

GIACOMO CASANOVA

THE MEMOIRS OF
JACQUES CASANOVA DE
SEINGALT, 1725-1798.
VOLUME 03: MILITARY
CAREER

Giacomo Casanova
The Memoirs of Jacques
Casanova de Seingalt, 1725-1798.
Volume 03: Military Career

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=34840030
The Memoirs of Jacques Casanova de Seingalt, 1725-1798. Volume 03:
Military Career:

Содержание

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| CHAPTER XIII | 4 |
| CHAPTER XIV | 25 |
| Конец ознакомительного фрагмента. | 43 |

Giacomo Casanova

The Memoirs of Jacques Casanova de Seingalt, 1725-1798. Volume 03: Military Career

CHAPTER XIII

I Renounce the Clerical Profession, and Enter the Military Service—Therese Leaves for Naples, and I Go to Venice—I Am Appointed Ensign in the Army of My Native Country—I Embark for Corfu, and Land at Orsera to Take a Walk

I had been careful, on my arrival in Bologna, to take up my quarters at a small inn, so as not to attract any notice, and as soon as I had dispatched my letters to Therese and the French officer, I thought of purchasing some linen, as it was at least doubtful whether I should ever get my trunk. I deemed it expedient to order some clothes likewise. I was thus ruminating, when it suddenly struck me that I was not likely now to succeed in the Church, but feeling great uncertainty as to the profession I ought

to adopt, I took a fancy to transform myself into an officer, as it was evident that I had not to account to anyone for my actions. It was a very natural fancy at my age, for I had just passed through two armies in which I had seen no respect paid to any garb but to the military uniform, and I did not see why I should not cause myself to be respected likewise. Besides, I was thinking of returning to Venice, and felt great delight at the idea of shewing myself there in the garb of honour, for I had been rather ill-treated in that of religion.

I enquired for a good tailor: death was brought to me, for the tailor sent to me was named Morte. I explained to him how I wanted my uniform made, I chose the cloth, he took my measure, and the next day I was transformed into a follower of Mars. I procured a long sword, and with my fine cane in hand, with a well-brushed hat ornamented with a black cockade, and wearing a long false pigtail, I sallied forth and walked all over the city.

I bethought myself that the importance of my new calling required a better and more showy lodging than the one I had secured on my arrival, and I moved to the best inn. I like even now to recollect the pleasing impression I felt when I was able to admire myself full length in a large mirror. I was highly pleased with my own person! I thought myself made by nature to wear and to honour the military costume, which I had adopted through the most fortunate impulse. Certain that nobody knew me, I enjoyed by anticipation all the conjectures which people would indulge in respecting me, when I made my first appearance in

the most fashionable cafe of the town.

My uniform was white, the vest blue, a gold and silver shoulder-knot, and a sword-knot of the same material. Very well pleased with my grand appearance, I went to the coffee-room, and, taking some chocolate, began to read the newspapers, quite at my ease, and delighted to see that everybody was puzzled. A bold individual, in the hope of getting me into conversation, came to me and addressed me; I answered him with a monosyllable, and I observed that everyone was at a loss what to make of me. When I had sufficiently enjoyed public admiration in the coffee-room, I promenaded in the busiest thoroughfares of the city, and returned to the inn, where I had dinner by myself.

I had just concluded my repast when my landlord presented himself with the travellers' book, in which he wanted to register my name.

"Casanova."

"Your profession, if you please, sir?"

"Officer."

"In which service?"

"None."

"Your native place?"

"Venice."

"Where do you come from?"

"That is no business of yours."

This answer, which I thought was in keeping with my external appearance, had the desired effect: the landlord bowed himself

out, and I felt highly pleased with myself, for I knew that I should enjoy perfect freedom in Bologna, and I was certain that mine host had visited me at the instance of some curious person eager to know who I was.

The next day I called on M. Orsi, the banker, to cash my bill of exchange, and took another for six hundred sequins on Venice, and one hundred sequins in gold after which I again exhibited myself in the public places. Two days afterwards, whilst I was taking my coffee after dinner, the banker Orsi was announced. I desired him to be shewn in, and he made his appearance accompanied my Monsignor Cornaro, whom I feigned not to know. M. Orsi remarked that he had called to offer me his services for my letters of exchange, and introduced the prelate. I rose and expressed my gratification at making his acquaintance. "But we have met before," he replied, "at Venice and Rome." Assuming an air of blank surprise, I told him he must certainly be mistaken. The prelate, thinking he could guess the reason of my reserve, did not insist, and apologized. I offered him a cup of coffee, which he accepted, and, on leaving me, he begged the honour of my company to breakfast the next day.

I made up my mind to persist in my denials, and called upon the prelate, who gave me a polite welcome. He was then apostolic prothonotary in Bologna. Breakfast was served, and as we were sipping our chocolate, he told me that I had most likely some good reasons to warrant my reserve, but that I was wrong not to trust him, the more so that the affair in question

did me great honour. "I do not know," said I, "what affair you are alluding to." He then handed me a newspaper, telling me to read a paragraph which he pointed out. My astonishment may be imagined when I read the following correspondence from Pesaro: "M. de Casanova, an officer in the service of the queen, has deserted after having killed his captain in a duel; the circumstances of the duel are not known; all that has been ascertained is that M. de Casanova has taken the road to Rimini, riding the horse belonging to the captain, who was killed on the spot."

In spite of my surprise, and of the difficulty I had in keeping my gravity at the reading of the paragraph, in which so much untruth was blended with so little that was real, I managed to keep a serious countenance, and I told the prelate that the Casanova spoken of in the newspaper must be another man.

"That may be, but you are certainly the Casanova I knew a month ago at Cardinal Acquaviva's, and two years ago at the house of my sister, Madame Lovedan, in Venice. Besides the Ancona banker speaks of you as an ecclesiastic in his letter of advice to M. Orsi."

"Very well, monsignor; your excellency compels me to agree to my being the same Casanova, but I entreat you not to ask me any more questions as I am bound in honour to observe the strictest reserve."

"That is enough for me, and I am satisfied. Let us talk of something else."

I was amused at the false reports which were being circulated about me, and, I became from that moment a thorough sceptic on the subject of historical truth. I enjoyed, however, very great pleasure in thinking that my reserve had fed the belief of my being the Casanova mentioned in the newspaper. I felt certain that the prelate would write the whole affair to Venice, where it would do me great honour, at least until the truth should be known, and in that case my reserve would be justified, besides, I should then most likely be far away. I made up my mind to go to Venice as soon as I heard from Therese, as I thought that I could wait for her there more comfortably than in Bologna, and in my native place there was nothing to hinder me from marrying her openly. In the mean time the fable from Pesaro amused me a good deal, and I expected every day to see it denied in some newspaper. The real officer Casanova must have laughed at the accusation brought against him of having run away with the horse, as much as I laughed at the caprice which had metamorphosed me into an officer in Bologna, just as if I had done it for the very purpose of giving to the affair every appearance of truth.

On the fourth day of my stay in Bologna, I received by express a long letter from Therese. She informed me that, on the day after my escape from Rimini, Baron Vais had presented to her the Duke de Castropignano, who, having heard her sing, had offered her one thousand ounces a year, and all travelling expenses paid, if she would accept an engagement as prima-donna at

the San Carlo Theatre, at Naples, where she would have to go immediately after her Rimini engagement. She had requested and obtained a week to come to a decision. She enclosed two documents, the first was the written memorandum of the duke's proposals, which she sent in order that I should peruse it, as she did not wish to sign it without my consent; the second was a formal engagement, written by herself, to remain all her life devoted to me and at my service. She added in her letter that, if I wished to accompany her to Naples, she would meet me anywhere I might appoint, but that, if I had any objection to return to that city, she would immediately refuse the brilliant offer, for her only happiness was to please me in all things.

For the first time in my life I found myself in need of thoughtful consideration before I could make up my mind. Therese's letter had entirely upset all my ideas, and, feeling that I could not answer it at once, I told the messenger to call the next day.

Two motives of equal weight kept the balance wavering; self-love and love for Therese. I felt that I ought not to require Therese to give up such prospects of fortune; but I could not take upon myself either to let her go to Naples without me, or to accompany her there. On one side, I shuddered at the idea that my love might ruin Therese's prospects; on the other side, the idea of the blow inflicted on my self-love, on my pride, if I went to Naples with her, sickened me.

How could I make up my mind to reappear in that city, in the

guise of a cowardly fellow living at the expense of his mistress or his wife? What would my cousin Antonio, Don Polo and his dear son, Don Lelio Caraffa, and all the patricians who knew me, have said? The thought of Lucrezia and of her husband sent a cold shiver through me. I considered that, in spite of my love for Therese, I should become very miserable if everyone despised me. Linked to her destiny as a lover or as a husband, I would be a degraded, humbled, and mean sycophant. Then came the thought, Is this to be the end of all my hopes? The die was cast, my head had conquered my heart. I fancied that I had hit upon an excellent expedient, which at all events made me gain time, and I resolved to act upon it. I wrote to Therese, advising her to accept the engagement for Naples, where she might expect me to join her in the month of July, or after my return from Constantinople. I cautioned her to engage an honest-looking waiting-woman, so as to appear respectably in the world, and, to lead such a life as would permit me to make her my wife, on my return, without being ashamed of myself. I foresaw that her success would be insured by her beauty even more than by her talent, and, with my nature, I knew that I could never assume the character of an easy-going lover or of a compliant husband.

Had I received Therese's letter one week sooner, it is certain that she would not have gone to Naples, for my love would then have proved stronger than my reason; but in matters of love, as well as in all others, Time is a great teacher.

I told Therese to direct her answer to Bologna, and, three days

after, I received from her a letter loving, and at the same time sad, in which she informed me that she had signed the engagement. She had secured the services of a woman whom she could present as her mother; she would reach Naples towards the middle of May, and she would wait for me there till she heard from me that I no longer wanted her.

Four days after the receipt of that letter, the last but one that Therese wrote me, I left Bologna for Venice. Before my departure I had received an answer from the French officer, advising me that my passport had reached Pesaro, and that he was ready to forward it to me with my trunk, if I would pay M. Marcello Birna, the proveditore of the Spanish army, whose address he enclosed, the sum of fifty doubloons for the horse which I had run away with, or which had run away with me. I repaired at once to the house of the proveditore, well pleased to settle that affair, and I received my trunk and my passport a few hours before leaving Bologna. But as my paying for the horse was known all over the town, Monsignor Cornaro was confirmed in his belief that I had killed my captain in a duel.

To go to Venice, it was necessary to submit to a quarantine, which had been adhered to only because the two governments had fallen out. The Venetians wanted the Pope to be the first in giving free passage through his frontiers, and the Pope insisted that the Venetians should take the initiative. The result of this trifling pique between the two governments was great hindrance to commerce, but very often that which bears only upon the

private interest of the people is lightly treated by the rulers. I did not wish to be quarantined, and determined on evading it. It was rather a delicate undertaking, for in Venice the sanitary laws are very strict, but in those days I delighted in doing, if not everything that was forbidden, at least everything which offered real difficulties.

I knew that between the state of Mantua and that of Venice the passage was free, and I knew likewise that there was no restriction in the communication between Mantua and Modena; if I could therefore penetrate into the state of Mantua by stating that I was coming from Modena, my success would be certain, because I could then cross the Po and go straight to Venice. I got a carrier to drive me to Revere, a city situated on the river Po, and belonging to the state of Mantua.

The driver told me that, if he took the crossroads, he could go to Revere, and say that we came from Mantua, and that the only difficulty would be in the absence of the sanitary certificate which is delivered in Mantua, and which was certain to be asked for in Revere. I suggested that the best way to manage would be for him to say that he had lost it, and a little money removed every objection on his part.

When we reached the gates of Revere, I represented myself as a Spanish officer going to Venice to meet the Duke of Modena (whom I knew to be there) on business of the greatest importance. The sanitary certificate was not even demanded, military honours were duly paid to me, and I was most civilly

treated. A certificate was immediately delivered to me, setting forth that I was travelling from Revere, and with it I crossed the Po, without any difficulty, at Ostiglia, from which place I proceeded to Legnago. There I left my carrier as much pleased with my generosity as with the good luck which had attended our journey, and, taking post-horses, I reached Venice in the evening. I remarked that it was the end of April, 1744, the anniversary of my birth, which, ten times during my life, has been marked by some important event.

The very next morning I went to the exchange in order to procure a passage to Constantinople, but I could not find any passenger ship sailing before two or three months, and I engaged a berth in a Venetian ship called, Our Lady of the Rosary, Commander Zane, which was to sail for Corfu in the course of the month.

Having thus prepared myself to obey my destiny, which, according to my superstitious feelings, called me imperiously to Constantinople, I went to St: Mark's Square in order to see and to be seen, enjoying by anticipation the surprise of my acquaintances at not finding me any longer an abbe. I must not forget to state that at Revere I had decorated my hat with a red cockade.

I thought that my first visit was, by right, due to the Abbe Grimani. The moment he saw me he raised a perfect shriek of astonishment, for he thought I was still with Cardinal Acquaviva, on the road to a political career, and he saw standing before him a

son of Mars. He had just left the dinner-table as I entered, and he had company. I observed amongst the guests an officer wearing the Spanish uniform, but I was not put out of countenance. I told the Abbe Grimani that I was only passing through Venice, and that I had felt it a duty and a pleasure to pay my respects to him.

"I did not expect to see you in such a costume."

"I have resolved to throw off the garb which could not procure me a fortune likely to satisfy my ambition."

"Where are you going?"

"To Constantinople; and I hope to find a quick passage to Corfu, as I have dispatches from Cardinal Acquaviva."

"Where do you come from now?"

"From the Spanish army, which I left ten days ago."

These words were hardly spoken, when I heard the voice of a young nobleman exclaiming;

"That is not true."

"The profession to which I belong," I said to him with great animation, "does not permit me to let anyone give me the lie."

And upon that, bowing all round, I went away, without taking any notice of those who were calling me back.

I wore an uniform; it seemed to me that I was right in showing that sensitive and haughty pride which forms one of the characteristics of military men. I was no longer a priest: I could not bear being given the lie, especially when it had been given to me in so public a manner.

I called upon Madame Manzoni, whom I was longing to see.

She was very happy to see me, and did not fail to remind me of her prediction. I told her my history, which amused her much; but she said that if I went to Constantinople I should most likely never see her again.

After my visit to Madame Manzoni I went to the house of Madame Orio, where I found worthy M. Rosa, Nanette, and Marton. They were all greatly surprised, indeed petrified at seeing me. The two lovely sisters looked more beautiful than ever, but I did not think it necessary to tell them the history of my nine months absence, for it would not have edified the aunt or pleased the nieces. I satisfied myself with telling them as much as I thought fit, and amused them for three hours. Seeing that the good old lady was carried away by her enthusiasm, I told her that I should be very happy to pass under her roof the four or five weeks of my stay in Venice, if she could give me a room and supper, but on condition that I should not prove a burden to her or to her charming nieces.

"I should be only too happy," she answered, "to have you so long, but I have no room to offer you."

"Yes, you have one, my dear," exclaimed M. Rosa, "and I undertake to put it to rights within two hours."

It was the room adjoining the chamber of the two sisters. Nanette said immediately that she would come downstairs with her sister, but Madame Orio answered that it was unnecessary, as they could lock themselves in their room.

"There would be no need for them to do that, madam," I said,

with a serious and modest air; "and if I am likely to occasion the slightest disturbance, I can remain at the inn."

"There will be no disturbance whatever; but forgive my nieces, they are young prudes, and have a very high opinion of themselves:"

Everything being satisfactorily arranged, I forced upon Madame Orio a payment of fifteen sequins in advance, assuring her that I was rich, and that I had made a very good bargain, as I should spend a great deal more if I kept my room at the inn. I added that I would send my luggage, and take up my quarters in her house on the following day. During the whole of the conversation, I could see the eyes of my two dear little wives sparkling with pleasure, and they reconquered all their influence over my heart in spite of my love for Therese, whose image was, all the same, brilliant in my soul: this was a passing infidelity, but not inconstancy.

On the following day I called at the war office, but, to avoid every chance of unpleasantness, I took care to remove my cockade. I found in the office Major Pelodoro, who could not control his joy when he saw me in a military uniform, and hugged me with delight. As soon as I had explained to him that I wanted to go to Constantinople, and that, although in uniform, I was free, he advised me earnestly to seek the favour of going to Turkey with the bailo, who intended to leave within two months, and even to try to obtain service in the Venetian army.

His advice suited me exactly, and the secretary of war, who

had known me the year before, happening to see me, summoned me to him. He told me that he had received letters from Bologna which had informed him of a certain adventure entirely to my honour, adding that he knew that I would not acknowledge it. He then asked me if I had received my discharge before leaving the Spanish army.

"I could not receive my discharge, as I was never in the service."

"And how did you manage to come to Venice without performing quarantine?"

"Persons coming from Mantua are not subject to it."

"True; but I advise you to enter the Venetian service like Major Pelodoro."

As I was leaving the ducal palace, I met the Abbe Grimani who told me that the abrupt manner in which I had left his house had displeased everybody.

"Even the Spanish officer?"

"No, for he remarked that, if you had truly been with the army, you could not act differently, and he has himself assured me that you were there, and to prove what he asserted he made me read an article in the newspaper, in which it is stated that you killed your captain in a duel. Of course it is only a fable?"

"How do you know that it is not a fact?"

"Is it true, then?"

"I do not say so, but it may be true, quite as true as my having been with the Spanish army ten days ago."

"But that is impossible, unless you have broken through the quarantine."

"I have broken nothing. I have openly crossed the Po at Revere, and here I am. I am sorry not to be able to present myself at your excellency's palace, but I cannot do so until I have received the most complete satisfaction from the person who has given me the lie. I could put up with an insult when I wore the livery of humility, but I cannot bear one now that I wear the garb of honour."

"You are wrong to take it in such a high tone. The person who attacked your veracity is M. Valmarana, the proveditore of the sanitary department, and he contends that, as nobody can pass through the cordon, it would be impossible for you to be here. Satisfaction, indeed! Have you forgotten who you are?"

"No, I know who I am; and I know likewise that, if I was taken for a coward before leaving Venice, now that I have returned no one shall insult me without repenting it."

"Come and dine with me."

"No, because the Spanish officer would know it."

"He would even see you, for he dines with me every day."

"Very well, then I will go, and I will let him be the judge of my quarrel with M. Valmarana."

I dined that day with Major Pelodoro and several other officers, who agreed in advising me to enter the service of the Republic, and I resolved to do so. "I am acquainted," said the major, "with a young lieutenant whose health is not sufficiently

strong to allow him to go to the East, and who would be glad to sell his commission, for which he wants one hundred sequins. But it would be necessary to obtain the consent of the secretary of war." "Mention the matter to him," I replied, "the one hundred sequins are ready." The major undertook the commission.

In the evening I went to Madame Orio, and I found myself very comfortably lodged. After supper, the aunt told her nieces to shew me, to my room, and, as may well be supposed, we spent a most delightful night. After that they took the agreeable duty by turns, and in order to avoid any surprise in case the aunt should take it into her head to pay them a visit, we skilfully displaced a part of the partition, which allowed them to come in and out of my room without opening the door. But the good lady believed us three living specimens of virtue, and never thought of putting us to the test.

Two or three days afterwards, M. Grimani contrived an interview between me and M. Valmarana, who told me that, if he had been aware that the sanitary line could be eluded, he would never have impugned my veracity, and thanked me for the information I had given him. The affair was thus agreeably arranged, and until my departure I honoured M. Grimani's excellent dinner with my presence every day.

Towards the end of the month I entered the service of the Republic in the capacity of ensign in the Bala regiment, then at Corfu; the young man who had left the regiment through the magical virtue of my one hundred sequins was lieutenant, but

the secretary of war objected to my having that rank for reasons to which I had to submit, if I wished to enter the army; but he promised me that, at the end of the year, I would be promoted to the grade of lieutenant, and he granted me a furlough to go to Constantinople. I accepted, for I was determined to serve in the army.

M. Pierre Vendramin, an illustrious senator, obtained me the favour of a passage to Constantinople with the Chevalier Venier, who was proceeding to that city in the quality of bailo, but as he would arrive in Corfu a month after me, the chevalier very kindly promised to take me as he called at Corfu.

A few days before my departure, I received a letter from Therese, who informed me that the Duke de Castropignano escorted her everywhere. "The duke is old," she wrote, "but even if he were young, you would have no cause for uneasiness on my account. Should you ever want any money, draw upon me from any place where you may happen to be, and be quite certain that your letters of exchange will be paid, even if I had to sell everything I possess to honour your signature."

There was to be another passenger on board the ship of the line on which I had engaged my passage, namely, a noble Venetian, who was going to Zante in the quality of counsellor, with a numerous and brilliant retinue. The captain of the ship told me that, if I was obliged to take my meals alone, I was not likely to fare very well, and he advised me to obtain an introduction to the nobleman, who would not fail to invite me to

share his table. His name was Antonio Dolfin, and he had been nicknamed Bucentoro, in consequence of his air of grandeur and the elegance of his toilet. Fortunately I did not require to beg an introduction, for M. Grimani offered, of his own accord, to present me to the magnificent councillor, who received me in the kindest manner, and invited me at once to take my meals at his table. He expressed a desire that I should make the acquaintance of his wife, who was to accompany him in the journey. I called upon her the next day, and I found a lady perfect in manners, but already of a certain age and completely deaf. I had therefore but little pleasure to expect from her conversation. She had a very charming young daughter whom she left in a convent. She became celebrated afterwards, and she is still alive, I believe, the widow of Procurator Iron, whose family is extinct.

I have seldom seen a finer-looking man, or a man of more imposing appearance than M. Dolfin. He was eminently distinguished for his wit and politeness. He was eloquent, always cheerful when he lost at cards, the favourite of ladies, whom he endeavoured to please in everything, always courageous, and of an equal temper, whether in good or in adverse fortune.

He had ventured on travelling without permission, and had entered a foreign service, which had brought him into disgrace with the government, for a noble son of Venice cannot be guilty of a greater crime. For this offence he had been imprisoned in the Leads—a favour which destiny kept also in reserve for me.

Highly gifted, generous, but not wealthy, M. Dolfin had

been compelled to solicit from the Grand Council a lucrative governorship, and had been appointed to Zante; but he started with such a splendid suite that he was not likely to save much out of his salary. Such a man as I have just portrayed could not make a fortune in Venice, because an aristocratic government can not obtain a state of lasting, steady peace at home unless equality is maintained amongst the nobility, and equality, either moral or physical, cannot be appreciated in any other way than by appearances. The result is that the man who does not want to lay himself open to persecution, and who happens to be superior or inferior to the others, must endeavour to conceal it by all possible means. If he is ambitious, he must feign great contempt for dignities; if he seeks employment, he must not appear to want any; if his features are handsome, he must be careless of his physical appearance; he must dress badly, wear nothing in good taste, ridicule every foreign importation, make his bow without grace, be careless in his manner; care nothing for the fine arts, conceal his good breeding, have no foreign cook, wear an uncombed wig, and look rather dirty. M. Dolfin was not endowed with any of those eminent qualities, and therefore he had no hope of a great fortune in his native country.

The day before my departure from Venice I did not go out; I devoted the whole of the day to friendship. Madame Orio and her lovely nieces shed many tears, and I joined them in that delightful employment. During the last night that I spent with both of them, the sisters repeated over and over, in the midst of

the raptures of love, that they never would see me again. They guessed rightly; but if they had happened to see me again they would have guessed wrongly. Observe how wonderful prophets are!

I went on board, on the 5th of May, with a good supply of clothing, jewels, and ready cash. Our ship carried twenty-four guns and two hundred Slavonian soldiers. We sailed from Malamacca to the shores of Istria during the night, and we came to anchor in the harbour of Orsera to take ballast. I landed with several others to take a stroll through the wretched place where I had spent three days nine months before, a recollection which caused me a pleasant sensation when I compared my present position to what it was at that time. What a difference in everything—health, social condition, and money! I felt quite certain that in the splendid uniform I was now wearing nobody would recognize the miserable-looking abbe who, but for Friar Stephano, would have become—God knows what!

CHAPTER XIV

An Amusing Meeting in Orsera—Journey to Corfu—My Stay in Constantinople—Bonneval—My Return to Corfu—Madame F.—The False Prince—I Run Away from Corfu—My Frolics at Casopo—I Surrender My self a Prisoner—My Speedy Release and Triumph—My Success with Madame F.

I affirm that a stupid servant is more dangerous than a bad one, and a much greater plague, for one can be on one's guard against a wicked person, but never against a fool. You can punish wickedness but not stupidity, unless you send away the fool, male or female, who is guilty of it, and if you do so you generally find out that the change has only thrown you out of the frying-pan into the fire.

This chapter and the two following ones were written; they gave at full length all the particulars which I must now abridge, for my silly servant has taken the three chapters for her own purposes. She pleaded as an excuse that the sheets of paper were old, written upon, covered with scribbling and erasures, and that she had taken them in preference to nice, clean paper, thinking that I would care much more for the last than for the first. I flew into a violent passion, but I was wrong, for the poor girl had acted with a good intent; her judgment alone had misled her. It is well known that the first result of anger is to deprive the

angry man of the faculty of reason, for anger and reason do not belong to the same family. Luckily, passion does not keep me long under its sway: 'Irasci, celerem tamen et placabilem esse'. After I had wasted my time in hurling at her bitter reproaches, the force of which did not strike her, and in proving to her that she was a stupid fool, she refuted all my arguments by the most complete silence. There was nothing to do but to resign myself, and, although not yet in the best of tempers, I went to work. What I am going to write will probably not be so good as what I had composed when I felt in the proper humour, but my readers must be satisfied with it they will, like the engineer, gain in time what they lose in strength.

I landed at Orsera while our ship was taking ballast, as a ship cannot sail well when she is too light, and I was walking about when I remarked a man who was looking at me very attentively. As I had no dread of any creditor, I thought that he was interested by my fine appearance; I could not find fault with such a feeling, and kept walking on, but as I passed him, he addressed me:

"Might I presume to enquire whether this is your first visit to Orsera, captain?"

"No, sir, it is my second visit to this city."

"Were you not here last year?"

"I was."

"But you were not in uniform then?"

"True again; but your questions begin to sound rather indiscreet."

"Be good enough to forgive me, sir, for my curiosity is the offspring of gratitude. I am indebted to you for the greatest benefits, and I trust that Providence has brought you here again only to give me the opportunity of making greater still my debt of gratitude to you."

"What on earth have I done, and what can I do for you? I am at a loss to guess your meaning."

"Will you be so kind as to come and breakfast with me? My house is near at hand; my refosco is delicious, please to taste it, and I will convince you in a few words that you are truly my benefactor, and that I have a right to expect that you have returned Orsera to load me with fresh benefits."

I could not suspect the man of insanity; but, as I could not make him out, I fancied that he wanted to make me purchase some of his refosco, and I accepted his invitation. We went up to his room, and he left me for a few moments to order breakfast. I observed several surgical instruments, which made me suppose that he was a surgeon, and I asked him when he returned.

"Yes, captain; I have been practising surgery in this place for twenty years, and in a very poor way, for I had nothing to do, except a few cases of bleeding, of cupping, and occasionally some slight excoriation to dress or a sprained ankle to put to rights. I did not earn even the poorest living. But since last year a great change has taken place; I have made a good deal of money, I have laid it out advantageously, and it is to you, captain, to you (may God bless you!) that I am indebted for my present

comforts."

"But how so?"

"In this way, captain. You had a connection with Don Jerome's housekeeper, and you left her, when you went away, a certain souvenir which she communicated to a friend of hers, who, in perfect good faith, made a present of it to his wife. This lady did not wish, I suppose, to be selfish, and she gave the souvenir to a libertine who, in his turn, was so generous with it that, in less than a month, I had about fifty clients. The following months were not less fruitful, and I gave the benefit of my attendance to everybody, of course, for a consideration. There are a few patients still under my care, but in a short time there will be no more, as the souvenir left by you has now lost all its virtue. You can easily realize now the joy I felt when I saw you; you are a bird of good omen. May I hope that your visit will last long enough to enable you to renew the source of my fortune?"

I laughed heartily, but he was grieved to hear that I was in excellent health. He remarked, however, that I was not likely to be so well off on my return, because, in the country to which I was going, there was abundance of damaged goods, but that no one knew better than he did how to root out the venom left by the use of such bad merchandise. He begged that I would depend upon him, and not trust myself in the hands of quacks, who would be sure to palm their remedies upon me. I promised him everything, and, taking leave of him with many thanks, I returned to the ship. I related the whole affair to M. Dolfin, who

was highly amused. We sailed on the following day, but on the fourth day, on the other side of Curzola, we were visited by a storm which very nearly cost me my life. This is how it happened:

The chaplain of the ship was a Sclavonian priest, very ignorant, insolent and coarse-mannered, and, as I turned him into ridicule whenever the opportunity offered, he had naturally become my sworn enemy. 'Tant de fiel entre-t-il dans l'ame d'un devot!' When the storm was at its height, he posted himself on the quarter-deck, and, with book in hand, proceeded to exorcise all the spirits of hell whom he thought he could see in the clouds, and to whom he pointed for the benefit of the sailors who, believing themselves lost, were crying, howling, and giving way to despair, instead of attending to the working of the ship, then in great danger on account of the rocks and of the breakers which surrounded us.

Seeing the peril of our position, and the evil effect of his stupid, incantations upon the minds of the sailors whom the ignorant priest was throwing into the apathy of despair, instead of keeping up their courage, I thought it prudent to interfere. I went up the rigging, calling upon the sailors to do their duty cheerfully, telling them that there were no devils, and that the priest who pretended to see them was a fool. But it was in vain that I spoke in the most forcible manner, in vain that I went to work myself, and shewed that safety was only to be insured by active means, I could not prevent the priest declaring that I was an Atheist, and he managed to rouse against me the anger of the greatest part of

the crew. The wind continued to lash the sea into fury for the two following days, and the knave contrived to persuade the sailors who listened to him that the hurricane would not abate as long as I was on board. Imbued with that conviction, one of the men, thinking he had found a good opportunity of fulfilling the wishes of the priest, came up to me as I was standing at the extreme end of the forecandle, and pushed me so roughly that I was thrown over. I should have been irretrievably lost, but the sharp point of an anchor, hanging along the side of the ship, catching in my clothes, prevented me from falling in the sea, and proved truly my sheet-anchor. Some men came to my assistance, and I was saved. A corporal then pointed out to me the sailor who had tried to murder me, and taking a stout stick I treated the scoundrel to a sound thrashing; but the sailors, headed by the furious priest, rushed towards us when they heard his screams, and I should have been killed if the soldiers had not taken my part. The commander and M. Dolfin then came on deck, but they were compelled to listen to the chaplain, and to promise, in order to pacify the vile rabble, that they would land me at the first opportunity. But even this was not enough; the priest demanded that I should give up to him a certain parchment that I had purchased from a Greek at Malamocco just before sailing. I had no recollection of it, but it was true. I laughed, and gave it to M. Dolfin; he handed it to the fanatic chaplain, who, exulting in his victory, called for a large pan of live coals from the cook's galley, and made an auto-da-fe of the document. The unlucky parchment, before it was entirely

consumed, kept writhing on the fire for half an hour, and the priest did not fail to represent those contortions as a miracle, and all the sailors were sure that it was an infernal manuscript given to me by the devil. The virtue claimed for that piece of parchment by the man who had sold it to me was that it insured its lucky possessor the love of all women, but I trust my readers will do me the justice to believe that I had no faith whatever in amorous philtres, talismans, or amulets of any kind: I had purchased it only for a joke.

You can find throughout Italy, in Greece, and generally in every country the inhabitants of which are yet wrapped up in primitive ignorance, a tribe of Greeks, of Jews, of astronomers, and of exorcists, who sell their dupes rags and toys to which they boastingly attach wonderful virtues and properties; amulets which render invulnerable, scraps of cloth which defend from witchcraft, small bags filled with drugs to keep away goblins, and a thousand gewgaws of the same description. These wonderful goods have no marketable value whatever in France, in England, in Germany, and throughout the north of Europe generally, but, in revenge, the inhabitants of those countries indulge in knavish practices of a much worse kind.

The storm abated just as the innocent parchment was writhing on the fire, and the sailors, believing that the spirits of hell had been exorcised, thought no more of getting rid of my person, and after a prosperous voyage of a week we cast anchor at Corfu. As soon as I had found a comfortable lodging I took my letters

to his eminence the proveditore-generale, and to all the naval commanders to whom I was recommended; and after paying my respects to my colonel, and making the acquaintance of the officers of my regiment, I prepared to enjoy myself until the arrival of the Chevalier Venier, who had promised to take me to Constantinople. He arrived towards the middle of June, but in the mean time I had been playing basset, and had lost all my money, and sold or pledged all my jewellery.

Such must be the fate awaiting every man who has a taste for gambling, unless he should know how to fix fickle fortune by playing with a real advantage derived from calculation or from adroitness, which defies chance. I think that a cool and prudent player can manage both without exposing himself to censure, or deserving to be called a cheat.

During the month that I spent in Corfu, waiting for the arrival of M. Venier, I did not devote any time to the study, either moral or physical, of the country, for, excepting the days on which I was on duty, I passed my life at the coffee-house, intent upon the game, and sinking, as a matter of course, under the adverse fortune which I braved with obstinacy. I never won, and I had not the moral strength to stop till all my means were gone. The only comfort I had, and a sorry one truly, was to hear the banker himself call me—perhaps sarcastically—a fine player, every time I lost a large stake. My misery was at its height, when new life was infused in me by the booming of the guns fired in honour of the arrival of the bailo. He was on board

the Europa, a frigate of seventy-two guns, and he had taken only eight days to sail from Venice to Corfu. The moment he cast anchor, the bailo hoisted his flag of captain-general of the Venetian navy, and the proveditore hauled down his own colours. The Republic of Venice has not on the sea any authority greater than that of Bailo to the Porte. The Chevalier Venier had with him a distinguished and brilliant suite; Count Annibal Gambera, Count Charles Zenobio, both Venetian noblemen of the first class, and the Marquis d'Anchotti of Bressan, accompanied him to Constantinople for their own amusement. The bailo remained a week in Corfu, and all the naval authorities entertained him and his suite in turn, so that there was a constant succession of balls and suppers. When I presented myself to his excellency, he informed me that he had already spoken to the proveditore, who had granted me a furlough of six months to enable me to accompany him to Constantinople as his adjutant; and as soon as the official document for my furlough had been delivered to me, I sent my small stock of worldly goods on board the Europa, and we weighed anchor early the next day.

We sailed with a favourable wind which remained steady and brought us in six days to Cerigo, where we stopped to take in some water. Feeling some curiosity to visit the ancient Cythera, I went on shore with the sailors on duty, but it would have been better for me if I had remained on board, for in Cerigo I made a bad acquaintance. I was accompanied by the captain of marines. The moment we set foot on shore, two men, very poorly

dressed and of unprepossessing appearance, came to us and begged for assistance. I asked them who they were, and one, quicker than the other, answered;

"We are sentenced to live, and perhaps to die, in this island by the despotism of the Council of Ten. There are forty others as unfortunate as ourselves, and we are all born subjects of the Republic.

"The crime of which we have been accused, which is not considered a crime anywhere, is that we were in the habit of living with our mistresses, without being jealous of our friends, when, finding our ladies handsome, they obtained their favours with our ready consent. As we were not rich, we felt no remorse in availing ourselves of the generosity of our friends in such cases, but it was said that we were carrying on an illicit trade, and we have been sent to this place, where we receive every day ten sous in 'moneta lunga'. We are called 'mangia-mayroni', and are worse off than galley slaves, for we are dying of ennui, and we are often starving without knowing how to stay our hunger. My name is Don Antonio Pocchini, I am of a noble Paduan family, and my mother belongs to the illustrious family of Campo San-Piero."

We gave them some money, and went about the island, returning to the ship after we had visited the fortress. I shall have to speak of that Pocchini in a few years.

The wind continued in our favour, and we reached the Dardanelles in eight or ten days; the Turkish barges met us there

to carry us to Constantinople. The sight offered by that city at the distance of a league is truly wonderful; and I believe that a more magnificent panorama cannot be found in any part of the world. It was that splendid view which was the cause of the fall of the Roman, and of the rise of the Greek empire. Constantine the Great, arriving at Byzantium by sea, was so much struck with the wonderful beauty of its position, that he exclaimed, "Here is the proper seat of the empire of the whole world!" and in order to secure the fulfilment of his prediction, he left Rome for Byzantium. If he had known the prophecy of Horace, or rather if he had believed in it, he would not have been guilty of such folly. The poet had said that the downfall of the Roman empire would begin only when one of the successors of Augustus bethought him removing the capital of the empire to where it had originated. The road is not far distant from Thrace.

We arrived at the Venetian Embassy in Pera towards the middle of July, and, for a wonder, there was no talk of the plague in Constantinople just then. We were all provided with very comfortable lodgings, but the intensity of the heat induced the baili to seek for a little coolness in a country mansion which had been hired by the Bailo Dona. It was situated at Bouyoudere. The very first order laid upon me was never to go out unknown to the bailo, and without being escorted by a janissary, and this order I obeyed to the letter. In those days the Russians had not tamed the insolence of the Turkish people. I am told that foreigners can now go about as much as they please in perfect security.

The day after our arrival, I took a janissary to accompany me to Osman Pacha, of Caramania, the name assumed by Count de Bonneval ever since he had adopted the turban. I sent in my letter, and was immediately shewn into an apartment on the ground floor, furnished in the French fashion, where I saw a stout elderly gentleman, dressed like a Frenchman, who, as I entered the room, rose, came to meet me with a smiling countenance, and asked me how he could serve the 'protege' of a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church, which he could no longer call his mother. I gave him all the particulars of the circumstances which, in a moment of despair, had induced me to ask the cardinal for letters of introduction for Constantinople, and I added that, the letters once in my possession, my superstitious feelings had made me believe that I was bound to deliver them in person.

"Then, without this letter," he said, "you never would have come to Constantinople, and you have no need of me?"

"True, but I consider myself fortunate in having thus made the acquaintance of a man who has attracted the attention of the whole of Europe, and who still commands that attention."

His excellency made some remark respecting the happiness of young men who, like me, without care, without any fixed purpose, abandon themselves to fortune with that confidence which knows no fear, and telling me that the cardinal's letter made it desirable that he should do something for me, he promised to introduce me to three or four of his Turkish friends who deserved to be known. He invited me to dine with him

every Thursday, and undertook to send me a janissary who would protect me from the insults of the rabble and shew me everything worth seeing.

The cardinal's letter representing me as a literary man, the pacha observed that I ought to see his library. I followed him through the garden, and we entered a room furnished with grated cupboards; curtains could be seen behind the wirework; the books were most likely behind the curtains.

Taking a key out of his pocket, he opened one of the cupboards, and, instead of folios, I saw long rows of bottles of the finest wines. We both laughed heartily.

"Here are," said the pacha, "my library and my harem. I am old, women would only shorten my life but good wine will prolong it, or at least, make it more agreeable.

"I imagine your excellency has obtained a dispensation from the mufti?"

"You are mistaken, for the Pope of the Turks is very far from enjoying as great a power as the Christian Pope. He cannot in any case permit what is forbidden by the Koran; but everyone is at liberty to work out his own damnation if he likes. The Turkish devotees pity the libertines, but they do not persecute them; there is no inquisition in Turkey. Those who do not know the precepts of religion, say the Turks, will suffer enough in the life to come; there is no need to make them suffer in this life. The only dispensation I have asked and obtained, has been respecting circumcision, although it can hardly be called so, because, at my

age, it might have proved dangerous. That ceremony is generally performed, but it is not compulsory."

During the two hours that we spent together, the pacha enquired after several of his friends in Venice, and particularly after Marc Antonio Dieto. I told him that his friends were still faithful to their affection for him, and did not find fault with his apostasy. He answered that he was a Mahometan as he had been a Christian, and that he was not better acquainted with the Koran than he had been with the Gospel. "I am certain," he added, "that I shall die-calmer and much happier than Prince Eugene. I have had to say that God is God, and that Mahomet is the prophet. I have said it, and the Turks care very little whether I believe it or not. I wear the turban as the soldier wears the uniform. I was nothing but a military man; I could not have turned my hand to any other profession, and I made up my mind to become lieutenant-general of the Grand Turk only when I found myself entirely at a loss how to earn my living. When I left Venice, the pitcher had gone too often to the well, it was broken at last, and if the Jews had offered me the command of an army of fifty thousand men, I would have gone and besieged Jerusalem."

Bonneval was handsome, but too stout. He had received a sabre-cut in the lower part of the abdomen, which compelled him to wear constantly a bandage supported by a silver plate. He had been exiled to Asia, but only for a short time, for, as he told me, the cabals are not so tenacious in Turkey as they are in Europe, and particularly at the court of Vienna. As I was taking leave of

him, he was kind enough to say that, since his arrival in Turkey, he had never passed two hours as pleasantly as those he had just spent with me, and that he would compliment the bailo about me.

The Bailo Dona, who had known him intimately in Venice, desired me to be the bearer of all his friendly compliments for him, and M. Venier expressed his deep regret at not being able to make his acquaintance.

The second day after my first visit to him being a Thursday, the pacha did not forget to send a janissary according to his promise. It was about eleven in the morning when the janissary called for me, I followed him, and this time I found Bonneval dressed in the Turkish style. His guests soon arrived, and we sat down to dinner, eight of us, all well disposed to be cheerful and happy. The dinner was entirely French, in cooking and service; his steward and his cook were both worthy French renegades.

He had taken care to introduce me to all his guests and at the same time to let me know who they were, but he did not give me an opportunity of speaking before dinner was nearly over. The conversation was entirely kept up in Italian, and I remarked that the Turks did not utter a single word in their own language, even to say the most ordinary thing. Each guest had near him a bottle which might have contained either white wine or hydromel; all I know is that I drank, as well as M. de Bonneval, next to whom I was seated, some excellent white Burgundy.

The guests got me on the subject of Venice, and particularly of Rome, and the conversation very naturally fell upon religion,

but not upon dogmatic questions; the discipline of religion and liturgical questions were alone discussed.

One of the guests, who was addressed as effendi, because he had been secretary for foreign affairs, said that the ambassador from Venice to Rome was a friend of his, and he spoke of him in the highest manner. I told him that I shared his admiration for that ambassador, who had given me a letter of introduction for a Turkish nobleman, whom he had represented as an intimate friend. He enquired for the name of the person to whom the letter was addressed, but I could not recollect it, and took the letter out of my pocket-book. The effendi was delighted when he found that the letter was for himself. He begged leave to read it at once, and after he had perused it, he kissed the signature and came to embrace me. This scene pleased M. de Bonneval and all his friends. The effendi, whose name was Ismail, entreated the pacha to come to dine with him, and to bring me; Bonneval accepted, and fixed a day.

Notwithstanding all the politeness of the effendi, I was particularly interested during our charming dinner in a fine elderly man of about sixty, whose countenance breathed at the same time the greatest sagacity and the most perfect kindness. Two years afterwards I found again the same features on the handsome face of M. de Bragadin, a Venetian senator of whom I shall have to speak at length when we come to that period of my life. That elderly gentleman had listened to me with the greatest attention, but without uttering one word. In society, a

man whose face and general appearance excite your interest, stimulates strongly your curiosity if he remains silent. When we left the dining-room I enquired from de Bonneval who he was; he answered that he was wealthy, a philosopher, a man of acknowledged merit, of great purity of morals, and strongly attached to his religion. He advised me to cultivate his acquaintance if he made any advances to me.

I was pleased with his advice, and when, after a walk under the shady trees of the garden, we returned to a drawing-room furnished in the Turkish fashion, I purposely took a seat near Yusuf Ali. Such was the name of the Turk for whom I felt so much sympathy. He offered me his pipe in a very graceful manner; I refused it politely, and took one brought to me by one of M. de Bonneval's servants. Whenever I have been amongst smokers I have smoked or left the room; otherwise I would have fancied that I was swallowing the smoke of the others, and that idea which is true and unpleasant, disgusted me. I have never been able to understand how in Germany the ladies, otherwise so polite and delicate, could inhale the suffocating fumes of a crowd of smokers.

Yusuf, pleased to have me near him, at once led the conversation to subjects similar to those which had been discussed at table, and particularly to the reasons which had induced me to give up the peaceful profession of the Church and to choose a military life; and in order to gratify his curiosity without losing his good opinion, I gave him, but with proper

caution, some of the particulars of my life, for I wanted him to be satisfied that, if I had at first entered the career of the holy priesthood, it had not been through any vocation of mine. He seemed pleased with my recital, spoke of natural vocations as a Stoic philosopher, and I saw that he was a fatalist; but as I was careful not to attack his system openly, he did not dislike my objections, most likely because he thought himself strong enough to overthrow them.

I must have inspired the honest Mussulman with very great esteem, for he thought me worthy of becoming his disciple; it was not likely that he could entertain the idea of becoming himself the disciple of a young man of nineteen, lost, as he thought, in a false religion.

After spending an hour in examining me, in listening to my principles, he said that he believed me fit to know the real truth, because he saw that I was seeking for it, and that I was not certain of having obtained it so far. He invited me to come and spend a whole day with him, naming the days when I would be certain to find him at home, but he advised me to consult the Pacha Osman before accepting his invitation. I told him that the pacha had already mentioned him to me and had spoken very highly of his character; he seemed much pleased. I fixed a day for my visit, and left him.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.