgence towards a friend in difficulties, and that I did not approve of selling property upon our joint lives. Such a step seemed to me mere progress on the former road to ruin. I should prefer to let our mansion, removing the whole family to the country, where we could live for one-third of the expense, until our debts were paid and the estate was nursed into comparative prosperity.

This scandalous ultimatum, which wounded the inclinations and the self-interest of every member in the family, won me the reputation of a very Dionysius of Syracuse. Day by day, in secret conclaves, the storm against me grew and gathered strength. My brother Francesco, however, had written from Corfu that he was coming home, and I judged it prudent to await his arrival. Until I gained his support, I stood alone, hated and dreaded like a fatal comet by my kindred. To distract my mind from painful thoughts, I summoned all my mental forces, and poured forth torrents of verse and prose and bizarre fancies upon paper. All through my long and troubled life I have drawn relief from two main sources. One is my own robust and democratic bent of mind. The other is my aptitude for studying human nature and for writing. I may truly say that the exercise of fancy and the art of composition have been to my mental pains what opiates are to physical torments.

XX.

We plunge from bad to worse, deeper and deeper into the mire.

When my brother Francesco arrived from the Levant, I explained to him the state of our affairs, and my own wishes with regard to their administration. We both decided that he should repair to Friuli, and undertake the management of our estates there. Gasparo was to remain titular head of the family, while Francesco received rents, kept strict accounts, and provided for the common household. Meanwhile we begged our mother to charge herself with certain domestic duties, and our sister-in-law with certain others, hoping by this apportionment of officers to introduce harmony and order into the establishment. My sister-in-law displayed a really exemplary resignation, merely expressing her desire that, at this juncture, the account-book of expenditure which she had kept for some years past should be signed by her husband and his three brothers, in token of approval and in discharge to her of all pecuniary obligations.

I strove to make her understand that there was no need for such a receipt in form; nobody would dream of calling her to account, and we were all very grateful for her services. She would not listen to my arguments, but insisted on our signing a certain notebook scrawled with cabalistic characters and numbers. Francesco observed that we might safely sign, for the sake of peace and quiet. Having entered our family without a farthing, accompanied by her father and mother, whom we had supported for many years and buried at our own charges, she was incapable of making claims on the estate. To this he added that he had consulted lawyers, and that he was quite convinced of the propriety of yielding to her wishes.

The sequel of this history will show that his reasoning, though plausible enough, was faulty, and that the policy he recommended led to further complications. Gasparo and Almorò had already signed; Francesco was prepared to follow suit; I did not care to take the odium of standing out alone. Accordingly, four signatures were generously appended to the mass of undecipherable hieroglyphics, without any attempt on our part to examine the accounts, which by this act we formally accepted.

Francesco set off for Friuli, after promising to maintain a detailed correspondence with Gasparo on the state and management of our farms there, and not to let himself be wheedled out of money or produce at the demand of every one and anybody. I did not then know what a worthless coadjutor I had summoned to support my policy. Without the least intention to defraud, he was governed by an insect's blind instinct for his own particular advantage. Under a compliant exterior, he concealed the subtlety of a diplomatist. His sole aim was to temporise and make concessions, with the view of bringing matters to a rupture and of obtaining his own share in the division of our common patrimony. This end he pursued in secrecy and silence, without reflecting on his duties to the family, or the position of our three unmarried sisters, and the discords which his pursuit of self-interest was bound to foment.

What followed after his departure for Friuli seemed conclusively to prove that a plan had been laid to drive him to the Levant and me to Dalmatia by involving us in embarrassments of all sorts. I accuse nobody; the heated passions which raged round us, and the injuries from which I suffered, deserve compassion more than blame.

Scarcely a day passed without letters being sent from Venice, begging my brother to dispatch provisions or money on various pretences. He complied with every application, whether it bore the name of Gasparo or of my mother or my sister-in-law. In the course of some seven months he had exhausted the whole harvest of that year, without asking for accounts or disputing the claims made upon the property he managed. In like manner the profits of certain houses in Venice, and of some farms at Bergamo and Vicenza, amounting to 800 ducats, had been dissipated. When letters still kept coming, demanding supplies and setting forth our urgent needs, my brother could only answer that there was nothing left to send. It was vain to inquire how the casks of wine and sacks of corn and bags of cash had vanished. Everybody had taken something to defray his own particular expenses. One said, "I got only so much;" another, "I got so much; I did this, and I did that." Gasparo knew less than anybody how matters had been managed, and had kept no account of the least article. The conclusion

arrived at was that we must all die of hunger unless we sold some piece of the estate upon our joint lives.

"Ora incomencian le dolenti note."

"And now begins the Iliad of our woes."

XXI.

My attitude of patient calm is useless.—Volcanic eruptions, machinations, tragi-comic civil wars within our household.

At this point I resolved to step forth boldly and to take the whole weight of our affairs upon my shoulders, without troubling my head about being called a tyrant and disturber of domestic peace. I proclaimed aloud that the family must retire for some time into the country and economise. Nothing would induce me to consent to sales or mortgages. Then I began to contract debts on my own account, and to part with my personal trifles for the support of the household. I soon saw that it was impossible in this way to keep fifteen people, servants included, at Venice. Whenever I insisted upon the necessity of leaving for the country, all the women rose in revolt, and turned their backs without a word of answer. Our dining-table became the scene of daily quarrels, sullen faces, surly glances, biting speeches. I was deeply grieved to observe that a final division of the estate was drawing nearer and nearer. To avert this catastrophe seemed impracticable, and I reflected gloomily upon the condition to which my brother Gasparo would be reduced, with a wife and five children to support upon the fourth part of our encumbered property. Meanwhile I could not blame him except for his incurable indolence and absolute immersion in studies for which I shared his weakness.

Among the habitués of the house, none of them friends of mine, were certain lawyers. I noticed that these gentlemen had frequent conferences with the ladies of the family who ruled my brother. They were clearly plotting against me, and seeking means to set the machinery of the law in movement in order to hamper my free action. There was also a lady to whom the female members of my family paid visits every evening. She was the Countess Elisabetta Ghellini of Vicenza, widow of the patrician Barbarigo Balbi, who died some years before this epoch, leaving her the mother of an only son. It is exceedingly rare to find a lady endowed with the excellent qualities of heart and head which she possessed in a supreme degree. About forty years of age, infirm of health, and exposed to constant litigation through various claims advanced against her moderate estates,

she bore the trials of life with steady courage and constant trust in Heaven. Her chief interest was the education of her son, a boy of eight or nine, for whom she had provided masters, while she herself instilled into his mind the principles of sound religion and morality. Gifted with a lively intellect, and fond of literature, she spent a large part of the day in reading poetry, and opened her house to a society composed mainly of persons who had suffered in the battles of life. Her extreme sympathy for the afflicted led her to despoil herself with admirable intrepidity, and to bestow on others what was needed for her own support. This compassionate and pious lady had for her adviser and advocate in the numerous lawsuits to which she was condemned, the celebrated Conte Francesco Santorini.

It will appear from the sequel that this digression upon the Countess Ghellini was needed to explain an important passage in my life. Amid the din and squabbles of our home, I used at times to catch fragments of the panegyrics poured forth by my female relatives and Gasparo upon this lady, and heard them rehearse the sonnets which they intended to recite in her honour, or to offer for her recreation. Such was the common custom at that period, observed by poets in the houses they frequented. I speedily divined that a plot was in process of formation to secure the assistance of a very famous advocate against me. Trusting this intuition, I resolved to introduce myself, although I had received no invitation, to the lady whom my enemies so warmly praised.

She received me, and asked who I might be. On giving my name, the noble and yet kindly distance of her manner changed suddenly to sternness. A few phrases which I thought it right to utter about her interest in my relatives increased this expression of reserve; and she began to speak as follows, with the happy choice of words which was peculiar to her: "Sir, I am a poor woman as regards the wealth of this life, but by the grace of God I am rich in the possession of good sentiments and a sound education. Your family is cultivated, and deserves to meet with kindly feeling and esteem from all the world. It is a pity that such a family should be annoyed and brought to sorrow by a certain individual bound to it by ties of blood, duty, and respect. A mother of very noble birth treated with contempt, sisters

domineered over, persons of merit regarded with hatred—all kinds of extravagances and injustice—such things dishonour the individual of whom I speak." This preamble made me feel inclined to bow myself out of the room in silence, since I am by nature far from prone to justify my innocence; but politeness and a fear that a certain famous advocate, if prejudiced against me, might upset my plans, kept me where I was. I suffered, however, keenly from the barbarous picture which had been presented to me, and began to plead in self-defence. She interrupted me by saying that she did not believe me to be entirely bad-hearted, and that if I ceased to follow the counsels of a certain friend of mine, I might become a rational and right-feeling young man. So then, here was Signor Massimo once more made a scape-goat—the friend who had assisted me in Dalmatia, succoured my family in our distress, and who still remained our uncomplaining creditor. The impropriety of this attack stung me so sharply that I could not hold my tongue. I had been treated as a knave and fool without losing patience; but never in my life have I heard my friends insulted without resenting the injustice.

I told the lady, knitting my brows and speaking seriously, that she was bound to listen to me: unless, as I thought not, she was indifferent to equity. Prejudice, I said, is a very unjust judge, and I did not wish her to fall into that category. Then I entered into a candid narration of our family affairs. I described the ill results of reckless mal-administration. I related what had already happened and was sure to happen, what I wanted, how I was opposed, my honourable intentions, the plots and schemes to thwart me, the services rendered by my friend and his guiltlessness of any machinations. I could see that she was both surprised and penetrated by my reasoning. Just at this point Conte Francesco Santorini entered the apartment, tired and drowsy. We exchanged greetings, and the lady spoke to him in this way: "Count, you were quite right to doubt about the Gozzi. This gentleman has put a very different face upon the matter, and I know not what to think." The Count sank sleepily into a chair, murmuring: "Did I not tell you that you ought to hear both sides? The chatter of women, heated brains" ... And having said these words, he subsided into slumber.

I begged this noble lady to continue her protection to our family, and to receive the visits which I hoped to pay her; if she sought to help us, she could do so by allaying the fever which was burning in so many irritated bosoms. For my part, I cultivated her friendship through many long years, until death forced me to deplore the loss of one whom I esteemed and reverenced. My relatives, on the other hand, gradually relaxed in their attentions, ceased to visit her, and changed their eulogistic sonnets into petty satires.

XXII.

The dogs of the law are let loose on me by my family.—It is impossible to avoid a separation.

As time went on, my steady intention to remove our family into the country, and my other plans of reform, roused my domestic antagonists to various pettifogging stratagems. The black-robed seedy myrmidons of the courts began to haunt our dwelling, taking inventories of every nail on the pretext of my mother's dowry, delivering demands in form from my three sisters for maintenance and marriage portions, presenting bills for drapery and jewels furnished by a company of merchants to the tune of 1500 ducats, and suing on the part of my two brothers-in-law for some 4000 ducats owed to them. Little creditors of all descriptions rose in swarms around us; and what was still more astounding, my sister-in-law advanced a claim of 900 ducats, due to her, she said, upon the statement of accounts which we had signed so negligently. One would have thought the myrmidons and ban-dogs of the law had been unleashed by hunters bent on driving a wild beast from his lair; while the satisfaction and triumph depicted on the faces of my relatives showed too clearly who were the real authors of this legal persecution.

I bore the brunt of these attacks with my habitual philosophy of laughter, drew closer to my brother Almorò, and informed Francesco by letter of what was being conspired against us. Count Francesco Santorini helped me at this pinch with excellent advice. Under his direction I took the following measures. Francesco received instructions to hold fast by every rood of our Friulian property, and to send me copies of any writs which might be served upon him there. I recognised my mother's dowry, and offered annual payments to the merchants and my brothers-in-law. To my sisters I replied in writing that their maintenance should be duly attended to, but that it was impossible to create marriage portions for them under the conditions of entail to which the estate was subjected. With regard to the monstrous claims advanced by my sister-in-law, I flatly denied their validity until they had been submitted to a court of justice. Then I proceeded to meet the current expenditure of our establishment as well as I

was able, while waiting for the time of harvest; and all this I did without mooting the question of Gasparo's separation from our brotherhood, in the hope that little by little things would settle down in peace and quietness. Vain and idle expectation! My reforms, by cutting at the root of vested interests, and checking the arbitrary sway of Heaven knows whom, merely fanned the flames of rage which burned against me. In a private memorial, addressed to my mother, brother, sister-in-law, and sisters, I finally explained the impossibility of supporting the family any longer at Venice, exposed as I was to annoying and expensive litigation with the very persons who ate and drank at the same table. I might just as well have talked to images. Writs issued by my mother, my sister-in-law, my sisters, fell in showers. Slights and insults thickened daily. Our common table had become a pit of hell, worthy to be sung by Dante. To such a state of misery had irrational dissensions brought a set of relatives who really loved each other.

In order to shelter Almorò and myself from the wordy missiles which fell like hail all dinner-time, I had a little table laid for us two in a separate apartment. The covers were removed with rudeness, on the pretext that the linen, plates, dishes, &c., belonged to my mother's dowry, and that if I wanted such furniture I must buy it. Pushed in this way to extremities, I decided to leave a house which had become for me a hell on earth. Perhaps it was impolitic to take this step. But I could not stand these petty persecutions longer. Before quitting the infernal regions, I begged permission from my mother to take away the beds in which my brother Almorò and I enjoyed our troubled slumbers, offering to pay their price to the credit of her dowry. She replied with a sardonic smile of discontent that she could not grant my request, since the beds were needed by the family. I accepted this refusal with hilarity.

"E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle."

"And thence we issued to review the stars."

XXIII.

Calumnious reports, negotiations, a legal partition of our family estate, tranquillity sought in vain.

I had hardly settled down with my brother Almorò in the remote quarter of S. Caterina, where lodgings are cheap in proportion to their inconvenience and discomfort, before the whole town began to talk about our doings. Three of the brothers Gozzi, it was rumoured, had laid violent hands upon the family estate; their eldest brother with his wife and five children, their three unmarried sisters, and their mother, a Venetian noblewoman worthy of all respect, had been plunged in tears and indigence by the barbarous inhumanity of these unnatural monsters. The hovel I had hired, and where I suffocated with Almorò in the smoke of a miserable kitchen, ill-furnished and waited on by an old beldame called Jacopa, was besieged by the myrmidons of the law. Everything was done to dislodge me from the city, and to make me abandon the line of action on which I had resolved. Democritus and my innocence came to my aid; and I determined to stand firm with silent and passive resistance.

In these painful circumstances I heard to my great sorrow that my brother's wife had persuaded him to become the lessee of the theatre of S. Angelo at Venice. Her romantic turn of fancy, together with her love of domination, made her conceive wild hopes of profit from this scheme. A company of actors were engaged at fixed salaries; and she was to play the part of controller, purse-holder, and stage-manager for the troupe at Venice and on the mainland. Moved by pity for my brother and his innocent children, I did everything I could, without appearing personally in the matter, to dissuade this hot-headed woman from so perilous an enterprise. She repelled all such attempts with scorn, being firmly convinced that she would gain a fortune and make her brothers-in-law bite their nails with envy.

I saw that the division of our patrimony could no longer be postponed, and civilly intimated to Gasparo that the time was come for taking this supreme step. Articles were accordingly drawn up, whereby the several parcels of our estate in Friuli, Venice, Bergamo, and Vicenza were partitioned into

four lots. Provision was made for the repayment of my mother's dowry and for the proper maintenance of my three sisters, all of whom elected to reside with Gasparo. A fund was formed for the liquidation of debts, the charge of which devolved on me. I undertook to render an annual report of this operation, showing how I had bestowed the monies in my hands as trustee for the family. Nothing was fixed about my sister-in-law's claims for reimbursement; but it will be seen that when her theatrical speculation proved a ruinous failure, I had to take these also into account. Gasparo expressed a wish to obtain the upper dwelling in our mansion as part of his share. The lower dwelling was conceded to Francesco, Almorò and myself. To my mother and sisters we offered the hospitality of sons and brothers, in case at any time they should repent of their decision to abide with Gasparo.

It might be imagined that, while these negotiations were in progress, I had no time to spend on literary occupations. Nothing could be further from the fact. I found in them my solace and distraction, pouring forth multitudes of compositions, for the most part humorous and alien to the cares which weighed upon my mind. The course of my Memoirs will bring to light many curious incidents which these literary pastimes occasioned, and the narration of which will prove, I hope, far from saddening to my readers.

XXIV.

I enter on a period of toilsome litigation, and become acquainted with Venetian lawyers.

I should have been an arrant fool had I flattered myself with the hope that this partition would introduce the olive-branch of peace into our midst. On the contrary, I looked forward, and with justice, to all kinds of coming troubles. Two-thirds of the estate were saved from extravagant administration by the process; but the minds of Gasparo's family had been almost incurably embittered by the same cause. When I wanted to lay my hands upon our documents, in order to study the nature of various entails and trusts under which the estates were settled, I found that all these papers had been sold out of spite. Who had done this I did not learn, but I was informed in great secrecy by a servant-maid that they had been sold to a certain pork-butcher. I repaired immediately to his shop, and was only just in time to repurchase some abstracts and wills, which had not yet been used to wrap up sausages. Then I set to work in the cabinets of notaries and advocates and in the public archives, following the scent afforded by my recovered papers. More than eighty bulky suits in my own handwriting remain to show how patiently I studied the rights and claims of our estate, and now I prepared myself for the task of laying these before the courts.

At this epoch I made acquaintance with the celebrated pleader, Antonio Testa, under whose direction and advice I embarked upon a series of litigations which kept me fully occupied for eighteen years, and in the course of which I became acquainted with the men who haunt our palace of justice, and learned the chicaneries of legal warfare. Inveterate abuses, introduced in the remote past, and complicated by the ingenuity of lawyers through successive generations (most of them men of subtle brains, some of them devoid of moral rectitude), have been built up into a system of pleading as false as it is firmly grounded and imbued with ineradicable insincerity. This system consists, for the most part, of quibbling upon side-issues, throwing dust in the eyes of judges, cavilling, misrepresenting, taking advantage of technical errors, doing everything in short to gain a

cause by indirect means. And from this false system neither honourable nor dishonest advocates are able to depart.

In justice to the legal profession, I must, however, say that I found many practicians who combined the gifts of eloquence and intellectual fervour with urbanity, cordiality, prudence, and disinterested zeal. Outside the vicious circle of their system they were men of loyalty and honour. Among these I ought to pay a particular tribute to my friendly counsel and defender, Signor Testa. Knowing my circumstances and my upright motives, he refused to take the fees which were his due, and not unfrequently opened his purse to me at a pinch in my necessities. I have never met with a lawyer more quick at seizing the strong and weak points of a case, more rapid in his analysis of piles of documents, more sagacious in divining the probable issue of a suit, or more acute in calculating the mental powers, the bias, and the equity of judges. Time and the circumstances of our several lives have drawn us somewhat apart. But nothing can diminish the feeling of deep gratitude which I shall always cherish for one who helped to heal the distractions and to improve the fallen fortunes of my family.

The final result of eight or nine tedious lawsuits, carried through with the assistance of Signor Testa, was that I received several parcels of our estates in Friuli, Vicenza, Bergamo, and Venice, which had been alienated by fraudulent evasions of entail. Meanwhile I found time to visit my mother and Gasparo's family. The latter were busily engaged in concocting and translating plays for my brother's theatre. These visits, paid with cordiality and frankness on my side, were usually the occasions of requests for money on my mother's. She begged with maternal dignity for little loans. I complied to the best of my ability, and forgot to remind her of her debts. My sister-in-law forced herself to treat me with an affectation of flattery. My sisters looked upon me with real affection, checked in its expression by I know not what untoward influence. My brother accepted me with philosophical indifference.

XXV.

A collision with my brother's family, due to old grudges and to present needs.—They make me a married man without my having taken a wife.

My brother Gasparo's income, derived from his portion of the family estates, from the interest on my mother's dowry and the annual allowance for my sisters' maintenance, together with the profits of his writing and of certain literary services rendered to his Excellency Marco Foscarini, late Doge of glorious memory, amounted to about 1500 ducats, free of all debts and obligations. This was certainly nothing very splendid; but neither would the wealth of Crœsus have been anything to boast of in the hands of an extravagant family, ruled only by the caprice of its component members.

I have mentioned above that Gasparo obtained the upper dwelling in our house at Venice, which was let for 150 ducats, while we three brothers received the lower dwelling, at that time inhabited by him. Some few months were allowed him to remove from the one apartment to the other. But no sooner had he entered into legal possession of his new habitation than he, or perhaps I ought to say his wife, let it again to the noble lady Ginevra Loredan Zeno. She paid the rent of several years in advance, and installed herself in Gasparo's part of the mansion, while he, with all his family, continued to inhabit our part with the utmost sang-froid, taking no further heed of the engagement he was under to us three brothers. Now we had resolved to put this tenement into good repair and to let it for some years, until the debts of the estate had been discharged and we could go to live in it at peace. With this view we had already found a tenant, who was no other than the Contessa Ghellini Balbi. She, on her side, had given up her old apartment, which was already let in advance to other tenants by her landlord. Time went on, and I saw no sign of our house being abandoned to our use, according to the family agreement. It appeared only too clearly that the partition I had demanded, my resolve to pay the family debts out of income without resorting to sale or mortgage, and my application to the courts for annulment of contracts made during my

father's lifetime, were all of them unpardonable offences in the eyes of those who had made the debts, the mortgages, the contracts.

I began by gently asking for the house which was our portion, seeing that we had resigned the upper dwelling to our brother at his particular request. No answer reached me; but rumours ran around the city that I was now attempting to turn my old mother, my three marriageable sisters, my brother, his wife, and five innocent children into the streets. At this point I expected that one of those interminable lawsuits, which are the dishonour of the legal profession, but which never lack advocates to keep them going, would be commenced against me. In order to lend colour and substance to their false report, my relatives determined to give me a wife without consulting me. It was impossible to fix definite calumnies upon Mme. Ghellini Balbi, because of her exemplary life and conspicuous piety. But my daily visits to her house offered a pretext for injurious insinuations; and I soon heard it announced that I was secretly married to this lady, and that all my plots had only this one end in view. Such gossip did me honour in some respects. Yet I was grieved that a lady of excellent conduct, devoted to her only son, and old enough to be my mother, should be made the butt of malignant animosity.

Without wasting time or breath in contradicting these unjust and lying vociferations of my private enemies, I made my mind up to obtain possession of my house by all the straightforward means in my power. Accordingly I managed to meet my brother apart from the din of women, and laid a clear statement before him of my obligations to Mme. Ghellini Balbi (who ran the risk of remaining without a roof to shelter her) and of my well-founded rights which were being iniquitously set at nought. The poor fellow seemed on the point of weeping. His gestures reminded me of patient Job, while he protested that he had nothing whatever to do with a state of affairs the injustice of which he frankly admitted. He added that he had to put up with infernal clamourings—that he was called a chicken-hearted poltroon, a father without entrails for his offspring—in short, that he was neither obeyed nor listened to at home. Then, to convince me that it was not he who opposed my entrance into our part of the house, he took a

pen and wrote and signed a declaration to the effect that he fully acknowledged the title of his brothers Francesco, Carlo, and Almorò, and that he would never interfere to prevent our taking possession of our lawful property.

All these steps proved fruitless. Time pressed, and I found myself obliged to bring my cause before a judge, who chanced to be his Excellency Count Galean Angarano, at that time Avvogador del Comune. What was my astonishment when I saw my sister-in-law, like an advocate in petticoats, at the head of my mother and my sisters, with my hen-pecked brother to bring up the rear, come marching into court. I will not dwell upon this too too comic scene—

"For my Thalia takes no thought to sing."

The judge recognised that my claims were indisputable. But before pronouncing sentence in my favour he strove to settle matters by mediation. Conferences took place; first between the bench and his Excellency the Senator Daniele Reniero, who acted for Mme. Ghellini Balbi; then between the Senator and my sister-in-law, who was the rock and stone of our vexation. I was curious to know the upshot of these whispered confabulations. At length Senator Reniero came up and told me that if I was willing to disburse sixty ducats, which my sister-in-law had pressing need of, I might enter at once into possession of the house without a verdict from the bench. Such a verdict would be appealed against and would certainly lead to indescribable delays. I thanked his Excellency for suggesting this arrangement. My sister-in-law received her ducats, and we obtained our dwelling. I had it straightway put into repair, for it looked as though it had sustained a siege. Mme. Balbi went at once to live there with a lease of five years only, while I retired with my brothers into a cheap house, which I had taken at S. Ubaldo and furnished with strict regard to economy. Here I arranged for Almorò's tuition by an excellent ecclesiastic. For my own part, I went on paying off debts, rebuilding such of our houses as needed it, prosecuting my lawsuits, and amusing myself in leisure hours with literature.

XXVI.

A serious event, depicting the character of my uncle, the Senator Almorò Cesare Tiepolo.

A very long time had elapsed since I visited my maternal uncle, the Senator Almorò Cesare Tiepolo. I imagined that my mother and the persons about her, who were assiduous in paying court to him from motives wholly alien to my nature, might have prejudiced the good old man against me. Still I did not choose to undergo the mortification of defending myself, especially as I could only do so by accusing those for whom at the bottom of my heart I felt both love and reverence. I knew, moreover, that our Venetian patricians, though just and dispassionate upon the bench in their capacity of judges, were singularly liable to be influenced by what they heard in private at their own homes from suitors or clients, and that it was extremely difficult to remove impressions which had once been made upon their minds. This weakness I have always ascribed to their amiability, and have regarded the nobles of our Republic as really adorable for qualities of the heart, in spite of the sentimental bias I have mentioned.

My habitual taciturnity and solitary ways of life, my neglect of petty social duties, my habit of asking and desiring nothing from fortune, together with the freedom of my pen, might have won me formidable enemies, if any such had deigned to look down upon a person of so little consequence as I am.

My wise and good uncle, who was suffering from a dropsy in the chest, and not far from death's door, let me know that he should like to see me. I went at once to his house; and was bidden to take a seat at his bedside. He began to complain gently that I had so long neglected to visit him. I answered frankly that I had stayed away through fear of his having been wrongfully prejudiced against me, and also because I heard that he was angry with me, perhaps on account of my prolonged absence. "If I complained," he said, "that my sister and your mother was being exposed to ill-treatment and affronts, this was no reason why you should suspend your visits." "I see," I replied, "that my suspicions and my fears are not without foundation. But this is not the proper time to trouble you with

lengthy narratives in self-defence. Your health is a matter of concern to me for your sake and for my own. I have tried everything in my power to avert discords and divisions, even to the point of doing violence to my naturally pacific temper. I feel sure, when you recover, as I hope you will with all my heart, that I shall make it clear to you that I have hurt nobody and attacked nobody, and that I am only doing all I can to benefit our family, without the least regard for my mere private interest; nay, that I am bearing the burden of enormous cares and weighty business, not to speak of exposing myself to risks and dangers, for the common good."

He was just, prudent, a philosopher, and ill. Therefore he made no immediate answer. I renewed my daily visits, and had the satisfaction of hearing afterwards that the venerable old man expressed himself in these words to my mother: "Believe me, your son Carlo is a good young fellow."

His illness kept increasing, and I perceived, by the persons whom he urged to visit him, that he was anxious to be reconciled with all of his acquaintances who might be under the impression that he bore a grudge against them. A certain Frate Bernardo of the Gesuati, who then passed for a learned ecclesiastic, acted as his spiritual director, and used to read at his request portions of the Holy Scriptures aloud to him. Observing his indifference upon the point of death, this excellent friar was moved to say: "I do not want you to prepare yourself for death too much like a philosopher."

Though he had filled important posts in the Government, and had frequently sat as member of the sublime Council of Ten, he was never heard, throughout his last illness, to utter the least word regarding the tribunals of justice or the state.

During his whole lifetime he had taken delight in gathering company around his hospitable board, and seeing the table furnished with good cheer, especially with the choicest kinds of fish. Now that he was sick unto death, and could only take some spoonfuls of such broth as are administered to dying persons, he still would have the table served as formerly for guests. Every morning he used to send for one of his gondoliers, and inquire what sorts of fine fish were that day in the market.

On receiving the man's report, he commented in praise or blame, as this might be, upon the season and the quality of the fishes for sale, and the various waters in which they had been caught. After settling these affairs of the household, he proceeded to religious exercises, grave discourses with his spiritual director, and prayers of fervent piety. I ought further to testify that he breathed his last in the spirit of a great man, philosophically Christian, and that his example inspired me with the desire to imitate his end.

He possessed the virtue of patience in the highest degree. No one ever saw his temper stirred by any untoward accident which happened to him. In order to give a single instance of his intrepid constancy, I will relate an event which happened some years before his death. One evening, while alighting from his gondola, he caught his foot in the long and ample robes of the patrician mantle, and was upon the point of falling into the canal. The gondolier, in his anxiety to catch and keep him up, let the oar go which he was holding in his hands. The oar fell with violence upon the right arm of his master, and broke it. The gondolier was not aware of what had happened; and my uncle, though he knew very well, uttered no complaint. He ascended the stairs, and when he reached his apartment, the valet came forward to help him off, as usual, with his cloak. Then at last he remarked with imperturbable long-suffering: "Pull gently, for my right arm is in two pieces." The uproar among the servants, who were greatly attached to him, was tremendous. The gondolier ran up, weeping bitterly and begging to be pardoned. He bade them all be calm, and said to the man: "You did me harm when you were meaning to do me good. What fault have you committed, which requires my pardon?" After this he had to lie forty days in bed without altering his position, at the surgeon's orders; yet he never uttered a syllable that betrayed any impatience. I could relate a number of such traits of character, but they have nothing to do with the Memoirs of my life.

After his death, which I felt very deeply, as every one could see, a certain Signor Giovannantonio Guseò came to call on me. This man practised as notary, land-surveyor, advocate, registrar, and judge in certain courts of

Friuli. He was known to be more wily than the old Greek Sinon, and had assisted my brother's wife in procuring the alienation of certain portions of our entailed estates. Now he suggested that it would do me great honour, as a sign of affectionate remembrance, if I were to contribute ten sacks of flour and two casks of wine annually to my mother, in addition to her dowry. I saw at once from whom this proposal emanated, and admired the address with which the proper moment had been chosen for working on my feelings. Such artifices, however, were repugnant to my nature; and changing my tone from sadness to cold reserve, I replied to the following effect. "I thought my mother's preference for my brother Gasparo's family unfortunate; my own house was always open to her, and here she would be revered and loved by three respectful sons. Here she would enjoy her yearly maintenance, and the income of her dowry. By refusing our offer, she only affronted us. By accepting it, she would confer a benefit on Gasparo, the number of whose family would be diminished. Meanwhile, the obligation I was under of reducing debts, repairing buildings on the property, and reclaiming parts of the entailed estates, rendered it impossible that I should weaken the insufficient resources at my command by any such donation as Signor Guseò had proposed." This answer set tongues wagging again, and revived the opinion that I was a downright Phalaris.

The estate of my uncle Tiepolo had gained nothing by his regency of Zante and by other lucrative appointments. The probity of his character did not suffer him to enrich himself at the expense of the State. Accordingly, he provided by will that all his debts should be paid off, appending a schedule of his creditors. The residue he bequeathed to his sister Girolama for her lifetime, with reversion to my mother. On the same sad occasion my mother inherited a portion of some landed property in Friuli, which had belonged to an old aunt Tiepolo, who died intestate. This, united to her dowry, formed a sufficient fund for her establishment.

My mother continued to regard me as her sixth finger, amputated without any suffering on her part. Of course she had the right to dispose of her affections as she felt inclined, and to keep her tender heart open for the

persons who possessed her favour. It was my misfortune not to possess it, but I did not envy those who had that privilege; and I can assure my readers that what caused me the greatest annoyance with regard to my mother, was seeing her always without a ducat to spend according to her fancy. This state of things continued when the whole property of that branch of the Tiepolos passed into her hands upon the death of her sister Girolama, who left furniture and a considerable amount of money to my mother, jointly with my brother Gasparo and his children.

XXVII.

It is decided that I was a husband, though I had no wife.—Some anecdotes of a serious character.

An event happened which clenched the gossip of my imaginary marriage to the Contessa Ghellini Balbi. The patrician Benedetto Balbi, Canon of Padua and Abbot of Lonigo, a gentleman abundantly endowed with gifts of nature and of fortune, who was this lady's brother-in-law, had caused himself to be legally appointed sole guardian of his nephew Paolo, the widow's only son. The lad may have been about ten years old at this epoch; and his uncle resolved to separate him from his mother, and to place him in a school kept by the Somascan fathers, at San Cipriano on the island of Murano. His mother, who was tenderly devoted to her son, did not oppose his entrance into this college, but resented his being torn from the arms which had nursed and fostered him till now, as though she were a peril to his youth and had no claim to supervise his education in the school. Sharp and angry words passed; and Mme. Balbi applied to the courts, demanding to be nominated guardian together with her brother-in-law. The conflagration spread, and I, innocent as I was, found myself involved in it. With the object of strengthening his case, the Cavaliere went about the town, loudly protesting that his sister-in-law had contracted a second alliance with Count Carlo Gozzi; that she had ceased thereby to be a Balbi, and had lost all rights over the boy, who belonged to his family. I laughed, as usual, with the lady over the pertinacity of folk in thinking we were married. But my laughter was turned to seriousness, when the Cavaliere finally declared his intention to be free of legal quarrels, and to abandon all the schemes which he had formed for his nephew's advantage, leaving him entirely to his mother's authority.

Assuming a Catonian gravity, I pointed out to Mme. Balbi that she ought to waive her just claims and to stomach her natural resentment for the sake of her son. I firmly believed in my own soul that an ounce of sincere love was worth more than a hundred pounds of gold. Yet I reminded her that she was not in the position to make up to her boy for the loss of his uncle's property. This reasoning, which I regard as mere sophistry, but which the

world accepts as irrefutable, made the lady burst into a flood of tears and then exclaim: "You are right! I am a poor woman, and should be condemned by everybody, perhaps even in the future by my own son. I am ready to sacrifice my rights; I will bury in my breast the stirrings of maternal love, the sense of insult and of injury, all that may prove prejudicial to the interests of my adored son, on whom I am unable to confer those benefits which lie within his uncle's power. Pray do me the further kindness of undertaking to explain the unalterable decision at which I have arrived."

I praised her virtuous resolution, and reported to the noble gentleman, her brother-in-law, from whom I have always received distinguished marks of politeness, the decision she had come to. In doing so, I attempted to draw a picture of her merits, and to maintain that her feelings were not merely excusable, but worthy of the highest commendation. The Cavaliere replied with some emotion: "You must not take me for a wild beast! I mean that the boy shall be visited by his mother, and looked after in all his wants, the charge of supplying which I take for the future on myself. I am quite willing to let her bring him back from time to time to dine with her, and only stipulate that her demonstrations of tenderness shall not interfere with his education and discipline." These solemn words of covenant having been exchanged, I was the instrument of separating the boy from his mother's embraces, and of conducting him to his appointed school. His behaviour on this occasion, in which firmness blent with filial emotion, made me feel sure that he was destined to reward his mother's virtues and his uncle's benevolence with conduct worthy of the highest honours of his country. Only death, which spared neither of his relatives, and which prevented them from reaping the fruits of their respective love and kindness, defeated these prognostications. The mother died twelve, and the uncle fifteen years after the events I have narrated. Young Balbi grew up to be an ornament, by his intellectual and moral qualities, by his probity and purity of manners, by his sympathy for the oppressed, and by his thoroughly national temper, to the Venetian Republic, in the administration of which his birth opened for him a career of usefulness and honour.

XXVIII.

I should not have believed what is narrated in this chapter, if I had not seen it with my own eyes.

Family jars and discords have this effect upon embittered minds that each member, wherever the wrong may really lie, is apt to think, not only that he is in the right, but that the right is absolutely and wholly on his side. For my part, I am not altogether sure that I was justified in doing what I did, and what I have described above with perfect candour.

I was aware that the theatrical speculation into which my brother had been induced to enter had taken a bad turn, and that worse might be expected in the future. A malignant and vindictive spirit would have found some satisfaction in these circumstances. As it was, I felt sincerely sorry, and flattered myself on being therefore free from malice. In proportion as things went from bad to worse, the rancour against myself increased, as though I had been responsible for an enterprise which I had always solemnly condemned by act and word.

I kept up relations with my brother's family, wishing to maintain the links of relationship unbroken, and to explain from time to time what I was doing for the common good. In spite of these demonstrations of a kindly feeling, which I admit were never very gushing, I saw to my deep regret that the wounds caused by the partition of our patrimony had not ceased to bleed.

The youngest of my sisters, Chiara by name, induced perhaps by some presentiment of coming trouble, asked me one day to take her under the protection of us three brothers. I cordially acceded to her request, and would have done the like by my mother and our two other sisters, had they not spurned the acceptance of what they had hitherto rejected as a great misfortune.

I told this youngest of my sisters that, our mother not being under my roof, my brother Francesco occupied with the estates in Friuli, Almorò a mere boy engaged in studies, and I absorbed in legal affairs for the common interests of the family, she could not with any propriety be left to the

custody of a rough and stupid serving-woman. I therefore begged her to enter a convent for a while, until we should have changed our mode of living, and should be in a position to receive her more suitably and to take thought for her proper establishment. My sisters are neither foolish nor ill-natured. Chiara accepted my proposal, and was placed in the convent of S. Maria degli Angeli at Pordenone, as a young lady in charge of the Superior.

Any one exposed, as I was, to the rage of angry tongues, blackening me with the epithets of unjust, inhumane, tyrannical, marrying me against my will, and capable of insinuating the worst of charges against me for my guardianship of a sister, would act rightly if he took the precautions I did. Yet the precautions of the most prudent man on earth do not always bear the good results expected of them. I speak with experience derived from long study of ill-inclined men and worse-inclined women, who have invariably taken my unalterable good faith for venomous maliciousness.

I was excessively pained to observe that the bitterness created in my brother Gasparo's family by the events I have narrated remained unconquerable. It is true that they concealed, as far as possible, their grudge against me, whenever I paid them visits and treated them with brotherly good-will. This grudge, however, could not help showing itself in public; and it did so in a monstrous fashion, which I should not have credited unless I had been an eye-witness of the scandal.

My brothers and I were in the habit, during carnival-time, of frequently attending the theatre of S. Angelo, which was under the direction of my sister-in-law far rather than her husband. Amusement was less our object than the wish to support, so far as in us lay, a speculation to which we feared our brother had been sacrificed. We persuaded Mme. Ghellini Balbi to accompany us; and she entered into our designs by applauding as heartily as any of the audience.

They had given at this theatre a translation of the French comedy called Esop at the Court, which succeeded partly by the elegance of my brother's Italian version, and partly by its novelty. Rumour told us that the sequel, by the same French author, entitled Esop in the Town, was being translated

and would soon appear. We were eager to be present at the first night, to back the piece with our approval, and to witness its triumph.

A worthy fellow, who aired his eloquence at Gasparo's house and also in our own, took me apart one day, and spoke with an air of secrecy and consternation to the following effect: "You must know that the forthcoming play of Esop in the Town will contain a scene, interpolated, not translated from the original, in which you, your brothers Francesco and Almorò, and Mme. Ghellini Balbi, are held up in a cruel satire to the public scorn. Do not let my name transpire; but take means to prevent this scandal; the comedy will be represented in five days from now." I was far from disbelieving that what my friend said was the truth; yet I took care to let no sign of my belief escape me. I thanked him for the friendly interest which had prompted him to warn me, but laughed the matter off as something beyond the range of possibility. He strained every nerve to convince me, but got nothing for his pains beyond smiles and ironical protestations of gratitude. I left him there fuming with anger at my obstinate hilarity.

I kept guard over my tongue in the presence of my brothers and the lady, and made a show of great anxiety to see the new play produced upon the boards. At last the first night came, and we all provided ourselves with a convenient box for the occasion. We were disappointed to find the theatre ill-attended, and to notice that the comedy dragged. Esop at the Court had caught the public by something piquant in its chief character, by his grotesque, crook-backed figure, and by the appropriate fables which had been written with real dramatic skill for the part. Esop in the Town was no less worthy of attention, but the novelty had evaporated; it seemed a plagiarism of the former piece, and wearied the audience like a composition which has lost its salt. At length the interpolated scene, of which my friend had warned me, came on.

An ancient dame, attired in black, made her entrance, and unfolded the tale of her self-styled calamities to Esop. Pouring forth an interminable catalogue of woes, she enumerated all the lies which had been circulated against myself and Mme. Balbi at the period of our family dissensions. The ancient dame summed up by saying that she had been turned out of house

and home, together with a loving son, three daughters, a daughter-in-law, and five grandchildren, by three of her own male children, the barbarous perverted offspring of her womb. Then she appealed with tears for counsel and advice to Esop, who expressed his sympathy in a frigidly elaborated fable. The ancient dame, attired in black, was an exact image of our poor mother, who had been blinded by a touch of spite against me and by the mud-honey of her favouritism into allowing herself to be exposed in this way on a public stage for the mirth of the populace.

The scene was very long; it had nothing to do with the action of the piece, having been foisted in to gratify a private animosity. The audience, ignorant of what it meant, began to yawn; and it contributed in no small measure to the failure of the play.

While this indecent and malignant episode was dragging its slow length along, I saw Mme. Ghellini Balbi becoming momently more taciturn and out of humour, my two brothers flaming into anger and preparing for some act of violence. The shouts of laughter with which I greeted this abortion of a satire added fuel to their fire, and Francesco, spurred by martial ardour, was on the point of defying the players. He only made me laugh the louder; but I had some difficulty in persuading my companions to quench their indignation in a cup of water, and to wrap themselves around with imperturbable indifference. They obeyed me. If we had made a disturbance, we should have put the cap on our own heads. As it was, our cold behaviour snuffed out the whole episode, without awaking anybody's interest. And such will, peradventure, be the fate of these Memoirs I am writing of my life.

In after days I was glad to have laughed at this indecent exhibition. The perusal of an anecdote in Ælian confirmed my self-congratulation. It was to the following effect. "When," says he, "a firm courageous spirit is attacked before the public in quizzical caricatures and gibing insults, these trifles vanish like mist before the wind; but if they meet with a nature which is base and proud and abject all at one and the same time, they fill it with melancholy and madness, which often lead it to the grave. Take the proof of these remarks. Socrates, when he was ridiculed upon the public stage by

Aristophanes, enjoyed the fun and laughed at it. Poliagros, under the same circumstances, went mad and hanged himself."

In concluding this episode, which I leave my readers to characterise with stronger epithets than I shall use, I wish to affirm that I never have believed, or can believe, that my brother Gasparo lent his pen or his assent to the production of the scene in question.

XXIX.

A disagreeable action at law brought against me.

While busily engaged in prosecuting my many lawsuits, I was unpleasantly surprised by the revival of my sister-in-law's old claim for reimbursement of monies expended by her in the management of our affairs during my father's lifetime. This preposterous claim had long been lying dormant, and the better terms on which we were gradually coming to live together made me forget it as a chimera of the past.

My brother Gasparo's direction of the theatre of which he was the sole lessee bore such fruits as every one predicted. Instead of the pecuniary profits he had been encouraged to expect, the poor fellow was worried with vexatious and aggressive opposition, peculiarly trying to one of his gifts and temperament, but only too usual in enterprises of this kind.

Wounded pride and thirst for vengeance, together with the hideous necessity of meeting debts contracted in this unsuccessful speculation, were the causes which roused his wife to bring her alleged claims upon the family into a law-court. The defendants in this suit were myself and my two brothers Francesco and Almorò. It will be remembered that she had induced us to sign her cabalistic book of magic numbers with the sole object of freeing her from any possible pretensions upon our side. My elder brother, who had been the first to sign, in order to give a good example to his juniors, was not prosecuted by his wife.

Our legal advisers maintained, with some show of reason, that Gasparo was the real mover in this matter. For my part, knowing as I did his peaceful character, I felt certain, that though he was capable of countenancing irregularities through indolence and the desire to live a quiet life, he was incapable of stirring up litigious strife on such foundations. I was not ignorant that he had stooped to the theatrical speculation in order merely to escape from a vortex of domestic intrigues. I knew, moreover, that, after the partition of our patrimony, his wife and family had changed their residence at least six times, through restlessness, without informing him; so that he had gone to knock at empty house-doors, and had casually learned from neighbours in what quarter of the

town his flighty brood had nested last. It also reached my ears that his wife was selling property upon his life, and that he had finally been driven by the tempest of his home to take a distant lodging of two rooms, where he installed himself with his little heap of books and abandoned himself to study, seeking the peace he could not find. After all, the father of a family who flies domestic cares, only brings upon himself more carping cares than those which he has fled from. All these considerations put together enabled me to convince my counsel that Gasparo had no share in the proceedings of his wife.

In the pleadings which set forth my sister-in-law's cause, Signor Guseò, already named by me above, deposed on obviously false oath that he had been commissioned by us three brothers to examine her accounts, and that he had found her claim for reimbursement in the sum demanded to be just. To cut a long story short, our arguments upon the other side were useless. It was in vain that we expounded the inability of a woman who had entered our family without dowry, and had got the management of affairs into her hands through the indolence of its real head, to constitute herself its creditor; in vain that we denounced the collusion of one brother with his wife against the interests of three innocent brothers, who had been absent many years without burdening the estate; in vain that we showed how the father and the mother of the plaintiff had been received into our house and maintained for full fifteen years until their death, and how her relatives had been more the masters there than its legitimate owners; in vain that we brought forward the chaotic account-book, signed by us in compliance with our elder brother for the sole sake of calming troubled tempers; in vain that we pointed out figures, garbled, cancelled, altered in these precious documents; in vain that we offered to discharge sums due to creditors for money or goods rendered to the plaintiff in her administration of the family affairs. All these solid pleas were like words thrown to the winds before the impudence of two scoundrelly pettifoggers, the very scum of the Venetian law-courts, who managed to convince our sapient judges that men ought to open their eyes wide before they signed papers. From that moment until now, I have always read my letters through ten times before appending my signature.

As usual, I consoled myself by laughing over the inevitable. Nor did I dream of complaining to Francesco, who had drawn me into the affair by his desire to settle matters. He, good fellow, met my laughter with a sorry countenance, protesting that he could never have anticipated such an abominable trick of fortune.

Seven hundred ducats were passed to my sister-in-law's credit on the termination of this suit. They did my brother's family no good. Debts to comedians had eaten up the capital beforehand; and I was obliged to pay a set of hungry fellows with the consent of him and his wife. The annoyance, however, did not stop here. In order to bolster up her claim, my sister-in-law had raked together a multitude of soi-disant creditors, who pretended to have supplied money or goods to our family; and declarations signed by them, recognising her as their sole debtor, were put into court as evidence. When they found their expectations frustrated, the wasp's nest swarmed out against us three brothers, and sequestrated our house-property for payment of their alleged debts. Before I succeeded in finally shaking them off, I had to transact much tiresome business and to fight several lawsuits.

XXX.

A long and serious illness.—My recovery.—The doctors differ.—One of my sisters takes the veil.—Beginnings of literary squabbles, and other trifles.

In the midst of these annoyances, I found the time and strength to pursue my literary studies, especially in the now neglected art of poetry, and enjoyed excellent health; when suddenly, one night, a violent hemorrhage from the lungs warned me that the life of mortals hangs upon the frailest thread.

Bleeding, vegetable diet, and a frugality in food, which few, I think, are capable of continuing for as long a space of time as I can, together with my philosophical indifference to death, restored me to something like a tolerable state of health.

It seemed to me at this period that my two brothers and I, who always kept together, were in a position to settle down again into our paternal home. Mme. Ghellini Balbi, who had rented the house for more than five years, politely retired at my request, and found another habitation at S. Agostino. I furnished our ancestral nest as decently as I was able; and we were soon installed there. It was then that I invited my youngest sister to leave her convent and join us, travelling myself to Pordenone for this purpose.

Whether through weakness, or human influence, or Divine inspiration, I know not; but I found the good girl obstinate against my prayers, my anger, and my threats. She entreated with a holy stubbornness to be left in prison, to be indulged in her desire to pass her lifetime in that blessed aviary of virgins. I commanded her to come home for at least three or four months. At the end of that time, if she still persisted in her pious fanaticism, I promised to play the part of executioner at her request. She replied with a serious enthusiasm, which made me laugh, that she knew enough of the world to be experienced in its wickedness; and when I insisted, she met me with rather less than heavenly doggedness by remarking that nothing short of cutting her in pieces would make her quit the convent-gratings. Though I did not believe that this ultimatum was dictated by the angels, I bent my head in order to avoid a scandal. On

taking the veil, she received those appointments and allowances which are usually bestowed upon the brides of Christ.

Were I to fix my thoughts upon the troubles which my four married sisters have had to suffer and still suffer—and I am only too well informed about them—I should be obliged to admit that the youngest chose the better part in life. They were always in straits, always weeping, with their gentle natures and their illimitable powers of endurance. One of them died before my eyes, to my deep sorrow, only because she was a wife. Meanwhile, the nun, beloved by her sisters, placidly smiled at things which we, refined in pleasures, finding nowhere solid pleasure for our satisfaction, would call barbarous tortures, and took delight in little treats, which we philosophers, past-masters in the arts of greed, are wont to scorn and turn our backs upon. In due course she attained the highest rank of Abbess in her convent; and I believe she was more gratified with this honour than Louis XVI. with his titles of King of France and of Navarre.

Time had at length allayed the discords of our family. My two remaining sisters found husbands. My brother Gasparo obtained a post at the University of Padua, which brought him six hundred ducats a year, besides pecuniary gratifications for extraordinary services. This proves that literature is not wholly unremunerated in Venice. In addition to these emoluments, he found another way, legitimate indeed, but one which seems incredible, for accumulating the sequins so much needed after his theatrical disaster. There was not a marriage, a taking of the veil among our noble families, an election of a Doge, or procurator, or grand chancellor, without my brother being engaged to produce the panegyrics or poems which are usual on such occasions—more sought perhaps by fashion than by studious readers. The patricians made it their custom to reward him with a hundred sequins, which contributed to the splendour of their families, but did him little good, for in his hands money found wings and flew away.

These details have little to do with my Memoirs; yet they are honourable to my nation, and are not without a certain bearing on my subject. Poetical trifles, published by me in collections, found favour by some aspect of

novelty and by genial satire on contemporary fashions. Unluckily, they got me the reputation of a good poet and good writer. Accordingly, many of our lords tried to press me into the ranks of the Raccoglitori—collectors and compilers of occasional verse-books. They did not know that I had adopted for my motto that line of Berni:—

"Voleva far da se, non comandato."

"His master he would be, and no man's man."

Whenever they did me the honour to force this function on me, I civilly declined, and sent their messengers on to my brother, without, however, refusing compositions of my own, which swelled the collections, to their gain or loss as chance might have it.

I never abandoned the scheme I had formed of moving at law against the Marchese Terzi of Bergamo in a suit for the recovery of lands and rights belonging to us. But while I was engaged on the preliminary business, a fresh attack of pulmonary hemorrhage cooled my ardour. Many learned physicians whom I consulted, looked upon me as a victim of consumption, at the point of death. Beggars in the street, when they saw me pass, promised to pray for my life if I would fling them a copper. The cleverest professors of medicine at Padua prescribed ass's milk, which was tantamount to saying: "Phthisical creature, go and make your peace with Heaven!" My own doctor in ordinary, Arcadio Cappello by name, now dead—an old man, experienced, well acquainted with my constitution, and a philosopher to boot—forbade me milk as though it had been poison. "You," he said, "are suffering from a nasty malady. Yet it has not the origin, nor has it made the progress, which these eminent physicians fancy. If you let your illness prey upon your mind, you will die. If you have the strength and heart to throw aside all thoughts about it, you will recover. It has in you no other basis than a hypochondriacal habit, which you have contracted by a sedentary life of worry, business, and excessive study. Raw milk of any kind is a pure poison in your case. Live regularly, cast aside reflections on your symptoms, take horse-exercise two or three hours a day. These are your best medicines."

Marchese Terzi owes no thanks to my malady. Bloodless as I was, through what I lost by hemorrhage and venesection, my intellect enjoyed the highest qualities of penetration and acumen. Stretched out upon my bed, I had the necessary papers for my lawsuit brought to me—abstracts and wills recovered from the pork-butcher—a whole paraphernalia of documents forbidden by my doctors—and set up a scheme of proofs and arguments, so clear and so convincing that they subsequently drove my enemy to desperate measures.

These annoying relapses of my malady continued for two years and a half to fall upon me when I least expected them. They were enough to dishearten any man less stupid than myself, and make him despair of living. Contrary to the advice of several physicians, who protested with wide-open horror-stricken eyes that riding would inflame my blood and burst the arteries of my lungs, I followed the prescription of Doctor Arcadio Cappello, half-suffocated as I was with hemorrhage. He proved to be right. Regular diet, contempt for my symptoms, and horse-exercise completed my cure. It is now twenty years and more since I have been reminded that I was ever subject to this indisposition.

As I have often had occasion to remark, no business, no quarrels, no lawsuits, and no illnesses prevented me from devoting some hours every day to poetry. This being the case, when controversies arose in Venice on philology and the higher Italian literature—controversies of which I mean to render some account in the following chapters—I went on vomiting blood from my veins, and scribbling sonnets, satires, essays in defence of our great writers, treatises on style, polemics against Chiari and Goldoni and their followers. All these trifles, when I read them aloud, made my friends laugh, as well as my doctor and the surgeon who attended on me.

Before engaging in the circumstances which led to my becoming a writer for the theatre, I will wind up the history of our private affairs. First of all, I let the lawsuit with Marchese Terzi drop. My reasons were as follows:—With the best intentions in the world, and the strongest desire to reunite the scattered members of our family under one roof, I found this task impossible. My sisters married. My brothers Francesco and Almorò in

course of time took wives and begat children. My mother's inheritance of the Tiepolo property (though strictly speaking it ought to have been treated as entailed upon her sons) ran to waste in the hands of Gasparo and his wife. I had the old debts of our estate still weighing on my shoulders. It seemed to me, in this condition of affairs, best to remain a bachelor, and to devote myself to the duties I had undertaken, without ambitious projects and without assuming heavier obligations. Freed from further responsibilities to my family, whom I had loyally served in their material interests, and against none of whom I harboured any rancour, I was master of my time and could devote myself to the literary exercises which were so congenial to my temper.

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