

GIACOMO CASANOVA

THE MEMOIRS OF
JACQUES CASANOVA DE
SEINGALT, 1725-1798.

VOLUME 18: RETURN TO
NAPLES

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Содержание

CHAPTER VIII	5
CHAPTER IX	15
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	19

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CHAPTER VIII

Cardinal Passianei—The Pope—Masiuccia—I Arrive At Naples

Cardinal Passianei received me in a large hall where he was writing. He begged me to wait till he had finished, but he could not ask me to take a seat as he occupied the only chair that his vast room contained.

When he had put down his pen, he rose, came to me, and after informing me that he would tell the Holy Father of my visit, he added,—

"My brother Cornaro might have made a better choice, as he knows the Pope does not like me."

"He thought it better to choose the man who is esteemed than the man who is merely liked."

"I don't know whether the Pope esteems me, but I am sure he knows I don't esteem him. I both liked and esteemed him before he was pope, and I concurred in his election, but since he has worn the tiara it's a different matter; he has shewn himself too much of a 'coglione'."

"The conclave ought to have chosen your eminence."

"No, no; I'm a root-and-branch reformer, and my hand would not have been stayed for fear of the vengeance of the guilty, and God alone knows what would have come of that. The only cardinal fit to be pope was Tamburini; but it can't be helped now. I hear people coming; good-bye, come again to-morrow."

What a delightful thing to have heard a cardinal call the Pope a fool, and name Tamburini as a fit person. I did not lose a moment in noting this pleasant circumstance down: it was too precious a morsel to let slip. But who was Tamburini? I had never heard of him. I asked Winckelmann, who dined with me.

"He's a man deserving of respect for his virtues, his character, his firmness, and his farseeing intelligence. He has never disguised his opinion of the Jesuits, whom he styles the fathers of deceits, intrigues, and lies; and that's what made Passianei mention him. I think, with him, that Tamburini would be a great and good pope."

I will here note down what I heard at Rome nine years later from the mouth of a tool of the Jesuits. The Cardinal Tamburini was at the last gasp, and the conversation turned upon him, when somebody else said,—

"This Benedictine cardinal is an impious fellow after all; he is on his death-bed, and he has asked for the viaticum, without wishing to purify his soul by confession."

I did not make any remark, but feeling as if I should like to know the truth of the matter I asked somebody about it next day, my informant being a person who must have known the truth, and could not have had any motive for disguising the real facts of the case. He told me that the cardinal had said mass three days before, and that if he had not asked for a confessor it was doubtless because he had nothing to confess.

Unfortunate are they that love the truth, and do not seek it out at its source. I hope the reader will pardon this digression, which is not without interest.

Next day I went to see Cardinal Passianei, who told me I was quite right to come early, as he wanted to learn all about my escape from The Leads, of which he had heard some wonderful tales told.

"I shall be delighted to satisfy your eminence, but the story is a long one."

"All the better; they say you tell it well."

"But, my lord, am I to sit down on the floor?"

"No, no; your dress is too good for that."

He rang his bell, and having told one of his gentlemen to send up a seat, a servant brought in a stool. A seat without a back and without arms! It made me quite angry. I cut my story short, told it badly, and had finished in a quarter of an hour.

"I write better than you speak," said he.

"My lord, I never speak well except when I am at my ease."

"But you are not afraid of me?"

"No, my lord, a true man and a philosopher can never make me afraid; but this stool of yours"

"You like to be at your ease, above all things."

"Take this, it is the funeral oration of Prince Eugene; I make you a present of it. I hope you will approve of my Latinity. You can kiss the Pope's feet tomorrow at ten o'clock."

When I got home, as I reflected on the character of this strange cardinal—a wit, haughty, vain, and boastful, I resolved to make him a fine present. It was the 'Pandectarum liber unicus' which M. de F. had given me at Berne, and which I did not know what to do with. It was a folio well printed on fine paper, choicely bound, and in perfect preservation. As chief librarian the present should be a valuable one to him, all the more as he had a large private library, of which my friend the Abbe Winckelmann was librarian. I therefore wrote a short Latin letter, which I enclosed in another to Winckelmann, whom I begged to present my offering to his eminence.

I thought it was as valuable as his funeral oration at any rate, and I hoped that he would give me a more comfortable chair for the future.

Next morning, at the time appointed, I went to Monte Cavallo, which ought to be called Monte Cavalli, as it gets its name from two fine statues of horses standing on a pedestal in the midst of the square, where the Holy Father's palace is situated.

I had no real need of being presented to the Pope by anyone, as any Christian is at liberty to go in when he sees the door open. Besides I had known His Holiness when he was Bishop of Padua; but I had preferred to claim the honor of being introduced by a cardinal.

After saluting the Head of the Faithful, and kissing the holy cross embroidered on his holy slipper, the Pope put his right hand on my left shoulder, and said he remembered that I always forsook the assembly at Padua, when he intoned the Rosary.

"Holy Father, I have much worse sins than that on my conscience, so I come prostrate at your foot to receive your absolution."

He then gave me his benediction, and asked me very graciously what he could do for me.

"I beg Your Holiness to plead for me, that I may be able to return to Venice."

"We will speak of it to the ambassador, and then we will speak again to you on the matter."

"Do you often go and see Cardinal Passionei?"

"I have been three times. He gave me his funeral oration on Prince Eugene, and in return I sent him the 'Pandects'."

"Has he accepted them?"

"I think so, Holy Father."

"If he has, he will send Winckelmann to pay you for them."

"That would be treating me like a bookseller; I will not receive any payment."

"Then he will return the volume of the 'Pandects'; we are sure of it, he always does so."

"If his eminence returns me the 'Pandects', I will return him his funeral oration."

At this the Pope laughed till his sides shook.

"We shall be pleased to hear the end of the story without anyone being informed of our innocent curiosity."

With these words, a long benediction delivered with much unction informed me that my audience was at an end.

As I was leaving His Holiness's palace, I was accosted by an old abbe, who asked me respectfully if I were not the M. Casanova who had escaped from The Leads.

"Yes," said I, "I am the man."

"Heaven be praised, worthy sir, that I see you again in such good estate!"

"But whom have I the honour of addressing?"

"Don't you recollect me? I am Momolo, formerly gondolier at Venice."

"Have you entered holy orders, then?"

"Not at all, but here everyone wears the cassock. I am the first scopatore (sweeper) of His Holiness the Pope."

"I congratulate you on your appointment, but you mustn't mind me laughing."

"Laugh as much as you like. My wife and daughters laugh when I put on the cassock and bands, and I laugh myself, but here the dress gains one respect. Come and see us."

"Where do you live?"

"Behind the Trinity of Monti; here's my address."

"I will come to-night."

I went home delighted with this meeting, and determined to enjoy the evening with my Venetian boatman. I got my brother to come with me, and I told him how the Pope had received me.

The Abbe Winckelmann came in the afternoon and informed me that I was fortunate enough to be high in favour with his cardinal, and that the book I had sent him was very valuable; it was a rare work, and in much better condition than the Vatican copy.

"I am commissioned to pay you for it."

"I have told his eminence that it was a present."

"He never accepts books as presents, and he wants yours for his own library; and as he is librarian of the Vatican Library he is afraid lest people might say unpleasant things."

"That's very well, but I am not a bookseller; and as this book only cost me the trouble of accepting it, I am determined only to sell it at the same price. Pray ask the cardinal to honour me by accepting it."

"He is sure to send it back to you."

"He can if he likes, but I will send back his funeral oration, as I am not going to be under an obligation to anyone who refuses to take a present from me."

Next morning the eccentric cardinal returned me my Pandects, and I immediately returned his funeral oration, with a letter in which I pronounced it a masterpiece of composition, though I laid barely glanced over it in reality. My brother told me I was wrong, but I did not trouble what he said, not caring to guide myself by his rulings.

In the evening my brother and I went to the 'scopatore santissimo', who was expecting me, and had announced me to his family as a prodigy of a man. I introduced my brother, and proceeded to a close scrutiny of the family. I saw an elderly woman, four girls, of whom the eldest was twenty-four, two small boys, and above all universal ugliness. It was not inviting for a man of voluptuous tastes, but I was there, and the best thing was to put a good face on it; so I stayed and enjoyed myself. Besides the general ugliness, the household presented the picture of misery, for the 'scopatore santissimo' and his numerous family were obliged to live on two hundred Roman crowns a year, and as there are no perquisites attached to the office of apostolic sweeper, he was compelled to furnish all needs out of this slender sum. In spite of that Momolo was a most generous man. As soon as he saw me seated he told me he should have liked to give me a good supper, but there was only pork chops and a polenta.

"They are very nice," said I; "but will you allow me to send for half a dozen flasks of Orvieto from my lodging?"

"You are master here."

I wrote a note to Costa, telling him to bring the six flasks directly, with a cooked ham. He came in half an hour, and the four girls cried when they saw him, "What a fine fellow!" I saw Costa was delighted with this reception, and said to Momolo,

"If you like him as well as your girls I will let him stay."

Costa was charmed with such honour being shewn him, and after thanking me went into the kitchen to help the mother with the polenta.

The large table was covered with a clean cloth, and soon after they brought in two huge dishes of polenta and an enormous pan full of chops. We were just going to begin when a knocking on the street door was heard.

"'Tis Signora Maria and her mother," said one of the boys.

At this announcement I saw the four girls pulling a wry face. "Who asked them?" said one. "What do they want?" said another. "What troublesome people they are!" said a third. "They might have stayed at home," said the fourth. But the good, kindly father said, "My children, they are hungry, and they shall share what Providence has given us."

I was deeply touched with the worthy man's kindness. I saw that true Christian charity is more often to be found in the breasts of the poor than the rich, who are so well provided for that they cannot feel for the wants of others.

While I was making these wholesome reflections the two hungry ones came in. One was a young woman of a modest and pleasant aspect, and the other her mother, who seemed very humble and as if ashamed of their poverty. The daughter saluted the company with that natural grace which is a gift of nature, apologizing in some confusion for her presence, and saying that she would not have taken the liberty to come if she had known there was company. The worthy Momolo was the only one who answered her, and he said, kindly, that she had done quite right to come, and put her a chair between my brother and myself. I looked at her and thought her a perfect beauty.

Then the eating began and there was no more talking. The polenta was excellent, the chops delicious, and the ham perfect, and in less than an hour the board was as bare as if there had been nothing on it; but the Orvieto kept the company in good spirits. They began to talk of the lottery which was to be drawn the day after next, and all the girls mentioned the numbers on which they had risked a few bajocchi.

"If I could be sure of one number," said I, "I would stake something on it."

Mariuccia told me that if I wanted a number she could give me one. I laughed at this offer, but in the gravest way she named me the number 27.

"Is the lottery still open?" I asked the Abbe Momolo.

"Till midnight," he replied, "and if you like I will go and get the number for you."

"Here are fifty crowns," said I, "put twenty-five crowns on 27-this for these five young ladies; and the other twenty-five on 27 coming out the fifth number, and this I will keep for myself."

He went out directly and returned with the two tickets.

My pretty neighbour thanked me and said she was sure of winning, but that she did not think I should succeed as it was not probable that 27 would come out fifth.

"I am sure of it," I answered, "for you are the fifth young lady I saw in this house." This made everybody laugh. Momolo's wife told me I would have done much better if I had given the money to the poor, but her husband told her to be quiet, as she did not know my intent. My brother laughed, and told me I had done a foolish thing. "I do, sometimes," said I, "but we shall see how it turns out, and when one plays one is obliged either to win or lose."

I managed to squeeze my fair neighbour's hand, and she returned the pressure with all her strength. From that time I knew that my fate with Mariuccia was sealed. I left them at midnight, begging the worthy Momolo to ask me again in two days' time, that we might rejoice together over our gains. On our way home my brother said I had either become as rich as Croesus or had gone

mad. I told him that both suppositions were incorrect, but that Mariuccia was as handsome as an angel, and he agreed.

Next day Mengs returned to Rome, and I supped with him and his family. He had an exceedingly ugly sister, who for all that, was a good and talented woman. She had fallen deeply in love with my brother, and it was easy to see that the flame was not yet extinguished, but whenever she spoke to him, which she did whenever she could get an opportunity, he looked another way.

She was an exquisite painter of miniatures, and a capital hand at catching a likeness. To the best of my belief she is still living at Rome with Maroni her husband. She often used to speak of my brother to me, and one day she said that he must be the most thankless of men or he would not despise her so. I was not curious enough to enquire what claim she had to his gratitude.

Mengs's wife was a good and pretty woman, attentive to her household duties and very submissive to her husband, though she could not have loved him, for he was anything but amiable. He was obstinate and fierce in his manner, and when he dined at home he made a point of not leaving the table before he was drunk; out of his own house he was temperate to the extent of not drinking anything but water. His wife carried her obedience so far as to serve as his model for all the nude figures he painted. I spoke to her one day about this unpleasant obligation, and she said that her confessor had charged her to fulfil it, "for," said he, "if your husband has another woman for a model he will be sure to enjoy her before painting her, and that sin would be laid to your charge."

After supper, Winckelmann, who was as far gone as all the other male guests, played with Mengs's children. There was nothing of the pedant about this philosopher; he loved children and young people, and his cheerful disposition made him delight in all kinds of enjoyment.

Next day, as I was going to pay my court to the Pope, I saw Momolo in the first ante-chamber, and I took care to remind him of the polenta for the evening.

As soon as the Pope saw me, he said,—

"The Venetian ambassador has informed us that if you wish to return to your native land, you must go and present yourself before the secretary of the Tribunal."

"Most Holy Father, I am quite ready to take this step, if Your Holiness will grant me a letter of commendation written with your own hand. Without this powerful protection I should never dream of exposing myself to the risk of being again shut up in a place from which I escaped by a miracle and the help of the Almighty."

"You are gaily dressed; you do not look as if you were going to church."

"True, most Holy Father, but neither am I going to a ball."

"We have heard all about the presents being sent back. Confess that you did so to gratify your pride."

"Yes, but also to lower a pride greater than mine."

The Pope smiled at this reply, and I knelt down and begged him to permit me to present the volume of Pandects to the Vatican Library. By way of reply he gave me his blessing, which signifies, in papal language, "Rise; your request is granted."

"We will send you," said he, "a mark of our singular affection for you without your having to pay any fees."

A second blessing bid me begone. I have often felt what a good thing it would be if this kind of dismissal could be employed in general society to send away importunate petitioners, to whom one does not dare say, "Begone."

I was extremely curious to know what the Pope had meant by "a mark of our singular affection." I was afraid that it would be a blessed rosary, with which I should not have known what to do.

When I got home I sent the book by Costa to the Vatican, and then I went to dine with Mengs. While we were eating the soup the winning numbers from the lottery were brought in. My brother glanced at them and looked at me with astonishment. I was not thinking of the subject at that moment, and his gaze surprised me.

"Twenty-seven," he cried, "came out fifth."

"All the better," said I, "we shall have some amusement out of it."

I told the story to Mengs, who said,—

"It's a lucky folly for you this time; but it always is a folly."

He was quite right, and I told him that I agreed with him; but I added that to make a worthy use of the fifteen hundred roman crowns which fortune had given me, I should go and spend fifteen days at Naples.

"I will come too," said the Abbe Alfani. "I will pass for your secretary."

"With all my heart," I answered, "I shall keep you to your word."

I asked Winckelmann to come and eat polenta with the scopatore santissimo, and told my brother to shew him the way; and I then called on the Marquis Belloni, my banker, to look into my accounts, and to get a letter of credit on the firm at Naples, who were his agents. I still had two hundred thousand francs: I had jewellery worth thirty thousand francs, and fifty thousand florins at Amsterdam.

I got to Momolo's in the dusk of the evening, and I found Winckelmann and my brother already there; but instead of mirth reigning round the board I saw sad faces on all sides.

"What's the matter with the girls?" I asked Momolo.

"They are vexed that you did not stake for them in the same way as you did for yourself."

"People are never satisfied. If I had staked for them as I did for myself, and the number had come out first instead of fifth, they would have got nothing, and they would have been vexed then. Two days ago they had nothing, and now that they have twenty-seven pounds apiece they ought to be contented."

"That's just what I tell them, but all women are the same."

"And men too, dear countryman, unless they are philosophers. Gold does not spell happiness, and mirth can only be found in hearts devoid of care. Let us say no more about it, but be happy."

Costa placed a basket containing ten packets of sweets, upon the table.

"I will distribute them," said I, "when everybody is here."

On this, Momolo's second daughter told me that Mariuccia and her mother were not coming, but that they would send them the sweets.

"Why are they not coming?"

"They had a quarrel yesterday," said the father, "and Mariuccia, who was in the right, went away saying that she would never come here again."

"You ungrateful girls!" said I, to my host's daughters, "don't you know that it is to her that you owe your winnings, for she gave me the number twenty-seven, which I should never have thought of. Quick! think of some way to make her come, or I will go away and take all the sweets with me."

"You are quite right," said Momolo.

The mortified girls looked at one another and begged their father to fetch her.

"Ira," said he, "that won't do; you made her say that she would never come here again, and you must make up the quarrel."

They held a short consultation, and then, asking Costa to go with them, they went to fetch her.

In half an hour they returned in triumph, and Costa was quite proud of the part he had taken in the reconciliation. I then distributed the sweets, taking care to give the two best packets to the fair Mary.

A noble polenta was placed upon the board, flanked by two large dishes of pork chops. But Momolo, who knew my tastes, and whom I had made rich in the person of his daughters, added to the feast some delicate dishes and some excellent wine. Mariuccia was simply dressed, but her elegance and beauty and the modesty of her demeanour completely seduced me.

We could only express our mutual flames by squeezing each other's hands; and she did this so feelingly that I could not doubt her love. As we were going out I took care to go downstairs beside

her and asked if I could not meet her by herself, to which she replied by making an appointment with me for the next day at eight o'clock at the Trinity of Monti.

Mariuccia was tall and shapely, a perfect picture, as fair as a white rose, and calculated to inspire voluptuous desires. She had beautiful light brown hair, dark blue eyes, and exquisitely arched eyelids. Her mouth, the vermilion of her lips, and her ivory teeth were all perfect. Her well-shaped forehead gave her an air approaching the majestic. Kindness and gaiety sparkled in her eyes; while her plump white hands, her rounded finger-tips, her pink nails, her breast, which the corset seemed scarcely able to restrain, her dainty feet, and her prominent hips, made her worthy of the chisel of Praxiteles. She was just on her eighteenth year, and so far had escaped the connoisseurs. By a lucky chance I came across her in a poor and wretched street, and I was fortunate enough to insure her happiness.

It may easily be believed that I did not fail to keep the appointment, and when she was sure I had seen her she went out of the church. I followed her at a considerable distance: she entered a ruined building, and I after her. She climbed a flight of steps which seemed to be built in air, and when she had reached the top she turned.

"No one will come and look for me here," said she, "so we can talk freely together."

I sat beside her on a stone, and I then declared my passionate love for her.

"Tell me," I added, "what I can do to make you happy; for I wish to possess you, but first to shew my deserts."

"Make me happy, and I will yield to your desires, for I love you."

"Tell me what I can do."

"You can draw me out of the poverty and misery which overwhelm me. I live with my mother, who is a good woman, but devout to the point of superstition; she will damn my soul in her efforts to save it. She finds fault with my keeping myself clean, because I have to touch myself when I wash, and that might give rise to evil desires.

"If you had given me the money you made me win in the lottery as a simple alms she would have made me refuse it, because you might have had intentions. She allows me to go by myself to mass because our confessor told her she might do so; but I dare not stay away a minute beyond the time, except on feast days, when I am allowed to pray in the church for two or three hours. We can only meet here, but if you wish to soften my lot in life you can do so as follows:

"A fine young man, who is a hairdresser, and bears an excellent character, saw me at Momolo's a fortnight ago, and met me at the church door next day and gave me a letter. He declared himself my lover, and said that if I could bring him a dowry of four hundred crowns, he could open a shop, furnish it, and marry me.

"I am poor," I answered, "and I have only a hundred crowns in charity tickets, which my confessor keeps for me." Now I have two hundred crowns, for if I marry, my mother will willingly give me her share of the money you made us gain. You can therefore make me happy by getting me tickets to the amount of two hundred crowns more. Take the tickets to my confessor, who is a very good man and fond of me; he will not say anything to my mother about it."

"I needn't go about seeking for charity tickets, my angel. I will take two hundred piastres to your confessor to-morrow, and you must manage the rest yourself. Tell me his name, and to-morrow I will tell you what I have done, but not here, as the wind and the cold would be the death of me. You can leave me to find out a room where we shall be at our ease, and without any danger of people suspecting that we have spent an hour together. I will meet you at the church to-morrow at the same hour and when you see me follow me."

Mariuccia told me her confessor's name, and allowed me all the caresses possible in our uncomfortable position. The kisses she gave me in return for mine left no doubt in my mind, as to her love for me. As nine o'clock struck I left her, perishing with cold, but burning with desire; my only thought being where to find a room in which I might possess myself of the treasure the next day.

On leaving the ruined palace, instead of returning to the Piazza di Spagna I turned to the left and passed along a narrow and dirty street only inhabited by people of the lowest sort. As I slowly walked along, a woman came out of her house and asked me politely if I were looking for anybody.

"I am looking for a room to let."

"There are none here, sir, but, you will find a hundred in the square."

"I know it, but I want the room to be here, not for the sake of the expense, but that I may be sure of being able to spend an hour or so of a morning with a person in whom I am interested. I am ready to pay anything."

"I understand what you mean, and you should have a room in my house if I had one to spare, but a neighbour of mine has one on the ground floor, and if you will wait a moment I will go and speak to her."

"You will oblige me very much."

"Kindly step in here."

I entered a poor room, where all seemed wretchedness, and I saw two children doing their lessons. Soon after, the good woman came back and asked me to follow her. I took several pieces of money from my pocket, and put them down on the only table which this poor place contained. I must have seemed very generous, for the poor mother came and kissed my hand with the utmost gratitude. So pleasant is it to do good, that now when I have nothing left the remembrance of the happiness I have given to others at small cost is almost the only pleasure I enjoy.

I went to a neighbouring house where a woman received me in an empty room, which she told me she would let cheaply if I would pay three months in advance, and bring in my own furniture.

"What do you ask for the three months' rent?"

"Three Roman crowns."

"If you will see to the furnishing of the room this very day I will give you twelve crowns."

"Twelve crowns! What furniture do you want?"

"A good clean bed, a small table covered with a clean cloth, four good chairs, and a large brazier with plenty of fire in it, for I am nearly perishing of cold here. I shall only come occasionally in the morning, and I shall leave by noon at the latest."

"Come at three o'clock, then, to-day, and you will find everything to your satisfaction."

From there I went to the confessor. He was a French monk, about sixty, a fine and benevolent-looking man, who won one's respect and confidence.

"Reverend father," I began, "I saw at the house of Abbe Momolo, 'scoptore santissimo', a young girl named Mary, whose confessor you are. I fell in love with her, and offered her money to try and seduce her. She replied that instead of trying to lead her into sin I would do better to get her some charity tickets that she might be able to marry a young man who loved her, and would make her happy. I was touched by what she said, but my passion still remained. I spoke to her again, and said that I would give her two hundred crowns for nothing, and that her mother should keep them.

"That would be my ruin," said she; "my mother would think the money was the price of sin, and would not accept it. If you are really going to be so generous, take the money to my confessor, and ask him to do what he can for my marriage."

"Here, then, reverend father, is the sum of money for the good girl; be kind enough to take charge of it, and I will trouble her no more. I am going to Naples the day after to-morrow, and I hope when I come back she will be married."

The good confessor took the hundred sequins and gave me a receipt, telling me that in interesting myself on behalf of Mariuccia I was making happy a most pure and innocent dove, whom he had confessed since she was five years old, and that he had often told her that she might communicate without making her confession because he knew she was incapable of mortal sin.

"Her mother," he added, "is a sainted woman, and as soon as I have enquired into the character of the future husband I will soon bring the marriage about. No one shall ever know from whom this generous gift comes."

After putting this matter in order I dined with the Chevalier Mengs, and I willingly consented to go with the whole family to the Aliberti Theatre that evening. I did not forget, however, to go and inspect the room I had taken. I found all my orders executed, and I gave twelve crowns to the landlady and took the key, telling her to light the fire at seven every morning.

So impatient did I feel for the next day to come that I thought the opera detestable, and the night for me was a sleepless one.

Next morning I went to the church before the time, and when Mariuccia came, feeling sure that she had seen me, I went out. She followed me at a distance, and when I got to the door of the lodging I turned for her to be sure that it was I, and then went in and found the room well warmed. Soon after Mariuccia came in, looking timid, confused, and as if she were doubtful of the path she was treading. I clasped her to my arms, and reassured her by my tender embraces; and her courage rose when I shewed her the confessor's receipt, and told her that the worthy man had promised to care for her marriage. She kissed my hand in a transport of delight, assuring me that she would never forget my kindness. Then, as I urged her to make me a happy man, she said,—

"We have three hours before us, as I told my mother I was going to give thanks to God for having made me a winner in the lottery."

This reassured me, and I took my time, undressing her by degrees, and unveiling her charms one by one, to my delight, without the slightest attempt at resistance on her part. All the time she kept her eyes fixed on mine, as if to soothe her modesty; but when I beheld and felt all her charms I was in an ecstasy. What a body; what beauties! Nowhere was there the slightest imperfection. She was like Venus rising from the foam of the sea. I carried her gently to the bed, and while she strove to hide her alabaster breasts and the soft hair which marked the entrance to the sanctuary, I undressed in haste, and consummated the sweetest of sacrifices, without there being the slightest doubt in my mind of the purity of the victim. In the first sacrifice no doubt the young priestess felt some pain, but she assured me out of delicacy that she had not been hurt, and at the second assault she shewed that she shared my flames. I was going to immolate the victim for the third time when the clock struck ten. She began to be restless, and hurriedly put on our clothes. I had to go to Naples, but I assured her that the desire of embracing her once more before her marriage would hasten my return to Rome. I promised to take another hundred crowns to her confessor, advising her to spend the money she had won in the lottery on her trousseau.

"I shall be at Monolo's to-night, dearest, and you must come, too; but we must appear indifferent to each other, though our hearts be full of joy, lest those malicious girls suspect our mutual understanding."

"It is all the more necessary to be cautious," she replied, "as I have noticed that they suspect that we love each other."

Before we parted she thanked me for what I had done for her, and begged me to believe that, her poverty notwithstanding, she had given herself for love alone.

I was the last to leave the house, and I told my landlady that I should be away for ten or twelve days. I then went to the confessor to give him the hundred crowns I had promised my mistress. When the good old Frenchman heard that I had made this fresh sacrifice that Mariuccia might be able to spend her lottery winnings on her clothes, he told me that he would call on the mother that very day and urge her to consent to her daughter's marriage, and also learn where the young man lived. On my return from Naples I heard that he had faithfully carried out his promise.

I was sitting at table with Mengs when a chamberlain of the Holy Father called. When he came in he asked M. Mengs if I lived there, and on that gentleman pointing me out, he gave me, from his holy master, the Cross of the Order of the Golden Spur with the diploma, and a patent under

the pontifical seal, which, in my quality as doctor of laws, made me a prothonotary-apostolic 'extra urbem'.

I felt that I had been highly honoured, and told the bearer that I would go and thank my new sovereign and ask his blessing the next day. The Chevalier Mengs embraced me as a brother, but I had the advantage over him in not being obliged to pay anything, whereas the great artist had to disburse twenty-five Roman crowns to have his diploma made out. There is a saying at Rome, 'Sine efusione sanguinis non fit remissio', which may be interpreted, Nothing without money; and as a matter of fact, one can do anything with money in the Holy City.

Feeling highly flattered at the favour the Holy Father had shewn me, I put on the cross which depended from a broad red ribbon-red being the colour worn by the Knights of St. John of the Lateran, the companions of the palace, 'comites palatini', or count-palatins. About the same time poor Cahusac, author of the opera of Zoroaster, went mad for joy on the receipt of the same order. I was not so bad as that, but I confess, to my shame, that I was so proud of my decoration that I asked Winckelmann whether I should be allowed to have the cross set with diamonds and rubies. He said I could if I liked, and if I wanted such a cross he could get me one cheap. I was delighted, and bought it to make a show at Naples, but I had not the face to wear it in Rome. When I went to thank the Pope I wore the cross in my button-hole out of modesty. Five years afterwards when I was at Warsaw, Czartoryski, a Russian prince-palatine, made me leave it off by saying,—

"What are you doing with that wretched bauble? It's a drug in the market, and no one but an impostor would wear it now."

The Popes knew this quite well, but they continued to give the cross to ambassadors while they also gave it to their 'valets de chambre'. One has to wink at a good many things in Rome.

In the evening Momolo gave me a supper by way of celebrating my new dignity. I recouped him for the expense by holding a bank at faro, at which I was dexterous enough to lose forty crowns to the family, without having the slightest partiality to Mariuccia who won like the rest. She found the opportunity to tell me that her confessor had called on her, that she had told him where her future husband lived, and that the worthy monk had obtained her mother's consent to the hundred crowns being spent on her trousseau.

I noticed that Momolo's second daughter had taken a fancy to Costa, and I told Momolo that I was going to Naples, but that I would leave my man in Rome, and that if I found a marriage had been arranged on my return I would gladly pay the expenses of the wedding.

Costa liked the girl, but he did not marry her then for fear of my claiming the first-fruits. He was a fool of a peculiar kind, though fools of all sorts are common enough. He married her a year later after robbing me, but I shall speak of that again.

Next day, after I had breakfasted and duly embraced my brother, I set out in a nice carriage with the Abbe Alfani, Le Duc preceding me on horseback, and I reached Naples at a time when everybody was in a state of excitement because an eruption of Vesuvius seemed imminent. At the last stage the inn-keeper made me read the will of his father who had died during the eruption of 1754. He said that in the year 1761 God would overwhelm the sinful town of Naples, and the worthy host consequently advised me to return to Rome. Alfani took the thing seriously, and said that we should do well to be warned by so evident an indication of the will of God. The event was predicted, therefore it had to happen. Thus a good many people reason, but as I was not of the number I proceeded on my way.

CHAPTER IX

My Short But Happy Stay at Naples—The Duke de Matalone My Daughter —Donna Lucrezia—My Departure

I shall not, dear reader, attempt the impossible, however much I should like to describe the joy, the happiness, I may say the ecstasy, which I experienced in returning to Naples, of which I had such pleasant memories, and where, eighteen years ago, I had made my first fortune in returning from Mataro. As I had come there for the second time to keep a promise I had made to the Duke de Matalone to come and see him at Naples, I ought to have visited this nobleman at once; but foreseeing that from the time I did so I should have little liberty left me, I began by enquiring after all my old friends.

I walked out early in the morning and called on Belloni's agent. He cashed my letter of credit and gave me as many bank-notes as I liked, promising that nobody should know that we did business together. From the bankers I went to see Antonio Casanova, but they told me he lived near Salerno, on an estate he had bought which gave him the title of marquis. I was vexed, but I had no right to expect to find Naples in the statu quo I left it. Polo was dead, and his son lived at St. Lucia with his wife and children; he was a boy when I saw him last, and though I should have much liked to see him again I had no time to do so.

It may be imagined that I did not forget the advocate, Castelli, husband of my dear Lucrezia, whom I had loved so well at Rome and Tivoli. I longed to see her face once more, and I thought of the joy with which we should recall old times that I could never forget. But Castelli had been dead for some years, and his widow lived at a distance of twenty miles from Naples. I resolved not to return to Rome without embracing her. As to Lelio Caraffa, he was still alive and residing at the Matalone Palace.

I returned, feeling tired with my researches, dressed with care, and drove to the Matalone Palace, where they told me that the duke was at table. I did not care for that but had my name sent in, and the duke came out and did me the honour of embracing me and thouing me, and then presented me to his wife, a daughter of the Duke de Bovino, and to the numerous company at table. I told him I had only come to Naples in fulfillment of the promise I had made him at Paris.

"Then," said he, "you must stay with me;" and, without waiting for my answer, ordered my luggage to be brought from the inn, and my carriage to be placed in his coach-house. I accepted his invitation.

One of the guests, a fine-looking man, on hearing my name announced, said gaily,—

"If you bear my name, you must be one of my father's bastards."

"No," said I, directly, "one of your mother's."

This repartee made everybody laugh, and the gentleman who had addressed me came and embraced me, not in the least offended. The joke was explained to me. His name was Casalnovi, not Casanova, and he was duke and lord of the fief of that name.

"Did you know," said the Duke de Matalone, "that I had a son?"

"I was told so, but did not believe it, but now I must do penance for my incredulity, for I see before me an angel capable of working this miracle."

The duchess blushed, but did not reward my compliment with so much as a glance; but all the company applauded what I had said, as it was notorious that the duke had been impotent before his marriage. The duke sent for his son, I admired him, and told the father that the likeness was perfect. A merry monk, who sat at the right hand of the duchess, said, more truthfully, that there was no likeness at all. He had scarcely uttered the words when the duchess coolly gave him a box on the ear, which the monk received with the best grace imaginable.

I talked away to the best of my ability, and in half an hour's time I had won everybody's good graces, with the exception of the duchess, who remained inflexible. I tried to make her talk for two days without success; so as I did not care much about her I left her to her pride.

As the duke was taking me to my room he noticed my Spaniard, and asked where my secretary was, and when he saw that it was the Abbe Alfani, who had taken the title so as to escape the notice of the Neapolitans, he said,—

"The abbe is very wise, for he has deceived so many people with his false antiques that he might have got into trouble."

He took me to his stables where he had some superb horses, Arabs, English, and Andalusians; and then to his gallery, a very fine one; to his large and choice library; and at last to his study, where he had a fine collection of prohibited books.

I was reading titles and turning over leaves, when the duke said,—

"Promise to keep the most absolute secrecy on what I am going to shew you."

I promised, without making any difficulty, but I expected a surprise of some sort. He then shewed me a satire which I could not understand, but which was meant to turn the whole Court into ridicule. Never was there a secret so easily kept.

"You must come to the St. Charles Theatre," said he, "and I will present you to the handsomest ladies in Naples, and afterwards you can go when you like, as my box is always open to my friends. I will also introduce you to my mistress, and she, I am sure, will always be glad to see you."

"What! you have a mistress, have you?"

"Yes, but only for form's sake, as I am very fond of my wife. All the same, I am supposed to be deeply in love with her, and even jealous, as I never introduce anyone to her, and do not allow her to receive any visitors."

"But does not your young and handsome duchess object to your keeping a mistress?"

"My wife could not possibly be jealous, as she knows that I am impotent—except, of course, with her."

"I see, but it seems strange; can one be said to have a mistress whom one does not love?"

"I did not say I loved her not; on the contrary, I am very fond of her; she has a keen and pleasant wit, but she interests my head rather than my heart."

"I see; but I suppose she is ugly?"

"Ugly? You shall see her to-night, and you can tell me what you think of her afterwards. She is a handsome and well-educated girl of seventeen."

"Can she speak French?"

"As well as a Frenchwoman."

"I am longing to see her."

When we got to the theatre I was introduced to several ladies, but none of them pleased me. The king, a mere boy, sat in his box in the middle of the theatre, surrounded by his courtiers, richly but tastefully dressed. The pit was full and the boxes also. The latter were ornamented with mirrors, and on that occasion were all illuminated for some reason or other. It was a magnificent scene, but all this glitter and light put the stage into the background.

After we had gazed for some time at the scene, which is almost peculiar to Naples, the duke took me to his private box and introduced me to his friends, who consisted of all the wits in the town.

I have often laughed on hearing philosophers declare that the intelligence of a nation is not so much the result of the climate as of education. Such sages should be sent to Naples and then to St. Petersburg, and be told to reflect, or simply to look before them. If the great Boerhaave had lived at Naples he would have learnt more about the nature of sulphur by observing its effects on vegetables, and still more on animals. In Naples, and Naples alone, water, and nothing but water, will cure diseases which are fatal elsewhere, despite the doctors' efforts.

The duke, who had left me to the wits for a short time, returned and took me to the box of his mistress, who was accompanied by an old lady of respectable appearance. As he went in he said, "Leonilda mia, ti presento il cavalier Don Giacomo Casanova, Veneziano, amico mio'."

She received me kindly and modestly, and stopped listening to the music to talk to me.

When a woman is pretty, one recognizes her charms instantaneously; if one has to examine her closely, her beauty is doubtful. Leonilda was strikingly beautiful. I smiled and looked at the duke, who had told me that he loved her like a daughter, and that he only kept her for form's sake. He understood the glance, and said,—

"You may believe me."

"It's credible," I replied.

Leonilda no doubt understood what we meant, and said, with a shy smile,—

"Whatever is possible is credible."

"Quite so," said I, "but one may believe, or not believe, according to the various degrees of possibility."

"I think it's easier to believe than to disbelieve. You came to Naples yesterday; that's true and yet incredible."

"Why incredible?"

"Would any man suppose that a stranger would come to Naples at a time when the inhabitants are wishing themselves away?"

"Indeed, I have felt afraid till this moment, but now I feel quite at my ease, since, you being here, St. Januarius will surely protect Naples."

"Why?"

"Because I am sure he loves you; but you are laughing at me."

"It is such a funny idea. I am afraid that if I had a lover like St. Januarius I should not grant him many favours."

"Is he very ugly, then?"

"If his portrait is a good likeness, you can see for yourself by examining his statue."

Gaiety leads to freedom, and freedom to friendship. Mental graces are superior to bodily charms.

Leonilda's frankness inspired my confidence, and I led the conversation to love, on which she talked like a past mistress.

"Love," said she, "unless it leads to the possession of the beloved object, is a mere torment; if bounds are placed to passion, love must die."

"You are right; and the enjoyment of a beautiful object is not a true pleasure unless it be preceded by love."

"No doubt if love precedes it accompanies, but I do not think it necessarily follows, enjoyment."

"True, it often makes love to cease."

"She is a selfish daughter, then, to kill her father; and if after enjoyment love still continue in the heart of one, it is worse than murder, for the party in which love still survives must needs be wretched."

"You are right; and from your strictly logical arguments I conjecture that you would have the senses kept in subjection: that is too hard!"

"I would have nothing to do with that Platonic affection devoid of love, but I leave you to guess what my maxim would be."

"To love and enjoy; to enjoy and love. Turn and turn about."

"You have hit the mark."

With this Leonilda burst out laughing, and the duke kissed her hand. Her governess, not understanding French, was attending to the opera, but I was in flames.

Leonilda was only seventeen, and was as pretty a girl as the heart could desire.

The duke repeated a lively epigram of Lafontaine's on "Enjoyment," which is only found in the first edition of his works. It begins as follows:—

"La jouissance et les desirs
Sont ce que l'homme a de plus rare;
Mais ce ne sont pas vrais plaisirs
Des le moment qu'on les separe."

I have translated this epigram into Italian and Latin; in the latter language I was almost able to render Lafontaine line for line; but I had to use twenty lines of Italian to translate the first ten lines of the French. Of course this argues nothing as to the superiority of the one language over the other.

In the best society at Naples one addresses a newcomer in the second person singular as a peculiar mark of distinction. This puts both parties at their ease without diminishing their mutual respect for one another.

Leonilda had already turned my first feeling of admiration into something much warmer, and the opera, which lasted for five hours, seemed over in a moment.

After the two ladies had gone the duke said, "Now we must part, unless you are fond of games of chance."

"I don't object to them when I am to play with good hands."

"Then follow me; ten or twelve of my friends will play faro, and then sit down to a cold collation, but I warn you it is a secret, as gaming is forbidden. I will answer for you keeping your own counsel, however."

"You may do so."

He took me to the Duke de Monte Leone's. We went up to the third floor, passed through a dozen rooms, and at last reached the gamester's chamber. A polite-looking banker, with a bank of about four hundred sequins, had the cards in his hands. The duke introduced me as his friend, and made me sit beside him. I was going to draw out my purse, but I was told that debts were not paid for twenty-four hours after they were due. The banker gave me a pack of cards, with a little basket containing a thousand counters. I told the company that I should consider each counter as a Naples ducat. In less than two hours my basket was empty. I stopped playing and proceeded to enjoy my supper. It was arranged in the Neapolitan style, and consisted of an enormous dish of macaroni and ten or twelve different kinds of shellfish which are plentiful on the Neapolitan coasts. When we left I took care not to give the duke time to condole with me on my loss, but began to talk to him about his delicious Leonilda.

Early next day he sent a page to my room to tell me that if I wanted to come with him and kiss the king's hand I must put on my gala dress. I put on a suit of rose-coloured velvet, with gold spangles, and I had the great honour of kissing a small hand, covered with chilblains, belonging to a boy of nine. The Prince de St. Nicander brought up the young king to the best of his ability, but he was naturally a kindly, just, and generous monarch; if he had had more dignity he would have been an ideal king; but he was too unceremonious, and that, I think, is a defect in one destined to rule others.

I had the honour of sitting next the duchess at dinner, and she deigned to say that she had never seen a finer dress. "That's my way," I said, "of distracting attention from my face and figure." She smiled, and her politeness to me during my stay were almost limited to these few words.

When we left the table the duke took me to the apartment occupied by his uncle, Don Lelio, who recognized me directly. I kissed the venerable old man's hand, and begged him to pardon me for the freaks of my youth. "It's eighteen years ago," said he, "since I chose M. Casanova as the companion of your studies." I delighted him by giving him a brief account of my adventures in Rome with Cardinal Acquaviva. As we went out, he begged me to come and see him often.

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