

**LEVER
CHARLES
JAMES**

CORNELIUS O'DOWD
UPON MEN AND WOMEN
AND OTHER THINGS IN
GENERAL

Charles Lever
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Charles James Lever Cornelius O'Dowd Upon Men And Women And Other Things In General

TO JOHN ANSTER, ESQ., LL.D

My dear Anster,

If you knew how often I have thought of you as I was writing this book, – if you knew how there rose before my mind memories of long ago – of those glorious evenings with all those fine spirits, to think of whom is a triumph even with all its sadness, – and if you knew how I long to meet once more the few soldiers who survive of that “old guard,” – you would see how naturally I dedicate my volume to him who was the best of us. Accept it, I beg you, as a token of recollection and regard from your affectionate friend,

CORNELIUS O'DOWD.

Lago Maggiore, July 20, 1864.

NOTICE

AMiable AND ACCOMPLISHED READER,

As I have very little to say for myself that is not said in some of my opening pages, there is no need that I should delay you on the threshold.

You will learn, if you take the trouble, by what course of events I came to my present pursuit, converting myself into what a candid, but not complimentary, friend has called “a diverting Vagabond.”

The fact was, I gave the world every reasonable opportunity of knowing that they had a remarkable man amongst them, but, with a stupidity all their own, they wouldn't see it; so that when the solicitor who once gave me a brief died – I believe it was a softening of the brain – I burned my wig and retired from the profession.

Now, let people say what they may, it is by no means easy to invent a new line of life; and even if you should, there are scores of people ready to start up and seize on your discovery; and as I write these lines I am by no means sure that to-morrow will not see some other Cornelius O'Dowd inviting the public to a feast of wisdom and life-knowledge, with perhaps a larger stock

than my own of “things not generally known.” I will disparage no man’s wares. There is, I feel assured, a market for us all. My rivals, or my imitators, whichever you like to call them, may prove superior to me; they maybe more ingenious, more various, more witty, or more profound; but take my word for it, bland Header, there is always something in the original tap, whether the liquor be Harvey sauce or L.L. whisky, and such is mine. You are, in coming to me, frequenting the old house; and if I could only descend to it, I could print you more testimonials to success than Mr Morrison’s of the pills, or the other man of cod-liver oil, but I scorn to give the names, imparted as they were in secret gratitude. One only trick of the trade I will condescend to – it is to assure you that you had need to beware of counterfeits, and that no O’Dowderies are genuine except signed by me.

My heart is broke with requests for my autograph. Will a sympathising public accept the above – which, of course, will be immediately photographed.

MYSELF

Bland Reader, – If you ever look into the Irish papers – and I hope you are not so exclusive regarding them as is Mr Cobden with the ‘Times’ – you will see that, under the title, “Landed Estates Court, County Mayo,” Judge Dobbs has just sold the town and lands of Kilmuray-nabachlish, Ballaghy, and Gregnaslattery, the property of Cornelius O’Dowd, Esq. of Dowd’s Folly, in the same county.

Now the above-recited lands, measuring seven hundred and fourteen acres, two roods, and eleven perches, statute measure, were mine, and I am the Cornelius O’Dowd, Esq., referred to in the same paragraph.

Though it is perfectly true that, what between mortgages, settlement claims, and bonds, neither my father nor myself owned these lands any more than we did the island of Jamaica, it was a great blow to me to be sold out; for, somehow or other, one can live a long time in Ireland on parchment – I mean on the mere documents of an estate that has long since passed away; but if you come once to an open sale and Judge Dobbs, there’s an end of you, and you’ll not get credit for a pair of shoes the day after.

My present reason for addressing you does not require that I should go into my family history, or mention more of myself than that I was called to the Bar in ‘42; that I stood an unsuccessful election for Athlone; that I served as a captain in the West Coast

Rifles; that I married a young lady of great personal attractions; and completed my misfortunes by taking the chairmanship of the Vichnasehneshee silver mines, that very soon left me with nothing but copper in my own pocket, and sent me to Judge Dobbs and his Court on the Inns Quay.

Like the rest of my countrymen, I was always hoping the Government would “do something” for me. I have not missed a levee for fourteen years, and I have shown the calves of my legs to every viceroyalty since Lord Clarendon’s day; but though they all joked and talked very pleasantly with me, none said, “O’Dowd, we must do something for you;” and if it was to rain commissionerships in lunacy, or prison inspectorships, I don’t believe one would fall upon C. O’D. I never knew rightly how it was, but though I was always liked at the Bar mess, and made much of on circuit, I never got a brief. People were constantly saying to me, “Con, if you were to do this, that, or t’other,” you’d make a hit; but it was always conditional on my being somewhere, or doing something that I never had attempted before.

It was clear, if I was the right man, I wasn’t in the right place; and this was all the more provoking, because, let me do what I would, some one was sure to exclaim, “Con, my boy, don’t try that; it is certainly not your line.” “What a capital agent for a new assurance company you’d be!” “What a success you’d have had on the stage! You’d have played Sir Lucius better than any living actor. Why don’t you go on the boards? Why not start a penny newspaper? Why not give readings?” I wonder why they didn’t

tell me to turn organist or a painter in oils.

“You’re always telling us how much you know of the world, Mr O’Dowd,” said my wife; “I wish you could turn the knowledge to some account.”

This was scarcely generous, to say the least of it.

Mrs O’D. knew well that I was vain of the quality – that I regarded it as a sort of specialty. In fact, deeming, with the poet, that the proper study of mankind was man, I had devoted a larger share of my life to the inquiry than quite consisted with professional advancement; and while others pored over their Blackstone, I was “doing Baden;” and instead of term reports and Crown cases, I was diverting myself in the Oberland or on the Lago Maggiore.

“And with all your great knowledge of life,” continued she, “I don’t exactly see what it has done for you.”

Now, Mrs O’Dowd being, as you may apprehend, a woman, I didn’t waste my time in arguing with her – I didn’t crush her, as I might, by telling her that the very highest and noblest of a man’s acquirements are, *ipso facto*, the least marketable; and that the boasted excellence of all classical education is in nothing so conspicuous as in the fact that Greek and Latin cannot be converted into money as readily as vulgar fractions and a bold handwriting. Being a woman, as I have observed, Mrs O’D. would have read the argument backwards, and stood out for the rule-of-three against Sophocles and “all his works.” I simply replied, with that dignity which is natural to me, “I *am* proud

of my knowledge of life; I do recognise in myself the analyst of that strange mixture that makes up human chemistry; but it has never occurred to me to advertise my discovery for sale, like Holloway's Pills or somebody's cod-liver oil." "Perhaps you knew nobody would buy it," cried she, and flounced out of the room, the bang of the door being one of the "epigrams in action" wives are skilled in.

Now, with respect to my knowledge of life, I have often compared myself to those connoisseurs in art who, without a picture or an engraving of their own, can roam through a gallery, taking the most intense pleasure in all it contains, gazing with ecstasy at the Raffaeles, and lingering delighted over the sunny landscapes of Claude. To me the world has, for years, imparted a sense of much enjoyment. Human nature has been my gallery, with all its variety, its breadth, its effect, its warm colouring, and its cold tints.

It has been my pride to think that I can recognise every style and every "handling," and that no man could impose a copy upon me for an original. "And can it be possible," cried I aloud, "that while picture-dealers revel in fortune – fellows whose traffic goes no higher than coloured canvass – that I, the connoisseur of humanity, the moral toxicologist – I, who read men as I read a French comedy – that I should be obliged to deny myself the generous claret my doctor thinks essential to my system, and that repose and change of scene he deems of more consequence to me than mere physic?"

I do not – I will not – I cannot, believe it. No class of persons could be less spared than pilots. Without their watchful skill the rich argosy that has entered the chops of the Channel would never anchor in the Pool. And are there no sand-banks, no sunk rocks, no hidden reefs, no insidious shoals, in humanity? Are there no treacherous lee-shores, no dangerous currents, no breakers? It is amidst these and such as these I purpose to guide my fellow-men, not pretending for a moment to the possession of any heaven-born instinct, or any inspired insight into Nature. No; I have toiled and laboured in the cause. The experience that I mean to offer for sale I have myself bought, occasionally far more dearly than I intend to dispose of it. *Haud ignarus mali*; I am willing to tell where I have been shipwrecked, and who stole my clothes. “Don’t tell me of your successes,” said a great physician to his colleague, “tell me of your blunders; tell me of the people you’ve killed.” I am ready to do this, figuratively of course, for they were all ladies; and more, I will make no attempt to screen myself from the ridicule that may attach to an absurd situation, nor conceal those experiences which may subject me to laughter.

You may deem me boastful if I have to set forth my qualifications; but what can I do? It is only when I have opened my pack and displayed my wares that you may feel tempted to buy. I am driven, then, to tell you that I know everybody that is worth knowing in Europe, and some two or three in America; that I have been everywhere – eaten of everything – seen everything. There’s not a railway guard from Norway to

Naples doesn't grin a recognition to me; not a waiter from the Trois Frères to the Wilde Mann doesn't trail his napkin to earth as he sees me. Ministers speak up when I stroll into the Chamber, and *prima donnas* soar above the orchestra, and warble in ecstasy as I enter the pit.

I don't like – I declare to you I do not like – saying these things; it smacks of vanity. Now for my plan. I purpose to put these my gifts at your disposal. The year before us will doubtless be an eventful one. What between Danes, Poles, and Italians, there must be a row somewhere. The French are very eager for war; and the Austrians, as Paddy says, “are blue-moulded for want of a beatin’.” There will be grand “battle-pieces” to paint; but, better than these, portraits, groups, “tableaux de genre” – Teniers bits, too, at the porch of an ale-house, and warm little interiors, in the style of Mieris. I shall be instructive at times – very instructive; and whenever I am very nice and dull, be assured that I'm “full of information, and know my subject thoroughly.”

As “your own correspondent,” I am free to go wherever I please. I have left Mrs O'D. in Ireland, and I revel in an Arcadian liberty. These are all my credentials; and if with their aid I can furnish you any amusement as to the goings-on of the world and its wife, or the doings of that amiable couple in politics, books, theatres, or socialities, I seek for nothing more congenial to my taste, nor more adapted to my nature, as a bashful Irishman.

If I will not often obtrude, I will not altogether avoid, my personal experiences; for there is this to be said, that no testimony

is worth much unless we know something of the temper, the tastes, and the character of the witness. We have all heard, for instance, of the gentleman who couldn't laugh at Munden's drolleries on the stage for thinking of a debt of ten pounds that the actor owed him: and this same spirit has a great deal to do – far more than we like to own – with our estimate of foreign countries. It is so hard to speak well of the climate where we had that horrible rheumatism, or laud the honesty of a people when we think of that rascally scoundrel of the Hotel d'Odessa. For these reasons I mean to come into the witness-box occasionally, and give you frankly, not merely my opinions, but the way they were come by. I don't affect to be superior to prejudices; I have as many of these as a porcupine has bristles. There's all the egotism I mean to inflict on you, unless it comes under the guise of an incident – “a circumstance which really occurred to the author” – and now, *en route*.

I wonder am I right in thinking that the present race of travelling English know less about the Continent and foreigners generally than their predecessors of, say, five-and-twenty years ago. Railroads and rapid travelling might be one cause; another is, that English is now more generally spoken by all foreigners than formerly; and it may be taken as a maxim, that nothing was ever asked or answered in broken phraseology that was worth the hearing. People with a limited knowledge of a strange language do not say what they *wish*, but what they *can*; and there is no name for the helplessness of him who is tied up in his preter-

pluperfect tense. Now we English are not linguists; even our diplomatists are remarkable for their little proficiency in French. I'm not sure that we don't benefit by this in the long-run. "Reden ist silber, aber Schweigen ist gold" – "Speech is silver, but silence is gold," says the German adage; and what a deal of wisdom have I seen attributed to a man who was posed by his declensions into a listener! One of the only countrymen of my own who has made a great career lately in public life is not a little indebted to deafness for it. He was so unlike those rash, impetuous, impatient Irish, who *would* interrupt – he listened, or seemed to listen, and he even smiled at the sarcasms that he did not hear.

Listening, if we did but know it, sits more gracefully on us than speech, when that speech involves the denial of genders, and the utter confusion of all cases and tenses.

Next to holding their tongues, there's another thing I wish you English would do abroad, which is, to dress like sane and responsible people. Men are simply absurd; but the women, with their ill-behaved hoops and short petticoats, are positively indecent; but the greatest of all their travelling offences is the proneness to form acquaintance at *tables-d'hôte*.

It is, first of all, a rank indiscretion for any but men to dine at these places. They are almost, as a rule, the resort of all that is disreputable in both sexes. You are sure to eat badly, and in the very worst of company. My warning is, however, meant for my countrywomen only: men can, or at least ought, to take care of themselves. As for myself, don't be shocked; but I do like

doubtful company – that is, I am immensely interested by all that class of people which the world calls adventurers, whether the same be railroad speculators, fortune-hunters, discoverers of inexhaustible mines, or Garibaldians. Your respectable man, with a pocket-book well stored with his circular notes, and his passport in order, is as uninteresting as a “Treckshuyt” on a Dutch canal; but your “martyr to circumstance” is like a smart felucca in a strong Levanter; and you can watch his course – how he shakes out his reefs or shortens sail – how he flaunts out his bunting, or hides his colours – with an unflinching interest I have often thought what a deal of cleverness – what stores of practical ability – were lost to the world in these out-at-elbow fellows, who speak every language fluently, play every game well, sing pleasingly, dance, ride, row, and shoot, especially with the pistol, to perfection. There they are, with a mass of qualities that win success! and, what often is harder, win goodwill in life! There they are, by some unhappy twist in their natures, preferring the precarious existence of the race-course or the billiard-table; while others, with about a tithe of their talents, are high in place and power. I met one of these men to-day, and a strong specimen of the class, well dressed, well whiskered, very quiet in manner, almost subdued in tone, but with a slight restlessness in his eye that was very significant. We found ourselves at table, over our coffee, when the others had left, and fell into conversation. He declined my offered cigar with much courtesy, preferring to smoke little cigarettes of his own making; and really the

manufacture was very adroit, and, in its way, a study of the maker's habits. We talked over the usual topics – the bad dinner we had just eaten, the strange-looking company, the discomfort of the hotel generally, and suchlike.

“Have we not met before?” asked he, after a pause. “If I don't mistake, we dined together aboard of Leslie's yacht, the Fawn.”

I shook my head. “Only knew Sir Francis Leslie by name; never saw the Fawn.”

The shot failed, but there was no recoil in his gun, and he merely bowed a half apology.

“A yacht is a mistake,” added he, after another interval. “One is obliged to take, not the men one wants, but the fellows who can bear the sea. Leslie, for instance, had such a set that I left him at Messina. Strange enough, they took us for pirates there.”

“For pirates!”

“Yes. There were three fishing-boats – what they call *Bilancelle* – some fifteen or sixteen miles out at sea, and when they saw us coming along with all canvass set, they hauled up their nets and ran with all speed for shore. Rather absurd, wasn't it? but, as I told Leslie about his friends, ‘the blunder wasn't so great after all; there was only a vowel between Raffs and Riffs.’”

The disparagement of “questionable people” is such an old device of adventurers, that I was really surprised such a master of his art as my present friend would condescend to it. It belonged altogether to an inferior practitioner; and, indeed, he quickly saw the effect it had produced upon me, as he said, “Not that I care a

straw for the fellows I associate with; my theory is, a gentleman can know any one.”

Richard was himself again as he uttered this speech, lying well back in his chair, and sending a thin cloud of incense from the angle of his mouth.

“What snobs they were in Brummel’s day, for instance, always asking if this or that man was fit to be known! Why, sir, it was the very fellows they tabooed were the cream of the set; ‘it was the cards they threw out were the trumps.’”

The illustration came so pat that he smiled as he perceived by a twinkle of my eye that I appreciated it.

“My father,” continued he, “knew Brummel well, and he told me that his grand defect was a want of personal courage – the very quality, of all others, his career required. His impertinences always broke down when brought to this test. I remember an instance he mentioned.

“Amongst the company that frequented Carlton House was a certain old Admiral P – , whom the Prince was fond of inviting, though he did not possess a single agreeable quality, or any one convivial gift, except a great power of drinking the very strongest port without its producing the slightest show of effect upon him.

“One night Brummel, evidently bent on testing the old sailor’s head, seated himself next him, making it his business to pass the decanters as briskly as he could. The admiral asked nothing better; filled and drank bumpers. Not content with this legitimate test, Brummel watched his opportunity when the admiral’s head

was turned, and filled his glass up to the brim. Four or five times was the trick repeated, and with success; when at last the admiral, turning quickly around, caught him in the very act, with the decanter still in his hand. Fixing his eyes upon him with the fierceness of a tiger, the old man said, ‘Drink it, sir – drink it!’ and so terrified was Brummel by the manner and the look that he raised the glass to his lips and drained it, while all at the table were convulsed with laughter.”

The Brummel school – that is, the primrose-glove adventurers – were a very different order of men from the present-day fellows, who take a turn in Circassia or China, or a campaign with Garibaldi; and who, with all their defects, are men of mettle and pluck and daring. Of these latter I found my new acquaintance to be one.

He sketched off the early part of the “expedition” graphically enough for me, showing the disorder and indiscipline natural to a force where every nationality of Europe was represented, and not by its most favourable types.

“I had an Irish servant,” said he, “whose blunders would fill a volume. His prevailing impression, perhaps not ill-founded on the whole, was, that we all had come out for pillage; and while a certain reserve withheld most of us from avowing this fact, he spoke of it openly and freely, expatiating admiringly on Captain This and Major That, who had done a fine stroke of work in such a store, or such another country-house. As for his blunders, they never ceased. I was myself the victim of an absurd one. On

the march from Melazzo I got a severe strain in the chest by my horse falling and rolling over me. No bone was broken, but I was much bruised, and a considerable extravasation of blood took place under the skin. Of course I could not move, and I was provided with a sort of litter, and slung between two mules. The doctor prescribed a strong dose of laudanum, which set me to sleep, and despatched Peter back to Melazzo with an order for a certain ointment, which he was to bring without delay, as the case was imminent; this was impressed upon him, as the fellow was much given to wandering off, when sent of a message, after adventures of his own.

“Fully convinced that I was in danger, away went Peter, very sad about me, but even more distressed lest he should forget what he was sent for. He kept repeating the words over and over as he went, till they became by mere repetition something perfectly incomprehensible, so that when he reached Melazzo nobody could make head or tail of his message. Group after group gathered about and interrogated him, and at last, by means of pantomime, discovered that his master was very ill. Signs were made to inquire if bleeding was required, or if it was a case for amputation, but he still shook his head in negative. ‘Is he dying?’ asked one, making a gesture to indicate lying down. Peter assented. ‘Oh, then it is the *unzione estrema* he wants!’ ‘That’s it,’ cried Peter, joyfully – ‘unzione it is.’ Two priests were speedily found and despatched; and I awoke out of a sound sleep under a tree to see three lighted candles on each side of me, and

two priests in full vestments standing at my feet and gabbling away in a droning sort of voice, while Peter blubbered and wrung his hands unceasingly. A jolly burst of laughter from me soon dispelled the whole illusion, and Peter had to hide himself for shame for a week after.”

“What became of the fellow – was he killed in the campaign?”

“Killed! nothing of the kind; he rose to be an officer, served on Nullo’s staff, and is at this very hour in Poland, and, if I mistake not, a major.”

“Men of this stamp make occasionally great careers,” said I, carelessly.

“No, sir,” replied he, very gravely. “To do anything really brilliant, the adventurer must have been a gentleman at one time or other: the common fellow stops short at petty larcenies; the man of good blood always goes in for the mint.”

“There was, then,” asked I, “a good deal of what the Yankees call ‘pocketing’ in that campaign of Garibaldi’s?”

“Less than one might suppose. Have you not occasionally seen men at a dinner-party pass this and refuse that, waiting for the haunch, or the pheasant, or the blackcock that they are certain is coming, when all of a sudden the jellies and ices make their appearance, and the curtain falls? So it was with many of us; we were all waiting for Rome, and licking our lips for the Vatican and the Cardinals’ palaces, when in came the Piedmontese and finished the entertainment. If I meet you here to-morrow, I can tell you more about this;” and so saying he arose, gave me an

easy nod, and strolled away.

“Who is that most agreeable gentleman who took his coffee with me?” asked I of the waiter as I entered the *salle*.

“It’s the Generale Inglese, who served with Garibaldi.”

“And his name?”

“Ah, *per bacco!* I never heard his name – Garibaldi calls him Giorgio, and the ladies who call here to take him out to drive now and then always say Giorgino – not that he’s so very small, for all that.”

My Garibaldian friend failed in his appointment with me this morning. We were to have gone together to a gallery, or a collection of ancient armour, or something of this sort, but he probably saw, as your clever adventurer *will* see, with half an eye, that I could be no use to him – that I was a wayfarer like himself on life’s highroad; and prudently turned round on his side and went to sleep again.

There is no quality so distinctive in this sort of man or woman – for adventurer has its feminine – as the rapid intuition with which he seizes on all available people, and throws aside all the unprofitable ones. A money-changer detecting a light napoleon is nothing to it. What are the traits by which they guide their judgment – what the tests by which they try humanity, I do not know, but that they do read a stranger at first sight is indisputable. That he found out Cornelius O’Dowd wasn’t a member of the British Cabinet, or a junior partner in Baring’s, was, you may sneeringly conjecture, no remarkable evidence of acuteness. But

why should he discover the fact – fact it is – that he'd never be one penny the richer by knowing me, and that intercourse with me was about as profitable as playing a match at billiards “for the table”?

Say what people will against roguery and cheating, rail as they may at the rapacity and rascality one meets with, I declare and protest, after a good deal of experience, that the world is a very poor world to him who is not the mark of some roguery! When you are too poor to be cheated, you are too insignificant to be cherished; and the man that is not worth humbugging isn't very far from bankruptcy.

It gave me a sort of shock, therefore, when I saw that my friend took this view of me, and I strolled down moodily enough to the Chamber of Deputies. Turin is a dreary city for a lounge; even a resident finds that he must serve a seven years' apprenticeship before he gets any footing in its stiff ungenial society – for of all Italians, nothing socially is less graceful than a Piedmontese. They have none of the courteous civility, none of the urbane gentleness of the peninsular Italians. They are cold, reserved, proud, and eminently awkward; not the less so, perhaps, that their habitual tongue is the very vilest jargon that ever disfigured a human mouth. Of course this is an efficient barrier against intercourse with strangers; and though French is spoken in society, it bears about the same relation to that language at Paris, as what is called pigeon-English at Hong-Kong does to the tongue in use in Belgravia.

When I reached the Palazzo Carignan, as the Chamber is called, the *séance* was nearly over, and a scene of considerable uproar prevailed. There had been a somewhat sharp altercation between General Bixio and the “Left,” and M. Mordini had repeatedly appealed to the President to make the General recall some offensive epithets he had bestowed on the “party of movement.” There were the usual cries and gesticulations, the shouts of derision, the gestures of menace; and, above all, the tinkle-tinkle of the Presidents bell, which was no more minded than the summons for a waiter in an Irish inn; and on they went in this hopeless way, till some one, I don’t know why, cried out, “That’s enough – we are satisfied;” by which it seemed that somebody had apologised, but for what, or how, or to whom, I have not the very vaguest conception.

With all their depreciation of France, the Italians are the most persistent imitators of Frenchmen, and the Chamber was exactly a copy of the French Chamber in the old Louis Philippe days – all violence, noise, sensational intensity, and excitement.

I have often heard public speakers mention the difficulty of adjusting the voice to the size of a room in which they found themselves for the first time, and the remark occurred to me as figuratively displaying one of the difficulties of Italian public men. The speakers in reality never clearly knew how far their words were to carry – whether they spoke to the Chamber or to the Country.

Is there or is there not a public opinion in Italy? Can the

public speaker direct his words over the heads of his immediate surroundings to countless thousands beyond them? If he cannot, Parliament is but a debating-club, with the disadvantage of not being able to select the subjects for discussion.

The glow of patriotism is never rightly warm, nor is the metal of party truly malleable, without the strong blast of a public opinion.

The Turin Chamber has no echo in the country; and, so far as I see, the Italians are far more eager to learn what is said in the French Parliament than in their own.

I remember an old waiter at the Hibernian Hotel in Dublin, who got a prize in the lottery and retired into private life, but who never could hear a bell ring without crying out, "Coming, sir." The Italians remind me greatly of him: they have had such a terrible time of flunkeyism, that they start at every summons, no matter what hand be on the bell-rope.

To be sure the French did bully them awfully in the last war. Never was an alliance more dearly paid for. We ourselves are not a very compliant or conciliating race, but we can remember what it cost us to submit to French insolence and pretension in the Crimea; and yet we did submit to it, not always with a good grace, but in some fashion or other.

Here comes my Garibaldino again, and with a proposal to go down to Genoa and look at the Italian fleet. I don't suppose that either of us know much of the subject; and indeed I feel, in my ignorance, that I might be a senior Lord of the Admiralty –

but that is only another reason for the inquiry. “One is nothing,” says Mr Puff, “if he ain’t critical” So Heaven help the Italian navy under the conjoint commentaries of myself and my friend! Meanwhile, and before we start, one word more of Turin.

A FRIEND OF GIOBERTS: BEING A REMINISCENCE OF SEVENTEEN YEARS AGO

Here I am at the “Feder” in Turin – as dirty a hotel, be it said passingly, as you’ll find out of Ireland, and seventeen long years it is since I saw it first. Italy has changed a good deal in the meanwhile – changed rulers, landmarks, systems, and ideas; not so my old acquaintance, the Feder! There’s the dirty waiter flourishing his dirtier napkin; and there’s the long low-ceilinged *table-d’hôte* room, stuffy and smoky, and suffocating as ever; and there are the little grinning coteries of threes and fours round small tables soaking their rolls in chocolate, and puffing their “Cavours,” with faces as innocent of soap as they were before the war of the liberation. After all, perhaps, I’d have no objection if some friend would cry out, “Why, Con, my boy, you don’t look a day older than when I saw you here in ‘46, I think! I protest you have not changed in the least. What *elixir vitæ* have you swallowed, old fellow? Not a wrinkle, nor a grey hair,” and so on. And yet seventeen years taken out of the working part of a man’s life – that period that corresponds with the interval between after breakfast, we’ll say, and an hour before dinner – makes a great gap in existence; for I did very little as a boy, being not an early riser, perhaps, and now, in the evening of my days, I have got

a theory that a man ought to dine early and never work after it. Though I'm half ashamed, on so short an acquaintance with my reader, to mention a personal incident, I can scarcely avoid – indeed I cannot avoid – relating a circumstance connected with my first visit to the “Hotel Feder.”

I was newly married when I came abroad for a short wedding-tour. The world at that time required new-married people to lay in a small stock of Continental notions, to assist their connubiality and enable them to wear the yoke with the graceful ease of foreigners; and so Mrs O'D. and I started with one heart, one passport, and – what's not so pleasant – one hundred pounds, to comply with this ordinance. Of course, once over the border – once in France – it was enough. So we took up our abode in a very unpretending little hotel of Boulogne-sur-Mer called “La Cour de Madrid,” where we boarded for the moderate sum of eleven francs fifty centimes per diem – the odd fifty being saved by my wife not taking the post-prandial cup of coffee and rum.

There was not much to see at Boulogne, and we soon saw it. For a week or so Mrs O'D. used to go out muffled like one of the Sultan's five hundred wives, protesting that she'd surely be recognised; but she grew out of the delusion at last, and discovered that our residence at the Cour de Madrid as effectually screened us from all remark or all inquiry as if we had taken up our abode in the Catacombs.

Now when one has got a large stock of any commodity on hand – I don't care what it is – there's nothing so provoking as not

to find a market. Mrs O'D.'s investment was bashfulness. She was determined to be the most timid, startled, modest, and blushing creature that ever wore orange-flowers; and yet there was not a man, woman, or child in the whole town that cared to know whether the act for which she left England was a matrimony or a murder.

“Don’t you hate this place, Cornelius?” – she never called me Con in the honeymoon. “Isn’t it the dullest, dreariest hole you have ever been in?”

“Not with you.”

“Then don’t yawn when you say so. I abhor it. It’s dirty, it’s vulgar, it’s dear.”

“No, no. It ain’t dear, my love; don’t say, dear.”

“Billiards perhaps, and filthy cigars, and that greenish bitter – anisette, I think they call it – are cheap enough, perhaps; but these are all luxuries I can’t share in.”

Here was the cloud no bigger than a man’s hand that presaged the first connubial hurricane. A married friend – one of much experience and long-suffering – had warned me of this, saying, “Don’t fancy you’ll escape, old fellow; but do the way the Ministry do about Turkey – put the evil day off; diplomatisé, promise, cajole, threaten a bit if needs be, but postpone;” and, strong with these precepts, I negotiated, as the phrase is, and, with a dash of reckless liberality that I tremble at now as I record it, I said, “You’ve only to say where – nothing but where to, and I’ll take you – up the Rhine, down the Danube, Egypt, the

Cataracts – ”

“I don’t want to go so far,” said she, dryly. “Italy will do.”

This was a stunner. I hoped the impossible would have stopped her, but she caught at the practicable, and foiled me.

“There’s only one objection,” said I, musing.

“And what may that be? Not money, I hope.”

“Heaven forbid – no. It’s the language. We get on here tolerably well, for the waiter speaks broken English; but in Italy, dearest, English is unknown.”

“Let us learn Italian, then. My aunt Groves said I had a remarkable talent for languages.”

I groaned inwardly at this, for the same aunt Groves had vouched for a sum of seventeen hundred and odd pounds as her niece’s fortune, but which was so beautifully “tied up,” as they called it, that neither Chancellor nor Master were ever equal to the task of untying it.

“Of course, dearest, let us learn Italian;” and I thought how I’d crush a junior counsel some day with a smashing bit of Dante.

We started that same night – travelled on day after day – crossed Mont Cenis in a snow-storm, and reached the Feder as wayworn and wretched-looking a pair as ever travelled on an errand of bliss and beatitude.

“In for a penny” is very Irish philosophy, but I can’t help that; so I wrote to my brother Peter to sell out another hundred for me out of the “Threes,” saying “dear Paulina’s health required a little change to a milder climate” (it was snowing when I wrote,

and the thermometer over the chimneypiece at 9° Reaumur, with windows that wouldn't shut, and a marble floor without carpet) – “that the balmy air of Italy” (my teeth chattered as I set it down) “would soon restore her; and indeed already she seemed to feel the change.” That she did, for she was crouching over a pan of charcoal ashes, with a railroad wrapper over her shoulders.

It's no use going over what is in every one's experience on first coming south of the Alps – the daily, hourly difficulty of not believing that you have taken a wrong road and got into Siberia; and strangest of all it is to see how little the natives think of it. I declare I often thought soap must be a great refrigerant, and I wish some chemist would inquire into the matter.

“Are we ever to begin this blessed language?” said Mrs O'D. to me, after four days of close arrest – snow still falling and the thermometer going daily down, down, lower and lower. Now I had made inquiries the day before from the landlord, and learned that he knew of a most competent person, not exactly a regular teacher who would insist upon our going to work in school fashion, but a man of sense and a gentleman – indeed, a person of rank and title, with whom the world had gone somewhat badly, and who was at that very moment suffering for his political opinions, far in advance, as they were, of those of his age.

“He's a friend of Gioberti,” whispered the landlord in my ear, while his features became animated with the most intense significance. Now, I had never so much as heard of Gioberti, but I felt it would be a deep disgrace to confess it, and so I only

exclaimed, with an air of half-incredulity, "Indeed!"

"As true as I'm here," replied he. "He usually drops in about noon to read the 'Opinione,' and, if you permit, I'll send him up to you. His name is Count Annibale Castrocarao."

I hastened forthwith to Mrs O'D., to apprise her of the honour that awaited us; repeating, a little *in extenso*, all that the host had said, and finishing with the stunning announcement, "and a friend of Gio-berti." Mrs O'Dowd never flinched under the shock, and, too proud to own her ignorance, she pertly remarked, "I don't think the more of him for that."

I felt that she had beat me, and I sat down abashed and humiliated. Meanwhile Mrs O'D. retired to make some change of dress; but, reappearing after a while in her smartest morning toilette, and a very coquettish little cap, with cherry-coloured ribbons, I saw what the word Count had done at once.

Just as the clock struck twelve, the waiter flung wide the double doors of our room, and announced, as pompously as though for royalty, "II Signor Conte di Castrocarao," and there entered a tall man slightly stooping in the shoulders, with a profusion of the very blackest hair on his neck and shoulders, his age anything from thirty-five to forty-eight, and his dress a shabby blue surtout, buttoned to the throat and reaching below the knees. He bowed and slid, and bowed again, till he came opposite where my wife sat, and then, with rather a dramatic sort of grace, he lifted her hand to his lips and kissed it. She reddened a little, but I saw she wasn't displeased with the air of homage that

accompanied the ceremony, and she begged him to be seated.

I own I was disappointed with the Count, his hair was so greasy, and his hands so dirty, and his general get-up so uncared for; but Mrs O'D. talked away with him very pleasantly, and he replied in his own broken English, making little grimaces and smiles and gestures, and some very tender glances, do duty where his parts of speech failed him. In fact, I watched him as a sort of psychological phenomenon, and I arrived at the conclusion that this friend of Gioberti's was a very clever artist.

All was speedily settled for the lessons – hour, terms, and mode of instruction. It was to be entirely conversational, with a little theme-writing, no getting by heart, no irregular verbs, no declensions, no genders. I did beg hard for a little grammar, but he wouldn't hear of it. It was against his "system," and so I gave in.

We began the next day, but the Count ignored me altogether, directing almost all his attentions to Mrs O'D.; and as I had already some small knowledge of the elementary part of the language, I was just as well pleased that she should come up, as it were, to my level. From this cause I often walked off before the lesson was over, and sometimes, indeed, I skulked it altogether, finding the system, as well as Gioberti's friend, to be an unconscionable bore. Mrs O'D., on the contrary, displayed an industry I never believed her to possess, and would pass whole evenings over her exercises, which often covered several sheets of letter-paper.

We had now been about five weeks in Turin, when my brother wrote to request I would come back as speedily as I could, that a case in which I held a brief was high in the cause-list, and would be tried very early in the session. I own I was not sorry at the recall. I detested the dreary life I was leading. I hated Turin and its bad feeding and bad theatres, its rough wines and its rougher inhabitants.

“Did you tell the Count we are off on Saturday?” asked I of Mrs O’D.

“Yes,” said she, dryly.

“I suppose he’s inconsolable,” said I, with a sneer.

“He’s very sorry we’re going, if you mean that, Mr O’Dowd; and so am I too.”

“Well, so am not I; and you may call me a Dutchman if you catch me here again.”

“The Count hopes you will permit him to see you. He asked this morning whether he might call on you about four o’clock.”

“Yes, I’ll see him with sincere pleasure for once,” I cried; “since it is to say good-bye to him.”

I was in my dressing-room, packing up for the journey, when the Count was announced and shown in. “Excuse me, Count,” said I, “for receiving you so informally, but I have a hasty summons to call me back to England, and no time to spare.”

“I will, notwithstanding, ask you for some of that time, all precious as it is,” said he in French, and with a serious gravity that I had never observed in him before.

“Well, sir,” said I, stiffly; “I am at your orders.”

It is now seventeen long years since that interview, and I am free to own that I have not even yet attained to sufficient calm and temper to relate what took place. I can but give the substance of our conversation. It is not over-pleasant to dwell on, but it was to this purport: – The Count had come to inform me that, without any intention or endeavour on his part, he had gained Mrs O’Dowd’s affections and won her heart! Yes, much-valued reader, he made this declaration to me, sitting opposite to me at the fire, as coolly and unconcernedly as if he was apologising for having carried off my umbrella by mistake. It is true, he was most circumstantial in showing that all the ardour was on one side, and that he, throughout the whole adventure, conducted himself as became a Gran’ Galantuomo, and the friend of Gioberti, whatever that might mean.

My amazement – I might almost call it my stupefaction – at the unparalleled impudence of the man, so overcame me, that I listened to him without an effort at interruption.

“I have come to you, therefore, to-day,” said he, “to give up her letters.”

“Her letters!” exclaimed I; “and she has written to you!”

“Twenty-three times in all,” said he, calmly, as he drew a large black pocket-book from his breast, and took out a considerable roll of papers. “The earlier ones are less interesting,” said he, turning them over. “It is about here, No. 14, that they begin to develop feeling. You see she commences to call me ‘Caro

Animale’ – she meant to say Annibale, but, poor dear! she mistook. No. 15 is stronger – ‘Animale Mio’ – the same error; and here, in No. 17, she begins, ‘Diletto del mio cuore, quando non ti vedo, non ti sento, il cielo stesso, non mi sorride piu. Il mio Tiranno’ – that was *you*.”

I caught hold of the poker with a convulsive grasp, but quick as thought he bounded back behind the table, and drew out a pistol, and cocked it. I saw that Gioberti’s friend had his wits about him, and resumed the conversation by remarking that the documents he had shown me were not in my wife’s handwriting.

“Very true,” said he; “these, as you will perceive by the official stamp, are sworn copies, duly attested at the Prefettura – the originals are safe.”

“And with what object,” asked I, gasping – “safe for what?”

“For you, Illustrissimo,” said he, bowing, “when you pay me two thousand francs for them.”

“I’ll knock your brains out first,” said I, with another clutch at the poker, but the muzzle of the pistol was now directly in front of me.

“I am moderate in my demands, signor,” said he, quietly; “there are men in my position would ask you twenty thousand; but I am a galantuomo – ”

“And the friend of Gioberti,” added I, with a sneer.

“Precisely so,” said he, bowing with much grace.

I will not weary you, dear reader, with my struggles – conflicts that almost cost me a seizure on the brain – but hasten to the

result. I beat down the noble Count's demand to one-half and for a thousand francs I possessed myself of the fatal originals, written unquestionably and indisputably by my wife's hand; and then, giving the Count a final piece of advice, never to let me see more of him, I hurried off to Mrs O'Dowd.

She was out paying some bills, and only arrived a few minutes before dinner-hour.

"I want you, madam, for a moment here," said I, with something of Othello, in the last act, in my voice and demeanour.

"I suppose I can take off my bonnet and shawl first, Mr O'Dowd," said she, snappishly.

"No, madam; you may probably find that you'll need them both at the end of our interview."

"What do you mean, sir?" asked she, haughtily.

"This is no time for grand airs or mock dignity, madam," said I, with the tone of the avenging angel. "Do you know these? are these in your hand? Deny it if you can."

"Why should I deny it? Of course they're mine."

"And you wrote this, and this, and this?" cried I, almost in a scream, as I shook forth one after another of the letters.

"Don't you know I did?" said she, as hotly; "and nothing beyond a venial mistake in one of them!"

"A what, woman? a what?"

"A mere slip of the pen, sir. You know very well how I used to sit up half the night at my exercises?"

"Exercises!"

“Well, themes, if you like better; the Count made me make clean copies of them, with all his corrections, and send them to him every day – here are the rough ones;” and she opened a drawer filled with a mass of papers all scrawled over and blotted. “And now, sir, once more, what do you mean?”

I did not wait to answer her, but rushed down to the landlord. “Where does that Count Castrocaro live?” I asked.

“Nowhere in particular, I believe, sir; and for the present he has left Turin – started for Genoa by the diligence five minutes ago. He’s a Gran’ Galantuomo, sir,” added he, as I stood stupefied.

“I am aware of that,” said I, as I crept back to my room to finish my packing.

“Did you settle with the Count?” asked my wife at the door.

“Yes,” said I, with my head buried in my trunk.

“And he was perfectly satisfied?”

“Of course he was – he has every reason to be so.”

“I am glad of it,” said she, moving away – “he had a deal of trouble with those themes of mine. No one knows what they cost him.” I could have told what they cost *me*; but I never did, till the present moment.

I need not say with what an appetite I dined on that day, nor with what abject humility I behaved to my wife, nor how I skulked down in the evening to the landlord to apologise for not being able to pay the bill before I left, an unexpected demand having left me short of cash. All these, seventeen years ago as

they are, have not yet lost their bitterness, nor have I yet arrived at the time when I can think with composure of this friend of Gioberti.

Admiral Dalrymple tells us, amongst his experiences as a farmer, that he gave twenty pounds for a dung-hill, "and he'd give ten more to any one who'd tell him what to do with it." I strongly suspect this is pretty much the case with the Italians as regards their fleet. There it is – at least, there is the beginning of it; and when it shall be complete, where is it to go? what is it to protect? whom to attack?

The very last thing Italians have in their minds is a war with England. If we have not done them any great or efficient service, we have always spoken civilly of them, and bade them a God-speed. But, besides a certain goodwill that they feel for us, they entertain – as a nation with a very extended and ill-protected coast-line ought – a considerable dread of a maritime power that could close every port they possess, and lay some very important towns in ashes.

Now, it is exactly by the possession of a fleet that, in any future war between England and France, these people may be obliged to ally themselves to France. The French will want them in the Mediterranean, and they cannot refuse when called on.

Count Cavour always kept telling our Foreign Office, "A strong Italy is the best thing in the world for you. A strong Italy is the surest of all barriers against France." There may be some truth in the assertion if Italy could spring at once – Minerva

fashion – all armed and ready for combat, and stand out as a first-rate power in Europe; but to do this requires years of preparation, long years too; and it is precisely in these years of interval that France can become all-dominant in Italy – the master, and the not very merciful master, of her destinies in everything. France has the guardianship of Italy – with this addition, that she can make the minority last as long as she pleases.

Perhaps my Garibaldian companion has impregnated me with an unreasonable amount of anti-French susceptibility, for certainly he abuses our dear allies with a zeal and a gusto that does one's heart good to listen to; and I do feel like that honest Bull, commemorated by Mathews, that "I hate prejudice – I hate the French." So it is: these revolutionists, these levellers, these men of the people, are never weary of reviling the French Emperor for being a *parvenu*. Human inconsistency cannot go much farther than this. Not but I perfectly agree with my Garibaldian, that we have all agreed to take the most absurdly exaggerated estimate of the Emperor's ability. Except in some attempts, and not always successful attempts, to carry out the policy and plans of the first Empire, there is really nothing that deserves the name of statesmanship in his career. Wherever he has ventured on a policy, and accompanied it by a prediction, it has been a failure. Witness the proud declaration of Italy from the Alps to the Adriatic, with its corroboration in the Treaty of Villafranca! The Emperor, in his policy, resembles one of those whist-players who never plan a game, but play trick by trick, and

rather hope to win by discovering a revoke than from any honest success of their own hand. It is all the sharp practice of statecraft that he employs: nor has he many resources in cunning. The same dodge that served him in the Crimea he revived at Villafranca. It is always the same ace he has in his sleeve!

The most ardent Imperialist will not pretend to say that he knows his road out of Rome or Mexico, or even Madagascar. For small intrigue, short speeches to deputations, and mock stag-hunts, he has not his superior anywhere. And now, here we are in Genoa, at the Hotel Feder, where poor O'Connell died, and there's no fleet, not a frigate, in the port.

“Where are they?”

“At Spezia.”

“Where is Spezia?”

The landlord, to whom this question is propounded, takes out of a pigeon-hole of his desk a large map and unfolds it, saying, proudly, “There, sir, that is Spezia – a harbour that could hold Portsmouth, and Plymouth, and Brest, and Cherbourg – I'm not sure he didn't say Calais – “and yet have room for our Italian fleet, which, in two years' time, will be one of the first in Europe.”

“The ships are building, I suppose?” said I.

“They are.”

“And where?”

“In America, at Toulon, and in England.”

“None in Italy?”

“Pardon me; there is a corvette on the stocks at Leghorn, and they are repairing a boiler at Genoa. Ah! Signor John Bull, take care; we have iron and coal mines, we have oak and hemp, and tallow and tar. There was a winged lion once that swept the seas before people sang ‘Rule Britannia.’ History is going to repeat itself.”

“Let me be called at eight to-morrow morning, and my coffee be ready by nine.”

“And we shall want a vetturino for Spezia,” added my Garibaldian; “let him be here by eleven.”

GARIBALDI'S WORSHIPPERS

The road from Genoa to Spezia is one of the most beautiful in Europe. As the Apennines descend to the sea they form innumerable little bays and creeks, alongside of which the road winds – now coasting the very shore, now soaring aloft on high-perched cliffs, and looking down into deep dells, or to the waving tops of tall pine-trees. Seaward, it is a succession of yellow-stranded bays, land-locked and narrow; and on the land side are innumerable valleys, some waving with horse-chestnut and olive, and others stern and rock-bound, but varying in colour from the bluish-grey of marble to every shade of porphyry.

For several miles after we left Genoa, the road presented a succession of handsome villas, which, neglected and uncared for, and in most part untenanted, were yet so characteristically Italian in all their vast-ness – their massive style and spacious plan – as to be great ornaments of the scenery. Their gardens, too – such glorious wildernesses of rich profusion – where the fig and the oleander, the vine and the orange, tangle and intertwine – and cactuses, that would form the wonder of our conservatories, are trained into hedgerows to protect cabbages. My companion pointed out to me one of these villas on a little jutting promontory of rock, with a narrow bay on one side, almost hidden by the overhanging chestnut-trees. “That,” said he, “is the Villa Spinola. It was from there, after a supper with his friend Vecchi, that

Garibaldi sailed on his expedition to Marsala. A sort of decent secrecy was maintained as to the departure of the expedition; but the cheers of those on shore, as the boats pulled off, told that the brave buccaneers carried with them the heartfelt good wishes of their countrymen.” Wandering on in his talk from the campaign of Sicily and Calabria, my companion spoke of the last wild freak of Garibaldi and the day of Aspromonte, and finally of the hero’s imprisonment at Varignano, in the Gulf of Spezia.

It appeared from his account that the poor wounded sufferer would have fared very ill, had it not been for the provident kindness and care of his friends in England, who supplied him with everything he could want and a great deal he could by no possibility make use of. Wine of every kind, for instance, was largely sent to one who was a confirmed water-drinker, and who, except when obliged by the impure state of the water, never ventured to taste wine. If now and then the zealous anxiety to be of service had its ludicrous side – and packages arrived of which all the ingenuity of the General’s followers failed to detect what the meaning might be – there was something very noble and very touching in this spontaneous sympathy of a whole people, and so Garibaldi felt it.

The personal homage of the admirers – the worshippers they might be called – was, however, an infliction that often pushed the patience of Garibaldi’s followers to its limit, and would have overcome the gentle forbearance of any other living creature than Garibaldi himself. They came in shoals. Steamboats and

diligences were crammed with them, and the boatmen of Spezia plied as thriving a trade that summer as though Garibaldi were a saint, at whose shrine the devout of all Europe came to worship. In vain obstacles were multiplied and difficulties to entrance invented. In vain it was declared that only a certain number of visitors were daily admitted, and that the number was already complete. In vain the doctors announced that the General's condition was prejudiced, and his feverish state increased, by these continual invasions. Each new arrival was sure to imagine that there was something special or peculiar in his case to make him an exception to any rule of exclusion.

"I knew Garibaldi in Monte Video. You have only to tell him it's Tomkins; he'll be overjoyed to see me." "I travelled with him from Manchester to Bridgeport; he'll remember me when he sees me; I lent him a wrapper in the train." "I knew his son Menotti when at school." "I was in New York when Garibaldi was a chandler, and I was always asking for his candles;" such and suchlike were the claims which would not be denied. At last the infliction became insupportable. Some nights of unusual pain and suffering required that every precaution against excitement should be taken, and measures were accordingly concerted how visitors should be totally excluded. There was this difficulty in the matter, that it might fall at this precise moment some person of real consequence might have, or some one whose presence Garibaldi would really have been well pleased to enjoy. All these considerations were, however, postponed to the patient's safety,

and an order was sent to the several hotels where strangers usually stopped to announce that Garibaldi could not be seen.

“There is a story,” said my companion, “which I have heard more than once of this period, but for whose authenticity I will certainly not vouch. *Se non vero e' ben trovato*, as regards the circumstance. It was said that a party of English ladies had arrived at the chief hotel, having come as a deputation from some heaven-knows-what association in England, to see the General, and make their own report on his health, his appearance, and what they deemed his prospect of perfect recovery. They had come a very long journey, endured a considerable share of fatigues and certain police attentions, which are not exactly what are called amenities. They had come, besides, on an errand which might warrant a degree of insistence even were they – which they were not – of an order that patiently puts up with denial. When their demand for admission was replied to by a reference to the general order excluding all visitors, they indignantly refused to be classed in such a category. They were not idle tourists, or sensation-hunting travellers. They were a deputation! They came from the Associated Brothers and Sisters of Freedom – from the Branch Committee of the Ear of Crying Nationalities – they were not to be sent away in this light and thoughtless manner.

“The correspondence was animated. It lasted the whole day, and the last-sent epistle of the ladies bore the date of half-past eleven at night. This was a document of startling import; for, after expressing, and not always in most measured phrase, the

indignant disappointment of the writers, it went on to throw out, but in a cloud-like misty sort of way, the terrible consequences that might ensue when they returned to England with the story of their rejection.

“Perhaps this was a mere chance shot; at all events, it decided the battle. The Garibaldians read it as a declaration of strict blockade; and that, from the hour of these ladies’ arrival in England, all supplies would be stopped. Now, as it happened that, in by far the greater number of cases, the articles sent out found their way to the suite of Garibaldi, not to the General himself, and that cambric shirts and choice hosiery, silk vests, and fur-lined slippers, became the ordinary wear of people to whom such luxuries were not known even by description, it was no mean menace that seemed to declare all this was to have an end.

“One used to sleep in a rich fur dressing-gown; another took a bottle of Arundel’s port at his breakfast; a third was habituating himself to that English liqueur called ‘Punch sauce,’ and so on; and they very reasonably disliked coming back to the dietary supplied by Victor Emmanuel.

“It was in this critical emergency that an inventive genius developed itself. There was amongst the suite of Garibaldi an old surgeon, Eipari, one of the most faithful and attached of all his followers, and who bore that amount of resemblance to Garibaldi which could be imparted by hair, mustache, and beard of the same yellowish-red colour, and eyes somewhat closely set. To put the doctor in bed, and make him personate the General, was

the plan – a plan which, as it was meant to save his chief some annoyance, he would have acceded to were it to cost him far more than was now intended.

“To the half-darkened room, therefore, where Eipari lay dressed in his habitual red shirt, propped up by pillows, the deputation was introduced. The sight of the hero was, however, too much for them. One dropped, Madonna-wise, with hands clasped across her bosom, at the foot of his bed; another fainted as she passed the threshold; a third gained the bedside to grasp his hand, and sank down in an ecstasy of devotion to water it with her tears; while the strong-minded woman of the party took out her scissors and cut four several locks off that dear and noble head. They sobbed over him – they blubbered over him – they compared him with his photograph, and declared he was libelled – they showered cards over him to get his autograph; and when, at length, by persuasion, not unassisted by mild violence, they were induced to withdraw, they declared that, for those few moments of ecstasy, they’d have willingly made a pilgrimage to Mecca.

“It is said,” continued my informant, “that Ripari never could be induced to give another representation; and that he declared the luxuries that came from England were dear at the cost of being caressed by a deputation of sympathisers.

“But to Garibaldi himself, the sympathy and the sympathisers went on to the last; and kind wishes and winter-clothing still find their way, with occasionally very tiresome visitors, to the lone rock at Caprera.”

SOMETHING ABOUT SOLFERINO AND SHIPS

Our host of the Feder was not wrong. There was not a word of exaggeration in what he said of Spezia. It could contain all the harbours of France and England, and have room for all the fleets of Europe besides. About seven miles in depth, and varying in width from two to three and a half, it is fissured on every side by beautiful little bays, with deep water everywhere, and not a sunk rock, or shoal, or a bar, throughout the whole extent. Even the sea-opening of the Gulf has its protection by the long coast-line of Tuscany, stretching away to the southward and eastward, so that the security is perfect, and a vessel once anchored within the headlands between Lerici and Palmaria is as safe as in dock.

The first idea of making a great arsenal and naval depot of Spezia came from the Great Emperor. It is said that he was not more than one day there, but in that time he planned the fort which bears his name, and showed how the port could be rendered all but impregnable. Cavour took up the notion, and pursued it with all his wonted energy and activity during the last three or four years of his life. He carried through the Chamber his project, and obtained a vote for upwards of two millions sterling; but his death, which occurred soon after, was a serious blow to the undertaking; and, like most of the political legacies

of the great statesman, the arsenal of Spezia fell into the hands of weak executors.

The first great blunder committed was to accord the chief contract to a bubble company, who sold it, to be again resold; so that it is said something like fifteen changes of proprietary occurred before the first spadeful of earth was turned.

The inordinate jealousy Italians have of foreigners, and their fear lest they should “utilise” Italy, and carry away all her wealth with them, has been the source of innumerable mistakes. From this, and their own ignorance of marine engineering, Spezia has already, without the slightest evidence of a commencement, swallowed up above eight millions of francs – the only palpable results being the disfigurement of a very beautiful road, and the bankruptcy of some half-dozen contractors.

There is nothing of which one hears more, than of the readiness and facility with which an Italian learns a new art or a new trade, adapts himself to the use of new tools, and acquires a dexterity in the management of new machinery.

Every newly-come English engineer was struck with this, and expressed freely his anticipations of what so gifted a people might become. After a while, however, if questioned, he would confess himself disappointed – that after the first extraordinary show of intelligence no progress was made – that they seemed marvellous in the initiative, but did nothing after. They speedily grew weary of whatever they could do or say, no matter in what fashion, and impatiently desired to try something new. The

John Bull contentedness to attain perfection in some one branch, and never ask to go beyond it, was a sentiment they could not understand. Every one, in fact, would have liked to do everything, and, as a consequence, do it exceedingly ill.

Assuredly the Count Cavour was the political Marquis de Carabas of Italy. Everything you see was his! No other head seemed to contrive, no other eye to see, nor ear to hear. These railroads – as much for military movements as passenger traffic – this colossal harbour, even to the two iron-clads that lie there at anchor – were all of his designing. They are ugly-looking craft, and have a look of pontoons rather than ships of war; but they are strong, and have a low draught of water, and were intended especially for the attack of Venice, just when the Emperor pulled up short at Villafranca. It is not generally known, I believe, but I can vouch for the fact, that so terrified were the Austrians on receiving at Venice the disastrous news of Solferino, that three of the largest steamers of the Austrian Lloyd's Company were brought up, and sunk within twelve hours after the battle. So hurriedly was the whole done that no time was given to remove the steward's stores, and the vessels went down as they stood!

This reminds me of a little incident, for whose exact truth I can guarantee. On the day of the battle of Solferino, the Austrian Envoy at Rome dined with the Cardinal Antonelli. It was a very joyous little dinner, each in the highest spirits – satisfied with the present, and full of hope for the future. The telegram which arrived at mid-day told that the troops were in motion, and that

the artillery fire had already opened. The position was a noble one – the army full of spirit, and all confident that before the sun should set the tide of victory would have turned, and the white legions of the Danube be in hot pursuit of their flying enemy. Indeed, the Envoy came to dinner fortified with a mass of letters from men high in command, all of which assumed as indisputable that the French must be beaten. Of the Italians they never spoke at all.

As the two friends sat over the dessert, they discussed what at that precise moment might be going on over the battlefield. Was the conflict still continuing? Had the French reserves been brought up? Had they, too, been thrown back, beaten and disordered? and where was the fourth corps under the Prince Napoleon? They were forty thousand strong – could they have arrived in time from the Po? All these casualties, and many others, did they talk over, but never once launching a doubt as to the issue, or ever dreaming that the day was not to reverse all the late past, and bring back the Austrians in triumph to Milan.

As they sat, the Prefect of Police was announced and introduced. He came with the list of the persons who were to be arrested and sent to prison – they were one hundred and eighteen, some of them among the first families of Rome – so soon as certain tidings of the victory arrived, and the game of reaction might be safe to begin.

“No news yet, Signor Prefetto! come back at ten,” said the Cardinal

At ten he presented himself once more. The Cardinal and his friend were taking coffee, but less joyous, it seemed, than before. At least they looked anxious for news, and started at every noise in the street that might announce new-come tidings. "We have heard nothing since you were here," said the Cardinal. "His Excellency thinks that, at a moment of immense exigency, they may not have immediately bethought them of sending off a despatch."

"There can be no doubt what the news will be when it comes," said the Envoy, "and I'd say, make the arrests at once."

"I don't know; I'm not sure. I think I'd rather counsel a little more patience," said the Cardinal. "What if you were to come back at, let us say, midnight." The Prefect bowed, and withdrew.

At midnight it was the same scene, only that the actors were more agitated; the Envoy, at least, worked up to a degree of impatience that bordered on fever; for while he persisted in declaring that the result was certain, he continued to censure, in very-severe terms, the culpable carelessness of those charged with the transmission of news. "Ah!" cried he, "there it comes at last!" and a loud summons at the bell resounded through the house.

"A telegram, Eminence," said the servant, entering with the despatch. The Envoy tore it open: there were but two words, – "*Sanglante dérouté.*"

The Cardinal took the paper from the hands of the overwhelmed and panic-struck minister, and read it. He stood

for a few seconds gazing on the words, not a line or lineament in his face betraying the slightest emotion; then, turning to the Envoy, he said, “Bon soir; allons dormir;” and moved away with his usual quick little step, and retired.

And all this time I have been forgetting the Italian fleet, which lies yonder beneath me. The Garibaldi, that they took from the Neapolitans; the Duca di Genova, the Maria Adelaide, and the Regina are there, all screw-propellers of fifty guns each; the Etna, a steam-corvette; and some six or seven old sailing craft, used as school ships; and, lastly, the two cuirassée gunboats, Formidabile and Terribile, and which, with a jealousy imitated from the French, no one is admitted on board of. They are provided with “rams” under the water-line, and have a strange apparatus by which about one-third of the deck towards the bow can be raised, like the lid of a snuff-box, leaving the forepart of the ship almost on a level with the water. Under what circumstances, and how, this provision is to be made available, I have not the very vaguest conception.

These vessels were never intended as sea-going ships; and the batteries are an exaggeration of the mistake in the Gloire, for even with the slightest sea the ports must be closed. Besides this defect, they roll abominably, and with a full head of steam on they cannot accomplish seven knots.

Turning from the ships to the harbour, I could not help thinking of Sydney Smith’s remark on the Reform Club, “I prefer your room to your company;” for, after all, what a sorry stud it is

for such a magnificent stable! It is but a beginning, you will say. True enough, and so is everything just now here; but, except the Genoese, the Italians have few real sailors. There are no deep-sea fisheries, and the small craft which creep along close to shore are not the nurseries of seamen. The world, however, has resolved, by a large vote, to be hopeful about Italy; and, of course, she will have a fleet, as she will have all the trade of the Levant, immensely productive mines, and vast regions of cotton. "What for no?" as Meg Dodds says; but I can't help thinking there are no people in Europe so much alike as the Italians and the Irish; and I ask myself, How is it that every one is so sanguine about the one, and so hopeless about the other? Why do we hear of the capacity and the intelligence of the former, and only of the latter what pertains to their ignorance and their sloth? Oh! unjust generation of men! have not my poor countrymen all the qualities you extol in these same Peninsulars, plus a few others not to be disparaged?

THE STRANGER AT THE CROCE DI MALTA

At the Croce di Malta, where we stopped – the Odessa, we heard, was atrociously bad – we met a somewhat depressed countryman, whose familiarity with place and people was indicated by several little traits. He rebuked the waiter for the salad oil, and was speedily supplied with better; he remonstrated about the wine, and a superior “cru” was served the day following. The book of the arrivals, too, was brought to him each day as he sat down to table, and he grunted out, I remember, in no very complimentary fashion as he read our names, “Nobodies.”

My Garibaldian friend had gone over to Massa, so that I found myself alone with this gentleman on the night of my arrival; for, when the company of the *table-d'hôte* withdrew, he and I were discovered, as the stage-people say, seated opposite to each other at the fire.

It blew hard without; the sea beat loudly on the shingly shore, and even sent some drifts of spray against the windows; while within doors a cheerful wood-fire blazed on the ample hearth, and the low-ceilinged room did not look a whit the worse that it suggested snugness instead of splendour. I had got my cup of coffee and my cognac on a little table beside me; and while I filled the bowl of my pipe, I bethought me how cheap and come-

at-able are often the materials of our comfort, if one had but the prudence which ignores all display. My companion, apparently otherwise occupied in thought, sat gazing moodily at the fire, and to all seeming unaware of my presence.

“Will my smoking annoy you, sir?” asked I, as I was ready to begin.

“No,” said he, without looking up. “I’d like to know where one could go to live nowadays if it did.”

“Very true,” said I; “the practice is almost universal”

“So is child-murder, so is profane swearing, so is wearing a beard, and poisoning by strychnine.”

I was somewhat struck by his enumeration of modern atrocities, and I said, in a tone intended to invite converse, “You are no admirer, then, of what some are fain to call progress?”

He started, and, turning a fierce sharp glance on me, said, “I’d rather you’d touch me with that hot poker there, sir, than hurl that hateful word at my ears. If there’s a thing I hate the most, it’s what cant – a vile modern slang – calls ‘Progress.’ You’re just in the spot at this moment to mark one of its high successes. Do you know Spezia?” “Not in the least; never was here before.” “Well, sir, I have known it, I’ll not stop to count how many years; but I knew it when that spot yonder, where you see that vile tall chimney, with its tail of murky smoke, was a beautiful little villa, all overgrown with fig and olive trees. Where you perceive that red glare – the flame of a smelting furnace – there was an orangery. I ought to know the spot well.

There, where a summerhouse stood, on that rocky point, they have got a crane and a windlass. Now, turn to this other side. The road you saw to-day, crossed with four main lines, cut up, almost impassable between mud, rubbish, and fallen timber, with swampy excavations on one side and brick-fields on the other, led – ay, and not four years ago – along the margin of the sea, with a forest of chestnuts on the other side, two lines of acacias forming a shade along it, so that in the mid-day of an Italian July you might walk it in delicious shadow. In the Gulf itself the whole scene was mirrored, and not a headland, nor rock, nor cliff, that was not pictured below. It was, in a word, a little paradise; nor were the people all unworthy of their lovely birthplace. They were a quiet, civil, obliging, simple-minded set – if not inviting strangers to settle amongst them, never rude or repelling to them; equitable in dealings, and strange to all disturbance or outrage. What they are now is no more easy to say than what a rivulet is when a torrent has carried away its banks and swept its bed. Two thousand navvies, the out sweepings of jails and the galleys, have come down to the works; a horde of contractors, sub-contractors, with the several staffs of clerks, inspectors, and suchlike, have settled on the spot, ravaging its beauty, uprooting its repose, vulgarising its simple rusticity, and converting the very gem of the Mediterranean into a dreary swamp – a vast amphitheatre, where liberated felons, robbing contractors, foul miasma, centrifugal pumps, and tertian fevers, fight all day for the mastery. And for what? – for what? To fill the pockets of

knavish ministers and thieving officials – to make an arsenal that will never be finished, for a fleet that will never be built.” My companion, it is needless to say, was no optimist; but the strange point was, that while he was unsparing of his censure on Cavour and the “Piedmontese party,” he was no apologist for the old state of things in Italy. So far from it, that he launched out freely in attack of Papal bigotry, superstition, and corruption, and freely corroborated our own Premier’s assertions, by calling the Pope’s the “worst government in Europe.” In fact, he showed very clearly that the smaller states of Italy were well or ill administered in the direct ratio that they admitted or rejected Papal interference, – Modena being the worst, and Tuscany the best of them.

Though he certainly knew his subject so far as details went – for he not merely knew Italy well in its several provinces, but he understood the characters and tempers of the leading Italians – yet, with all this, I could not help asking him, If he was not satisfied with the old Italy, and yet did not like the new, what he did wish for?

“I have my theory on that subject, sir,” said he; “nor am I the less enamoured of it that I never yet met the man I could induce to adopt it.”

“It is no worse than the fate of all discoverers, I suppose,” said I; “Columbus saw land two whole days before his followers.”

“Columbus was a humbug, sir, and no more discovered America than you did.”

I was so afraid of a digression here that I stammered out a

partial concurrence, and asked for some account of his project for Italy.

“I’d unite her to Greece, sir. These people, with the exception of a small circle around Rome, are not Latins – they are Greeks. I’d bring them back to the parent stock, who are the only people in Europe with craft and subtlety to rule them. Take my word for it, sir, they’d not cheat the ‘Hellenes’ as they do the French and the English; and as the only true way to reform a nation is to make vice unprofitable, I’d unite them to a race that could outgoue and outwit them on every hand. What is it, I ask you, makes of the sluggish, indolent, careless Irishman, the prudent, hard-working, prosperous fellow you see him in the States? Simply the fact, that the craft by which he outwitted John Bull no longer serves him. The Yankee is too shrewd to be jockeyed by it, and Paddy must use his hands instead of his head. The same would happen with the Italian. Give him a Greek master, and you’ll see what he’ll become.”

“But the Greeks, after all,” said I, “do not present such a splendid example of order and prosperity. They are little better than brigands.”

“And don’t you see why?” broke he in. “Have you ever looked into a gambling-house when the company had no ‘pigeon,’ and were obliged to play against each other. They have lost all decency – all the semblance of good manners and decorum. Whatever little politeness they had put on to impose upon the outsider was gone, and there they were in all the naked atrocity of

their bad natures. It is thus you see the Greeks. You have dropped in upon them unfairly; you have invaded a privacy they had hoped might be respected. Give them a nation to cheat, however; let the pigeon be introduced, and you'll not see a better bred and a more courtly people in Europe."

That they had great social qualities he proceeded to show from a number of examples. They were, in fact, in the world of long ago what the French are to our own day, and there was no reason to suppose that the race had lost its old characteristics. According to my companion's theory, Force had only its brief interval of domination anywhere; the superior intelligence was sure to gain the upper hand at last; and we, in our opposition to this law, were supply retarding an inevitable tendency of nature – protracting the fulfilment of what we could not prevent.

I got him back from these speculations to speak of himself, and he told me some experiences which will, perhaps, account for the displeasure with which he regards the changed fortunes of Spezia. I shall give his narrative as nearly as I can in his own words, and in a chapter to itself.

THE STRANGE MAN'S SORROW

“When I first knew Spezia, it was a very charming spot to pass the summer in. The English had not found it out. A bottle of Harvey sauce or a copy of ‘Galignani’ had never been seen here; and the morning meal, which now figures in my bill as ‘Dejeuner complet – two francs.’ was then called ‘Coffee,’ and priced twopence. I used to pass my day in a small sail-boat, and in my evenings I played halfpenny whist with the judge and the commander of the forces and a retired envoy, who, out of a polite attention to me as a stranger, agreed to play such high stakes during my sojourn at the Baths.

“They were excellent people, of unblemished character, and a politeness I have rarely seen equalled. Nobody could sneeze without the whole company rising to wish him a long and prosperous life, or a male heir to his name; and as for turning the trump card without a smile and a bow all round to the party, it was a thing unheard of.

“I thought if I could only secure a spot to live in in such an Arcadia, it would be charming, but this was a great difficulty. No one had any accommodation more than he wanted for himself. The very isolation that gave the place its charm excluded all speculation, and not a house was to be had. In my voyagings, however, around the Gulf, I landed one day at a little inlet, surrounded with high lands, and too small to be called a bay, and

there, to my intense astonishment, I discovered a small villa. It looked exactly like the houses one sees in a toy-shop, and where you take off the roof to peep in and see how neatly the stairs are made and the rooms divided; but there was a large garden at one side and an orangery at the other, and it all looked the neatest and prettiest little thing one ever saw off the boards of a minor theatre. I drew my boat on shore and strolled into the garden, but saw no one, not even a dog. There was a deep well with a draw-bucket, and I filled my gourd with ice-cold water; and then plucking a ripe orange that had just given me a bob in the eye, I sat down to eat it. While I was engaged, I heard a wicket open and shut, and saw an old man, very shabbily dressed, and with a mushroom straw hat, coming towards me. Before I could make excuses for my intrusion, he had welcomed me to Pertusola – ‘The Nook,’ in English – and invited me to step in and have a glass of wine.

“I took him for the steward or *fattore*, and acceded, not sorry to ask some questions about the villa and its owner. He showed me over the house, explaining with much pride how a certain kitchen-range came from England, though nobody ever knew the use of it, but it was all very comfortable. The silk-worms and dried figs and salt-fish occupied more space, and contributed more odour, perhaps, than a correct taste would have approved of. Yet there were capabilities – great capabilities; and so, before I left, I took it from the old gentleman in the rusty costume, who turned out to be the proprietor, a marquis, the ‘*commendatore*’

of I don't know what order, and various other dignities beside, all recited and set forth in the lease.

“I suppose I have something of Robinson Crusoe in my nature, for I loved the isolation of this spot immensely. It wasn't an island, but it was all but an island. Towards the land, two jutting promontories of rock denied access to anything not a goat; the sea in front; an impenetrable pine wood to the rear: and there I lived so happily, so snugly, that even now, when I want a pleasant theme to doze over beside my wood-fire of an evening, I just call up Pertusola, and ramble once again through its olive groves, or watch the sunset tints as they glow over the Carara mountains.

“I smartened the place up wonderfully, within doors and without. I got flowers, roots, and annuals, and slips of geraniums, and made the little plateau under my drawing-room window a blaze of tulips and ranunculuses, so that the Queen – she was at Spezia for the bathing – came once to see my garden, as one of the show spots of the place. Her Majesty was as gracious as only royalty knows how to be, and so were all her suite in their several ways; but there was one short, fat, pale-faced man, with enormous spectacles, who, if less polite than the rest, was ten times as inquisitive. He asked about the soil, and the drainage, the water and its quality – was it a spring – did it ever fail – and when, and how? Then as to the bay itself, was it sheltered, and from what winds? What the anchorage was like – mud – and why mud? And when I said there was always a breeze even in summer, he eagerly pushed me to explain, why? and I did

explain that there was a cleft or gully between the hills, which acted as a sort of conductor to the wind; and on this he went back to verify my statement, and spent some time poking about, examining everything, and stationing himself here and there on points of rock, to experience the currents of air. ‘You are right,’ said he, as he got into his boat, ‘quite right; there is a glorious draught here for a smelting-furnace.’

“I thought it odd praise at the time, but before six months I received notice to quit.

“Pertusola had been sold to a lead company, one of the directors having strongly recommended the site as an admirable harbour, with good water, and a perpetual draught of wind, equal to a blast-furnace.”

Looking at the dress-coat in which you once captivated dinner-parties, on a costeimonger – seeing the strong-boned hunter that has carried you over post and rail, in a cab, – are sore trials; but nothing, according to my companion’s description, to the desecration of your house and home by its conversion into a factory. Such an air of the “Inferno,” too, pervades the smelting-house, with its lurid glow, its roar, its flash, and its furious heat, that I could readily forgive him the passionate warmth with which he described it.

“They had begun that chimney, sir,” cried he, “before I got out of the house. I had to cross on a plank over a pit before my door, where they were riddling the ore. The morning I left, I covered my eyes, not to see the barbaric glee with which they destroyed all

around, and I left the place for ever. I crossed over the Gulf, and I took that house you can see on the rocky point called Marola. It had no water; there was no depth to anchor in; and not a breath of air could come at it except in stillness. No more terrors of smelting-house here, thought I. Well, sir, I must be brief; the whole is too painful to dwell on. I hadn't been eight months there when a little steamer ran in one morning, and four persons in plain clothes landed from her, and potted about the shore – I thought looking for anemones. At last they strolled up to my house, and asked permission to have a look at the Gulf from my terrace. I acceded, and in they came. They were all strangers but one, and who do you think he was? The creature with the large spectacles! My blood ran cold when I saw him.

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