

GIACOMO CASANOVA

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

VOLUME 22: TO
LONDON

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CHAPTER V

I Meet the Venetian Ambassadors at Lyons, and also Marcoline's Uncle—I
Part from Marcoline and Set Out for Paris—An Amorous Journey

Thus freed from the cares which the dreadful slanders of Possano had caused me, I gave myself up to the enjoyment of my fair Venetian, doing all in my power to increase her happiness, as if I had had a premonition that we should soon be separated from one another.

The day after the supper I gave to Madame Pernon and M. Bono, we went to the theatre together, and in the box opposite to us I saw M. Querini, the procurator, Morosini, M. Memmo, and Count Stratico, a Professor of the University of Padua. I knew all these gentlemen; they had been in London, and were passing through Lyons on their return to Venice.

"Farewell, fair Marcoline!" I said to myself, feeling quite broken-hearted, but I remained calm, and said nothing to her. She did not notice them as she was absorbed in her conversation with M. Bono, and besides, she did not know them by sight. I saw that M. Memmo had seen me and was telling the procurator of my presence, and as I knew the latter very well I felt bound to pay them my respects then and there.

Querini received me very politely for a devotee, as also did Morosini, while Memmo seemed moved; but no doubt he remembered that it was chiefly due to his mother that I had been imprisoned eight years ago. I congratulated the gentlemen on their embassy to England, on their return to their native land, and for form's sake commended myself to their good offices to enable me to return also. M. Morosini, noticing the richness of my dress and my general appearance of prosperity, said that while I had to stay away he had to return, and that he considered me the luckier man.

"Your excellency is well aware," said I, "that nothing is sweeter than forbidden fruit."

He smiled, and asked me whither I went and whence I came.

"I come from Rome," I answered, "where I had some converse with the Holy Father, whom I knew before, and I am going through Paris on my way to London."

"Call on me here, if you have time, I have a little commission to give you."

"I shall always have time to serve your excellency in. Are you stopping here for long?"

"Three or four days."

When I got back to my box Marcoline asked me who were the gentlemen to whom I had been speaking. I answered coolly and indifferently, but watching her as I spoke, that they were the Venetian ambassadors on their way from London. The flush of her cheek died away and was replaced by pallor; she raised her eyes to heaven, lowered them, and said not a word. My heart was broken. A few minutes afterwards she asked me which was M. Querini, and after I had pointed him out to her she watched him furtively for the rest of the evening.

The curtain fell, we left our box, and at the door of the theatre we found the ambassadors waiting for their carriage. Mine was in the same line as theirs. The ambassador Querini said,—

"You have a very pretty young lady with you."

Marcoline stepped forward, seized his hand, and kissed it before I could answer.

Querini, who was greatly astonished, thanked her and said,—

"What have I done to deserve this honour?"

"Because," said Marcoline, speaking in the Venetian dialect, "I have the honour of knowing his excellency M. Querini."

"What are you doing with M. Casanova?"

"He is my uncle."

My carriage came up. I made a profound bow to the ambassadors, and called out to the coachman, "To the 'Hotel du Parc'." It was the best hotel in Lyons, and I was not sorry for the Venetians to hear where I was staying.

Marcoline was in despair, for she saw that the time for parting was near at hand.

"We have three or four days before us," said I, "in which we can contrive how to communicate with your uncle Mattio. I must commend you highly for kissing M. Querini's hand. That was a masterstroke indeed. All will go off well; but I hope you will be merry, for sadness I abhor."

We were still at table when I heard the voice of M. Memmo in the ante-chamber; he was a young man, intelligent and good-natured. I warned Marcoline not to say a word about our private affairs, but to display a moderate gaiety. The servant announced the young nobleman, and we rose to welcome him; but he made us sit down again, and sat beside us, and drank a glass of wine with the utmost cordiality. He told me how he had been supping with the old devotee Querini, who had had his hand kissed by a young and fair Venetian. The ambassadors were much amused at the circumstance, and Querini himself, in spite of his scrupulous conscience, was greatly flattered.

"May I ask you, mademoiselle," he added, "how you came to know M. Querini?"

"It's a mystery, sir."

"A mystery, is it? What fun we shall have tomorrow! I have come," he said, addressing himself to me, "to ask you to dine with us to-morrow, and you must bring your charming niece."

"Would you like to go, Marcoline?"

"Con grandissimo piacere! We shall speak Venetian, shall we not?"

"Certainly."

"E viva! I cannot learn French."

"M. Querini is in the same position," said M. Memmo.

After half an hour's agreeable conversation he left us, and Marcoline embraced me with delight at having made such a good impression on these gentlemen.

"Put on your best dress to-morrow," said I, "and do not forget your jewels. Be agreeable to everybody, but pretend not to see your Uncle Mattio, who will be sure to wait at table."

"You may be sure I shall follow your advice to the letter."

"And I mean to make the recognition a scene worthy of the drama. I intend that you shall be taken back to Venice by M. Querini himself, while your uncle will take care of you by his special orders."

"I shall be delighted with this arrangement, provided it succeeds."

"You may trust to me for that."

At nine o'clock the next day I called on Morosini concerning the commissions he had for me. He gave me a little box and a letter for Lady Harrington, and another letter with the words,—

"The Procurator Morosini is very sorry not to have been able to take a last leave of Mdlle. Charpillon."

"Where shall I find her?"

"I really don't know. If you find her, give her the letter; if not, it doesn't matter. That's a dazzling beauty you have with you, Casanova."

"Well, she has dazzled me."

"But how did she know Querini?"

"She has seen him at Venice, but she has never spoken to him."

"I thought so; we have been laughing over it, but Querini is hugely pleased. But how did you get hold of her? She must be very young, as Memmo says she cannot speak French."

"It would be a long story to tell, and after all we met through a mere chance."

"She is not your niece."

"Nay, she is more—she is my queen."

"You will have to teach her French, as when you get to London."

"I am not going to take her there; she wants to return to Venice."

"I pity you if you are in love with her! I hope she will dine with us?"

"Oh, yes! she is delighted with the honour."

"And we are delighted to have our poor repast animated by such a charming person."

"You will find her worthy of your company; she is full of wit."

When I got back to the inn I told Marcoline that if anything was said at dinner about her return to Venice, she was to reply that no one could make her return except M. Querini, but that if she could have his protection she would gladly go back with him.

"I will draw you out of the difficulty," said I; and she promised to carry out my instructions.

Marcoline followed my advice with regard to her toilette, and looked brilliant in all respects; and I, wishing to shine in the eyes of the proud Venetian nobles, had dressed myself with the utmost richness. I wore a suit of grey velvet, trimmed with gold and silver lace; my point lace shirt was worth at least fifty louis; and my diamonds, my watches, my chains, my sword of the finest English steel, my snuff-box set with brilliants, my cross set with diamonds, my buckles set with the same stones, were altogether worth more than fifty thousand crowns. This ostentation, though puerile in itself, yet had a purpose, for I wished M. de Bragadin to know that I did not cut a bad figure in the world; and I wished the proud magistrates who had made me quit my native land to learn that I had lost nothing, and could laugh at their severity.

In this gorgeous style we drove to the ambassador's dinner at half-past one.

All present were Venetians, and they welcomed Marcoline enthusiastically. She who was born with the instinct of good manners behaved with the grace of a nymph and the dignity of a French princess; and as soon as she was seated between two grave and reverend signors, she began by saying that she was delighted to find herself the only representative of her sex in this distinguished company, and also that there were no Frenchmen present.

"Then you don't like the French," said M. Memmo.

"I like them well enough so far as I know them, but I am only acquainted with their exterior, as I don't speak or understand the language."

After this everybody knew how to take her, and the gaiety became general.

She answered all questions to the point, and entertained the company with her remarks on French manners, so different to Venetian customs.

In the course of dinner M. Querini asked how she had known him, and she replied that she had often seen him at Divine service, whereat the devotee seemed greatly flattered. M. Morosini, pretending not to know that she was to return to Venice, told her that unless she made haste to acquire French, the universal language, she would find London very tedious, as the Italian language was very little known there.

"I hope," she replied, "that M. de Seingalt will not bring me into the society of people with whom I cannot exchange ideas. I know I shall never be able to learn French."

When we had left the table the ambassadors begged me to tell the story of my escape from The Leads, and I was glad to oblige them. My story lasted for two whole hours; and as it was noticed that Marcoline's eyes became wet with tears when I came to speak of my great danger. She was rallied upon the circumstance, and told that nieces were not usually so emotional.

"That may be, gentlemen," she replied, "though I do not see why a niece should not love her uncle. But I have never loved anyone else but the hero of the tale, and I cannot see what difference there can be between one kind of love and another."

"There are five kinds of love known to man," said M. Querini. "The love of one's neighbour, the love of God, which is beyond compare, the highest of all, love matrimonial, the love of house and home, and the love of self, which ought to come last of all, though many place it in the first rank."

The nobleman commented briefly on these diverse kinds of love, but when he came to the love of God he began to soar, and I was greatly astonished to see Marcoline shedding tears, which she wiped away hastily as if to hide them from the sight of the worthy old man whom wine had made more theological than usual. Feigning to be enthusiastic, Marcoline took his hand and kissed it, while he in his vain exaltation drew her towards him and kissed her on the brow, saying, "Poveretta, you are an angel!"

At this incident, in which there was more love of our neighbour than love of God, we all bit our lips to prevent ourselves bursting out laughing, and the sly little puss pretended to be extremely moved.

I never knew Marcoline's capacities till then, for she confessed that her emotion was wholly fictitious, and designed to win the old man's good graces; and that if she had followed her own inclinations she would have laughed heartily. She was designed to act a part either upon the stage or on a throne. Chance had ordained that she should be born of the people, and her education had been neglected; but if she had been properly tutored she would have been fit for anything.

Before returning home we were warmly invited to dinner the next day.

As we wanted to be together, we did not go to the theatre that day and when we got home I did not wait for Marcoline to undress to cover her with kisses.

"Dear heart," said I, "you have not shewn me all your perfections till now, when we are about to part; you make me regret you are going back to Venice. Today you won all hearts."

"Keep me then, with you, and I will ever be as I have been to-day. By the way, did you see my uncle?"

"I think so. Was it not he who was in continual attendance?"

"Yes. I recognized him by his ring. Did he look, at me?"

"All the time, and with an air of the greatest astonishment. I avoided catching his eye, which roved from you to me continually."

"I should like to know what the good man thinks! You will see him again to-morrow. I am sure he will have told M. Querini that, I am his niece, and consequently not yours.

"I expect so, too."

"And if M. Querini says as much to me to-morrow, I, expect I shall have to, admit the fact. What do you think?"

"You must undoubtedly tell him the truth, but frankly and openly, and so as not to let him think that you have need of him to return to Venice. He is not your father, and has no right over your liberty."

"Certainly not."

"Very good. You must also agree that I am not your uncle, and that the bond between us is, of the most tender description. Will, there be any difficulty is that?"

"How can you ask me such a question? The link between us makes me feel proud, and will ever do so."

"Well, well, I say no more. I trust entirely in your tact. Remember that Querini and no other must take you back to Venice; he must treat you as if you were his daughter. If he will not consent, you shall not return at all."

"Would to God it were so!"

Early the next morning I got a note from M. Querini requesting me to call on him, as he wanted to speak to me on a matter of importance.

"We are getting on," said Marcoline. "I am very glad that things have taken this turn, for when you come back you can tell me the whole story, and I can regulate my conduct accordingly."

I found Querini and Morosini together. They gave me their hands when I came in, and Querini asked me to sit down, saying that there would be nothing in our discussion which M. Morosini might not hear.

"I have a confidence to make to you, M. Casanova," he began; "but first I want you to do me the same favor."

"I can have no secrets from your excellency."

"I am obliged to you, and will try to deserve your good opinion. I beg that you will tell me sincerely whether you know the young person who is with you, for no one believes that she is your niece."

"It is true that she is—not my niece, but not being acquainted with her relations or family I cannot be said to know her in the sense which your excellency gives to the word. Nevertheless, I am proud to confess that I love her with an affection which will not end save with my life."

"I am delighted to hear you say so. How long have you had her?"

"Nearly two months."

"Very good! How did she fall into your hands?"

"That is a point which only concerns her, and you will allow me not to answer that question."

"Good! we will go on. Though you are in love with her, it is very possible that you have never made any enquiries respecting her family."

"She has told me that she has a father and a mother, poor but honest, but I confess I have never been curious enough to enquire her name. I only know her baptismal name, which is possibly not her true one, but it does quite well for me."

"She has given you her true name."

"Your excellency surprises me! You know her, then?"

"Yes; I did not know her yesterday, but I do now. Two months . . . Marcoline . . . yes, it must be she. I am now certain that my man is not mad."

"Your man?"

"Yes, she is his niece. When we were at London he heard that she had left the paternal roof about the middle of Lent. Marcoline's mother, who is his sister, wrote to him. He was afraid to speak to her yesterday, because she looked so grand. He even thought he must be mistaken, and he would have been afraid of offending me by speaking to a grand lady at my table. She must have seen him, too."

"I don't think so, she has said nothing about it to me."

"It is true that he was standing behind her all the time. But let us come to the point. Is Marcoline your wife, or have you any intention of marrying her?"

"I love her as tenderly as any man can love a woman, but I cannot make her a wife; the reasons are known only to herself and me."

"I respect your secret; but tell me if you would object to my begging her to return to Venice with her uncle?"

"I think Marcoline is happy, but if she has succeeded in gaining the favour of your excellency, she is happier still; and I feel sure that if she were to go back to Venice under the exalted patronage of your excellency, she would efface all stains on her reputation. As to permitting her to go, I can put no stumbling-block in the way, for I am not her master. As her lover I would defend her to the last drop of my blood, but if she wants to leave me I can only assent, though with sorrow."

"You speak with much sense, and I hope you will not be displeased at my undertaking this good work. Of course I shall do nothing without your consent."

"I respect the decrees of fate when they are promulgated by such a man as you. If your excellency can induce Marcoline to leave me, I will make no objection; but I warn you that she must be won mildly. She is intelligent, she loves me, and she knows that she is independent; besides she

reckons on me, and she has cause to do so. Speak to her to-day by herself; my presence would only be in your way. Wait till dinner is over; the interview might last some time."

"My dear Casanova, you are an honest man. I am delighted to have made your acquaintance."

"You do me too much honour. I may say that Marcoline will hear nothing of all this."

When I got back to the inn, I gave Marcoline an exact account of the whole conversation, warning her that she would be supposed to know nothing about it.

"You must execute a masterly stroke, dearest," said I, "to persuade M. Querini that I did not lie in saying that you had not seen your uncle. As soon as you see him, you must give a shout of surprise, exclaim, 'My dear uncle!' and rush to his arms. This would be a splendid and dramatic situation, which would do you honour in the eyes of all the company."

"You may be sure that I shall play the part very well, although my heart be sad."

At the time appointed we waited on the ambassadors, and found that all the other guests had assembled. Marcoline, as blithe and smiling as before, first accosted M. Querini, and then did the polite to all the company. A few minutes before dinner Mattio brought in his master's spectacles on a silver tray. Marcoline, who was sitting next to M. Querini, stopped short in something she was saying, and staring at the man, exclaimed in a questioning voice,—

"My uncle?"

"Yes, my dear niece."

Marcoline flung herself into his arms, and there was a moving scene, which excited the admiration of all.

"I knew you had left Venice, dear uncle, but I did not know you were in his excellency's service. I am so glad to see you again! You will tell my father and mother about me? You see I am happy. Where were you yesterday?"

"Here."

"And you didn't see me?"

"Yes; but your uncle there . . ."

"Well," said I, laughing, "let us know each other, cousin, and be good friends. Marcoline, I congratulate you on having such an honest man for an uncle."

"That is really very fine," said M. Querini; and everybody exclaimed, "Very affecting, very affecting indeed!"

The newly-found uncle departed, and we sat down to dinner, but in spirits which differed from those of yesterday. Marcoline bore traces of those mingled emotions of happiness and regret which move loyal hearts when they call to mind their native land. M. Querini looked at her admiringly, and seemed to have all the confidence of success which a good action gives to the mind. M. Morosini sat a pleased spectator. The others were attentive and curious as to what would come next. They listened to what was said, and hung on Marcoline's lips.

After the first course there was greater unison in the company, and M. Morosini told Marcoline that if she would return to Venice she would be sure of finding a husband worthy of her.

"I must be the judge of that," said she.

"Yes, but it is a good thing to have recourse to the advice of discreet persons who are interested in the happiness of both parties."

"Excuse me, but I do not think so. If I ever marry, my husband will have to please me first."

"Who has taught you this maxim?" said Querini.

"My uncle, Casanova, who has, I verily believe, taught me everything that can be learnt in the two months I have been happy enough to live with him."

"I congratulate the master and the pupil, but you are both too young to have learnt all the range of science. Moral science cannot be learnt in two months."

"What his excellency has just said," said I, turning to Marcoline, "is perfectly correct. In affairs of marriage both parties should rely to a great extent on the advice of friends, for mere marriages of inclination are often unhappy."

"That is a really philosophical remark, my dear Marcoline," said Querini; "but tell me the qualities which in your opinion are desirable in a husband."

"I should be puzzled to name them, but they would all become manifest in the man that pleased me."

"And supposing he were a worthless fellow?"

"He would certainly not please me, and that's the reason why I have made up my mind never to marry a man whom I have not studied."

"Supposing you made a mistake?"

"Then I would weep in secret."

"How if you were poor?"

"She need never fear poverty, my lord," said I. "She has an income of fifty crowns a month for the remainder of her life."

"Oh, that's a different matter. If that is so, sweetheart, you are privileged. You will be able to live at Venice in perfect independence."

"I think that to live honourably there I only need the protection of a lord like your excellency."

"As to that, Marcoline, I give you my word that I will do all in my power for you if you come to Venice. But let me ask you one question, how are you sure of your income of fifty crowns a month? You are laughing."

"I laugh because I am such a silly little thing. I don't have any heed for my own business. My friend there will tell you all about it."

"You have not been joking, have you?" said the worthy old man to me.

"Marcoline," said I, "has not only capital which will produce a larger sum than that which I have named, but she has also valuable possessions. Your excellency will note her wisdom in saying that she would need your lordship's protection at Venice, for she will require someone to look after the investment of her capital. The whole amount is in my hands, and if she likes Marcoline can have it all in less than two hours."

"Very good; then you must start for Venice the day after to-morrow. Mattio is quite ready to receive you."

"I have the greatest respect and love for my uncle, but it is not to his care that your excellency must commend me if I resolve to go."

"Then to whom?"

"To your own care, my lord. Your excellency has called me dear daughter two or three times, lead me, then, to Venice, like a good father, and I will come willingly; otherwise I protest I will not leave the man to whom I owe all I have. I will start for London with him the day after to-morrow."

At these words which delighted me silence fell on all. They waited for M. Querini to speak, and the general opinion seemed to be that he had gone too far to be able to draw back. Nevertheless, the old man kept silence; perhaps in his character of devotee he was afraid of being led into temptation, or of giving occasion to scandal, and the other guests were silent like him, and ate to keep each other in countenance. Mattio's hand trembled as he waited; Marcoline alone was calm and collected. Dessert was served, and still no one dared to say a word. All at once this wonderful girl said, in an inspired voice, as if speaking to herself,—

"We must adore the decrees of Divine Providence, but after the issue, since mortals are not able to discern the future, whether it be good or whether it be evil."

"What does that reflection relate to, my dear daughter?" said M. Querini, "and why do you kiss my hand now?"

"I kiss your hand because you have called me your dear daughter for the fourth time."

This judicious remark elicited a smile of approval from all, and restored the general gaiety; but M. Querini asked Marcoline to explain her observation on Providence.

"It was an inspiration, and the result of self-examination. I am well; I have learned something of life; I am only seventeen, and in the course of two months I have become rich by honest means. I am all happy, and yet I owe my happiness to the greatest error a maiden can commit. Thus I humble myself before the decrees, of Providence and adore its wisdom."

"You are right, but, none the less you ought to repent of what you have done."

"That's where I am puzzled; for before I can repent; I must think of it, and when I think of it I find nothing for which to repent. I suppose I shall have to consult some great theologian on the point."

"That will not be necessary; you are, intelligent, and your heart is good, and I will give you the necessary instruction on the way. When one repents there is no need to think of the pleasure which our sins have given us."

In his character of apostle the good M. Querini was becoming piously amorous of his fair proselyte. He left the table for a few moments, and when he returned he, told Marcoline that if he had a young lady to take to, Venice he should be obliged to leave her in the care of his housekeeper, Dame Veneranda, in whom he had every confidence.

"I have just been speaking to her; and if you would like to come, all is arranged. You shall sleep with her, and dine with us till we get to Venice, and then I will deliver, you into your mother's keeping, in the presence of your uncle. What do you say?"

"I will come with pleasure:"

"Come and see Dame Veneranda."

"Willingly."

"Come with us, Casanova."

Dame Veneranda looked a perfect canoness, and I did not think that Marcoline would fall, in love with her, but she seemed sensible and trustworthy. M. Querini told her in our presence what he had just told Marcoline, and the duenna assured him that she would take, the utmost care of the young lady. Marcoline kissed her and called her mother, thus gaining the old lady's, good graces. We rejoined, the company, who expressed to Marcoline their intense pleasure at having her for a companion on their journey.

"I shall have to put my steward in another carriage," said M. Querini, "as the calash only holds two."

"That will not be necessary," I remarked, "for Marcoline has her carriage, and Mistress Veneranda will find it a very comfortable one. It will hold her luggage as well."

"You, want to give me your carriage," said Marcoline. "You are too good to me."

I could made no reply, my emotion was so great. I turned aside and wiped, away my tears. Returning to the company, I found that Marcoline had vanished and M. Morosini, who, was also much affected told me she had come, to speak to Mistress Veneranda. Everybody was melancholy, and seeing that I was the cause I began to talk about England, where I hoped to make my fortune with a project of mine, the success of which only depended on Lord Egremont. M. de Morosini said he would give me a letter for Lord Egremont and another for M. Zuccata, the Venetian ambassador.

"Are you not afraid," said M. Querini, "of getting into, trouble with the State Inquisitors for recommending M. Casanova?"

Morosini replied coldly that as the Inquisitors had, not told him for what crime I was condemned, he did not feel himself bound to share their judgment. Old Querini, who was extremely particular, shook his head and said nothing.

Just then Marcoline came back to the room, and everybody could see that she had been weeping. I confess that this mark of her affection was as pleasing to my vanity as to my love; but such is man, and such, doubtless, is the reader who may be censuring my conduct. This charming girl, who still,

after all these years, dwells in my old heart, asked me to take her back to the inn, as she wanted to pack up her trunks. We left directly, after having promised to come to dinner on the following day.

I wept bitterly when I got to my room. I told Clairmont to see that the carriage was in good order, and then, hastily undressing, I flung myself on the bed in my dressing-gown, and wept as if some blessing was being taken from me against my will. Marcoline, who was much more sensible, did what she could to console me, but I liked to torment myself, and her words did but increase my despair.

"Reflect," said she, "that it is not I who am leaving you, but you who are sending me away; that I long to spend the rest of my days with you, and that you have only got to say a word to keep me."

I knew that she was right; but still a fatal fear which has always swayed me, the fear of being bound to anyone, and the hypocrisy of a libertine ever longing for change, both these feelings made me persist in my resolution and my sadness.

About six o'clock MM. Morosini and Querini came into the courtyard and looked at the carriage, which was being inspected by the wheelwright. They spoke to Clairmont, and then came to see us.

"Good heavens!" said M. Querini, seeing the numerous boxes which she was going to place on her carriage; and when he had heard that her carriage was the one he had just looked at, he seemed surprised; it was indeed a very good vehicle.

M. Morosini told Marcoline that if she liked to sell it when she got to Venice he would give her a thousand Venetian ducats, or three thousand francs for it.

"You might give her double that amount," said I, "for it is worth three thousand ducats."

"We will arrange all that," said he; and Querini added,—

"It will be a considerable addition to the capital she proposes to invest."

After some agreeable conversation I told M. Querini that I would give him a bill of exchange for five thousand ducats, which, with the three or four thousand ducats the sale of her jewellery would realize, and the thousand for the carriage, would give her a capital of nine or ten thousand ducats, the interest of which would bring her in a handsome income.

Next morning I got M. Bono to give me a bill of exchange on M. Querini's order, and at dinner-time Marcoline handed it over to her new protector, who wrote her a formal receipt. M. Morosini gave me the letters he had promised, and their departure was fixed for eleven o'clock the next day. The reader may imagine that our dinner-party was not over gay. Marcoline was depressed, I as gloomy as a splenetic Englishman, and between us we made the feast more like a funeral than a meeting of friends.

I will not attempt to describe the night I passed with my charmer. She asked me again and again how I could be my own executioner; but I could not answer, for I did not know. But how often have I done things which caused me pain, but to which I was impelled by some occult force it was my whim not to resist.

In the morning, when I had put on my boots and spurs, and told Clairmont not to be uneasy if I did not return that night, Marcoline and I drove to the ambassadors' residence. We breakfasted together, silently enough, for Marcoline had tears in her eyes, and everyone knowing my noble conduct towards her respected her natural grief. After breakfast we set out, I sitting in the forepart of the carriage, facing Marcoline and Dame Veneranda, who would have made me laugh under any other circumstances, her astonishment at finding herself in a more gorgeous carriage than the ambassador's was so great. She expatiated on the elegance and comfort of the equipage, and amused us by saying that her master was quite right in saying that the people would take her for the ambassadress. But in spite of this piece of comedy, Marcoline and I were sad all the way. M. Querini, who did not like night travelling, made us stop at Pont-Boivoisin, at nine o'clock, and after a bad supper everyone went to bed to be ready to start at daybreak. Marcoline was to sleep with Veneranda, so I accompanied her, and the worthy old woman went to bed without any ceremony, lying so close to the wall that

there was room for two more; but after Marcoline had got into bed I sat down on a chair, and placing my head beside hers on the pillow we mingled our sobs and tears all night.

When Veneranda, who had slept soundly, awoke, she was much astonished to see me still in the same position. She was a great devotee, but women's piety easily gives place to pity, and she had moved to the furthest extremity of the bed with the intention of giving me another night of love. But my melancholy prevented my profiting by her kindness.

I had ordered a saddle horse to be ready for me in the morning. We took a hasty cup of coffee and bade each other mutual farewells. I placed Marcoline in the carriage, gave her a last embrace, and waited for the crack of the postillion's whip to gallop back to Lyons. I tore along like a madman, for I felt as if I should like to send the horse to the ground and kill myself. But death never comes to him that desires it, save in the fable of the worthy Lafontaine. In six hours I had accomplished the eighteen leagues between Pont-Bovoisin and Lyons, only stopping to change horses. I tore off my clothes and threw myself on the bed, where thirty hours before I had enjoyed all the delights of love. I hoped that the bliss I had lost would return to me in my dreams. However, I slept profoundly, and did not wake till eight o'clock. I had been asleep about nineteen hours.

I rang for Clairmont, and told him to bring up my breakfast, which I devoured eagerly. When my stomach was restored in this manner I fell asleep again, and did not get up till the next morning, feeling quite well, and as if I could support life a little longer.

Three days after Marcoline's departure I bought a comfortable two-wheeled carriage with patent springs, and sent my trunks to Paris by the diligence. I kept a portmanteau containing the merest necessities, for I meant to travel in a dressing-gown and night-cap, and keep to myself all the way to Paris. I intended this as a sort of homage to Marcoline, but I reckoned without my host.

I was putting my jewellery together in a casket when Clairmont announced a tradesman and his daughter, a pretty girl whom I had remarked at dinner, for since the departure of my fair Venetian I had dined at the table-d'hôte by way of distraction.

I shut up my jewels and asked them to come in, and the father addressed me politely, saying,—

"Sir, I have come to ask you to do me a favour which will cost you but little, while it will be of immense service to my daughter and myself."

"What can I do for you? I am leaving Lyons at day-break to-morrow."

"I know it, for you said so at dinner; but we shall be ready at any hour. Be kind enough to give my daughter a seat in your carriage. I will, of course, pay for a third horse, and will ride post."

"You cannot have seen the carriage."

"Excuse me, I have done so. It is, I know, only meant for one, but she could easily squeeze into it. I know I am troubling you, but if you were aware of the convenience it would be to me I am sure you would not refuse. All the places in the diligence are taken up to next week, and if I don't get to Paris in six days I might as well stay away altogether. If I were a rich man I would post, but that would cost four hundred francs, and I cannot afford to spend so much. The only course open to me is to leave by the diligence tomorrow, and to have myself and my daughter bound to the roof. You see, sir, the idea makes her weep, and I don't like it much better myself."

I looked attentively at the girl, and found her too pretty for me to keep within bounds if I travelled alone with her. I was sad, and the torment I had endured in parting from Marcoline had made me resolve to avoid all occasions which might have similar results. I thought this resolve necessary for my peace of mind.

"This girl," I said to myself, "may be so charming that I should fall in love with her if I yield to the father's request, and I do not wish for any such result."

I turned to the father and said,—

"I sympathize with you sincerely; but I really don't see what I can do for you without causing myself the greatest inconvenience."

"Perhaps you think that I shall not be able to ride so many posts in succession, but you needn't be afraid on that score."

"The horse might give in; you might have a fall, and I know that I should feel obliged to stop, and I am in a hurry. If that reason does not strike you as a cogent one, I am sorry, for to me it appears unanswerable."

"Let us run the risk, sir, at all events."

"There is a still greater risk of which I can tell you nothing. In brief, sir, you ask what is impossible."

"In Heaven's name, sir," said the girl, with a voice and a look that would have pierced a heart of stone, "rescue me from that dreadful journey on the roof of the diligence! The very idea makes me shudder; I should be afraid of falling off all the way; besides, there is something mean in travelling that way. Do but grant me this favour, and I will sit at your feet so as not to discomfort you."

"This is too much! You do not know me, mademoiselle. I am neither cruel nor impolite, especially where your sex is concerned, though my refusal must make you feel otherwise. If I give way you may regret it afterwards, and I do not wish that to happen." Then, turning to the father, I said,—

"A post-chaise costs six Louis. Here they are; take them. I will put off my departure for a few hours, if necessary, to answer for the chaise, supposing you are not known here, and an extra horse will cost four Louis take them. As to the rest, you would have spent as much in taking two places in the diligence."

"You are very kind, sir, but I cannot accept your gift. I am not worthy of it, and I should be still less worthy if I accepted the money. Adele, let us go. Forgive us, sir, if we have wasted half an hour of your time. Come, my poor child."

"Wait a moment, father."

Adele begged him to wait, as her sobs almost choked her. I was furious with everything, but having received one look from her beautiful eyes I could not withstand her sorrow any longer, and said,

"Calm yourself, mademoiselle. It shall never be said that I remained unmoved while beauty wept. I yield to your request, for if I did not I should not be able to sleep all night. But I accede on one condition," I added, turning to her father, "and that is that you sit at the back of the carriage."

"Certainly; but what is to become of your servant?"

"He will ride on in front. Everything is settled. Go to bed now, and be ready to start at six o'clock."

"Certainly, but you will allow me to pay for the extra horse?"

"You shall pay nothing at all; it would be a shame if I received any money from you. You have told me you are poor, and poverty is no dishonour; well, I may tell you that I am rich, and riches are no honour save when they are used in doing good. Therefore, as I said, I will pay for all."

"Very good, but I will pay for the extra horse in the carriage."

"Certainly not, and let us have no bargaining, please; it is time to go to bed. I will put you down at Paris without the journey costing you a farthing, and then if you like you may thank me; these are the only conditions on which I will take you. Look! Mdlle. Adele is laughing, that's reward enough for me."

"I am laughing for joy at having escaped that dreadful diligence roof."

"I see, but I hope you will not weep in my carriage, for all sadness is an abomination to me."

I went, to bed, resolved to struggle against my fate no longer. I saw that I could not withstand the tempting charms of this new beauty, and I determined that everything should be over in a couple of days. Adele had beautiful blue eyes, a complexion wherein were mingled the lily and the rose, a small mouth, excellent teeth, a figure still slender but full of promise; here, surely, were enough motives for a fresh fall. I fell asleep, thanking my good genius for thus providing me with amusement on the journey.

Just before we started the father came and asked if it was all the same to me whether we went by Burgundy or the Bourbonnais.

"Certainly. Do you prefer any particular route?"

"If I went through Nevers I might be able to collect a small account."

"Then we will go by the Bourbonnais."

Directly after Adele, simply but neatly dressed, came down and wished me good day, telling me that her father was going to put a small trunk containing their belongings at the back of the carriage. Seeing me busy, she asked if she could help me in any way.

"No," I replied, "you had better take a seat."

She did so, but in a timid manner, which annoyed me, because it seemed to express that she was a dependent of mine. I told her so gently, and made her take some coffee with me, and her shyness soon wore off.

We were just stepping into the carriage when a man came and told me that the lamps were out of repair and would come off if something were not done to them. He offered to put them into good repair in the course of an hour. I was in a terrible rage, and called Clairmont and began to scold him, but he said that the lamps were all right a short while ago, and that the man must have put them out of order that he might have the task of repairing them.

He had hit it off exactly. I had heard of the trick before, and I called out to the man; and on his answering me rather impudently, I began to kick him, with my pistol in my hand. He ran off swearing, and the noise brought up the landlord and five or six of his people. Everybody said I was in the right, but all the same I had to waste two hours as it would not have been prudent to travel without lamps.

Another lamp-maker was summoned; he looked at the damage, and laughed at the rascally trick his fellow-tradesman had played me.

"Can I imprison the rascal?" I said to the landlord. "I should like to have the satisfaction of doing so, were it to cost me two Louis."

"Two Louis! Your honour shall be attended to in a moment."

I was in a dreadful rage, and did not notice Adele, who was quite afraid of me. A police official came up to take my information, and examine witnesses, and to draw up the case.

"How much is your time worth, sir?" he asked me.

"Five louis."

With these words I slid two louis into his hand, and he immediately wrote down a fine of twenty louis against the lamp-maker, and then went his way, saying,—

"Your man will be in prison in the next ten minutes." I breathed again at the prospect of vengeance. I then begged Mdlle. Adele's pardon, who asked mine in her turn, not knowing how I had offended her. This might have led to some affectionate passages, but her father came in saying that the rascal was in prison, and that everyone said I was right.

"I am perfectly ready to swear that he did the damage," said he.

"You saw him, did you?"

"No, but that's of no consequence, as everybody is sure he did it."

This piece of simplicity restored my good temper completely, and I began to ask Moreau, as he called himself, several questions. He told me he was a widower, that Adele was his only child, that he was going to set up in business at Louviers, and so on.

In the course of an hour the farce turned into a tragedy, in the following manner. Two women, one of them with a baby at her breast, and followed by four brats, all of whom might have been put under a bushel measure, came before me, and falling on their knees made me guess the reason of this pitiful sight. They were the wife, the mother, and the children of the delinquent.

My heart was soon moved with pity for them, for my vengeance had been complete, and I did not harbour resentment; but the wife almost put me in a fury again by saying that her husband was an innocent man, and that they who had accused him were rascals.

The mother, seeing the storm ready to burst, attacked me more adroitly, admitting that her son might be guilty, but that he must have been driven to it by misery, as he had got no bread wherewith to feed his children. She added:

"My good sir, take pity on us, for he is our only support. Do a good deed and set him free, for he would stay in prison all his days unless we sold our beds to pay you."

"My worthy woman, I forgive him completely. Hand this document to the police magistrate and all will be well."

At the same time I gave her a louis and told her to go, not wishing to be troubled with her thanks. A few moments after, the official came to get my signature for the man's release, and I had to pay him the legal costs. My lamps cost twelve francs to mend, and at nine o'clock I started, having spent four or five louis for nothing.

Adele was obliged to sit between my legs, but she was ill at ease. I told her to sit further back, but as she would have had to lean on me, I did not urge her; it would have been rather a dangerous situation to begin with. Moreau sat at the back of the carriage, Clairmont went on in front, and we were thus neck and neck, or rather neck and back, the whole way.

We got down to change horses, and as we were getting into the carriage again Adele had to lift her leg, and shewed me a pair of black breeches. I have always had a horror of women with breeches, but above all of black breeches.

"Sir," said I to her father, "your daughter has shewn me her black breeches."

"It's uncommonly lucky for her that she didn't shew you something else."

I liked the reply, but the cursed breeches had so offended me that I became quite sulky. It seemed to me that such clothes were a kind of rampart or outwork, very natural, no doubt, but I thought a young girl should know nothing of the danger, or, at all events, pretend ignorance if she did not possess it. As I could neither scold her nor overcome my bad temper, I contented myself with being polite, but I did not speak again till we got to St. Simphorien, unless it was to ask her to sit more comfortably.

When we got to St. Simphorien I told Clairmont to go on in front and order us a good supper at Roanne, and to sleep there. When we were about half-way Adele told me that she must be a trouble to me, as I was not so gay as I had been. I assured her that it was not so, and that I only kept silence that she might be able to rest.

"You are very kind," she answered, "but it is quite a mistake for you to think that you would disturb me by talking. Allow me to tell you that you are concealing the real cause of your silence."

"Do you know the real cause?"

"Yes, I think I do."

"Well, what is it?"

"You have changed since you saw my breeches."

"You are right, this black attire has clothed my soul with gloom."

"I am very sorry, but you must allow that in the first place I was not to suppose that you were going to see my breeches, and in the second place that I could not be aware that the colour would be distasteful to you."

"True again, but as I chanced to see the articles you must forgive my disgust. This black has filled my soul with funereal images, just as white would have cheered me. Do you always wear those dreadful breeches?"

"I am wearing them for the first time to-day."

"Then you must allow that you have committed an unbecoming action."

"Unbecoming?"

"Yes, what would you have said if I had come down in petticoats this morning? You would have pronounced them unbecoming. You are laughing."

"Forgive me, but I never heard anything so amusing. But your comparison will not stand; everyone would have seen your petticoats, whereas no one has any business to see my breeches."

I assented to her logic, delighted to find her capable of tearing my sophism to pieces, but I still preserved silence.

At Roanne we had a good enough supper, and Moreau, who knew very well that if it had not been for his daughter there would have been no free journey and free supper for him, was delighted when I told him that she kept me good company. I told him about our discussion on breeches, and he pronounced his daughter to be in the wrong, laughing pleasantly. After supper I told him that he and his daughter were to sleep in the room in which we were sitting, while I would pass the night in a neighbouring closet.

Just as we were starting the next morning, Clairmont told me that he would go on in front, to see that our beds were ready, adding that as we had lost one night it would not do much harm if we were to lose another.

This speech let me know that my faithful Clairmont began to feel the need of rest, and his health was dear to me. I told him to stop at St. Pierre le Mortier, and to take care that a good supper was ready for us. When we were in the carriage again, Adele thanked me.

"Then you don't like night travelling?" I said.

"I shouldn't mind it if I were not afraid of going to sleep and falling on you."

"Why, I should like it. A pretty girl like you is an agreeable burden."

She made no reply, but I saw that she understood; my declaration was made, but something more was wanted before I could rely on her docility. I relapsed into silence again till we got to Varennes, and then I said,—

"If I thought you could eat a roast fowl with as good an appetite as mine, I would dine here."

"Try me, I will endeavour to match you."

We ate well and drank better, and by the time we started again we were a little drunk. Adele, who was only accustomed to drink wine two or three times a year, laughed at not being able to stand upright, but seemed to be afraid that something would happen. I comforted her by saying that the fumes of champagne soon evaporated; but though she strove with all her might to keep awake, nature conquered, and letting her pretty head fall on my breast she fell asleep, and did not rouse herself for two hours. I treated her with the greatest respect, though I could not resist ascertaining that the article of clothing which had displeased me so much had entirely disappeared.

While she slept I enjoyed the pleasure of gazing on the swelling curves of her budding breast, but I restrained my ardour, as the disappearance of the black breeches assured me that I should find her perfectly submissive whenever I chose to make the assault. I wished, however, that she should give herself up to me of her own free will, or at any rate come half-way to meet me, and I knew that I had only to smooth the path to make her do so.

When she awoke and found that she had been sleeping in my arms, her astonishment was extreme. She apologized and begged me to forgive her, while I thought the best way to put her at ease would be to give her an affectionate kiss. The result was satisfactory; who does not know the effect of a kiss given at the proper time?

As her dress was in some disorder she tried to adjust it, but we were rather pushed for space, and by an awkward movement she uncovered her knee. I burst out laughing and she joined me, and had the presence of mind to say:

"I hope the black colour has given you no funereal thoughts this time."

"The hue of the rose, dear Adele, can only inspire me with delicious fancies."

I saw that she lowered her eyes, but in a manner that shewed she was pleased.

With this talk—and, so to speak, casting oil on the flames—we reached Moulin, and got down for a few moments. A crowd of women assailed us with knives and edged tools of all sorts, and

I bought the father and daughter whatever they fancied. We went on our way, leaving the women quarrelling and fighting because some had sold their wares and others had not.

In the evening we reached St. Pierre; but during the four hours that had elapsed since we left Moulin we had made way, and Adele had become quite familiar with me.

Thanks to Clairmont, who had arrived two hours before, an excellent supper awaited us. We supped in a large room, where two great white beds stood ready to receive us.

I told Moreau that he and his daughter should sleep in one bed, and I in the other; but he replied that I and Adele could each have a bed to ourselves, as he wanted to start for Nevers directly after supper, so as to be able to catch his debtor at daybreak, and to rejoin us when we got there the following day.

"If you had told me before, we would have gone on to Nevers and slept there."

"You are too kind. I mean to ride the three and a half stages. The riding will do me good, and I like it. I leave my daughter in your care. She will not be so near you as in the carriage."

"Oh, we will be very discreet, you may be sure!"

After his departure I told Adele to go to bed in her clothes, if she were afraid of me.

"I shan't be offended," I added.

"It would be very wrong of me," she answered, "to give you such a proof of my want of confidence."

She rose, went out a moment, and when she came back she locked the door, and as soon as she was ready to slip off her last article of clothing came and kissed me. I happened to be writing at the time, and as she had come up on tiptoe I was surprised, though in a very agreeable manner. She fled to her bed, saying saucily,

"You are frightened of me, I think?"

"You are wrong, but you surprised me. Come back, I want to see you fall asleep in my arms."

"Come and see me sleep."

"Will you sleep all the time?"

"Of course I shall."

"We will see about that."

I flung the pen down, and in a moment I held her in my arms, smiling, ardent, submissive to my desires, and only entreating me to spare her. I did my best, and though she helped me to the best of her ability, the first assault was a labour of Hercules. The others were pleasanter, for it is only the first step that is painful, and when the field had been stained with the blood of three successive battles, we abandoned ourselves to repose. At five o'clock in the morning Clairmont knocked, and I told him to get us some coffee. I was obliged to get up without giving fair Adele good day, but I promised that she should have it on the way.

When she was dressed she looked at the altar where she had offered her first sacrifice to love, and viewed the signs of her defeat with a sigh. She was pensive for some time, but when we were in the carriage again her gaiety returned, and in our mutual transports we forgot to grieve over our approaching parting.

We found Moreau at Nevers; he was in a great state because he could not get his money before noon. He dared not ask me to wait for him, but I said that we would have a good dinner and start when the money was paid.

While dinner was being prepared we shut ourselves up in a room to avoid the crowd of women who pestered us to buy a thousand trifles, and at two o'clock we started, Moreau having got his money. We got to Cosne at twilight, and though Clairmont was waiting for us at Briane, I decided on stopping where I was, and this night proved superior to the first. The next day we made a breakfast of the meal which had been prepared for our supper, and we slept at Fontainebleau, where I enjoyed Adele for the last time. In the morning I promised to come and see her at Louviers, when I returned from England, but I could not keep my word.

We took four hours to get from Fontainebleau to Paris, but how quickly the time passed. I stopped the carriage near the Pont St. Michel, opposite to a clockmaker's shop, and after looking at several watches I gave one to Adele, and then dropped her and her father at the corner of the Rue aux Ours. I got down at the "Hotel de Montmorenci," not wanting to stop with Madame d'Urfe, but after dressing I went to dine with her.

CHAPTER VI

I Drive My Brother The Abbe From Paris—Madame du Romain Recovers Her Voice Through My Cabala—A Bad Joke—The Corticelli—I Take d'Aranda to London My Arrival At Calais

As usual, Madame d'Urfe received me with open arms, but I was surprised at hearing her tell Aranda to fetch the sealed letter she had given him in the morning. I opened it, found it was dated the same day, and contained the following:

"My genius told me at day-break that Galtinardus was starting from Fontainebleau, and that he will come and dine with me to-day."

She chanced to be right, but I have had many similar experiences in the course of my life-experiences which would have turned any other man's head. I confess they have surprised me, but they have never made me lose my reasoning powers. Men make a guess which turns out to be correct, and they immediately claim prophetic power; but they forgot all about the many cases in which they have been mistaken. Six months ago I was silly enough to bet that a bitch would have a litter of five bitch pups on a certain day, and I won. Everyone thought it a marvel except myself, for if I had chanced to lose I should have been the first to laugh.

I naturally expressed my admiration for Madame d'Urfe's genius, and shared her joy in finding herself so well during her pregnancy. The worthy lunatic had given orders that she was not at home to her usual callers, in expectation of my arrival, and so we spent the rest of the day together, consulting how we could make Aranda go to London of his own free will; and as I did not in the least know how it was to be done, the replies of the oracle were very obscure. Madame d'Urfe had such a strong dislike to bidding him go, that I could not presume on her obedience to that extent, and I had to rack my brains to find out some way of making the little man ask to be taken to London as a favour.

I went to the Comedie Italienne, where I found Madame du Romain, who seemed glad to see me back in Paris again.

"I want to consult the oracle on a matter of the greatest importance," said she, "and I hope you will come and see me tomorrow."

I, of course, promised to do so.

I did not care for the performance, and should have left the theatre if I had not wanted to see the ballet, though I could not guess the peculiar interest it would have for me. What was my surprise to see the Corticelli amongst the dancers. I thought I would like to speak to her, not for any amorous reasons, but because I felt curious to hear her adventures. As I came out I met the worthy Baletti, who told me he had left the stage and was living on an annuity. I asked him about the Corticelli, and he gave me her address, telling me that she was in a poor way.

I went to sup with my brother and his wife, who were delighted to see me, and told me that I had come just in time to use a little gentle persuasion on our friend the abbe, of whom they had got tired.

"Where is he?"

"You will see him before long, for it is near supper-time; and as eating and drinking are the chief concerns of his life, he will not fail to put in an appearance."

"What has he done?"

"Everything that a good-for-nothing can do; but I hear him coming, and I will tell you all about it in his presence."

The abbe was astonished to see me, and began a polite speech, although I did not favour him with so much as a look. Then he asked me what I had against him.

"All that an honest man can have against a monster. I have read the letter you wrote to Possano, in which I am styled a cheat, a spy, a coiner, and a poisoner. What does the abbe think of that?"

He sat down to table without a word, and my brother began as follows:

"When this fine gentleman first came here, my wife and I gave him a most cordial welcome. I allowed him a nice room, and told him to look upon my house as his own. Possibly with the idea of interesting us in his favour, he began by saying that you were the greatest rascal in the world. To prove it he told us how he had carried off a girl from Venice with the idea of marrying her, and went to you at Genoa as he was in great necessity. He confesses that you rescued him from his misery, but he says that you traitorously took possession of the girl, associating her with two other mistresses you had at that time. In fine, he says that you lay with her before his eyes, and that you drove him from Marseilles that you might be able to enjoy her with greater freedom.

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