

GIACOMO CASANOVA

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

VOLUME 17: RETURN TO
ITALY

Giacomo Casanova

**The Memoirs of Jacques
Casanova de Seingalt, 1725-1798.
Volume 17: Return to Italy**

«Public Domain»

Casanova G.

The Memoirs of Jacques Casanova de Seingalt, 1725-1798. Volume 17:
Return to Italy / G. Casanova — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

CHAPTER IV	5
CHAPTER V	15
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	16

Giacomo Casanova

The Memoirs of Jacques Casanova de Seingalt, 1725-1798. Volume 17: Return to Italy

CHAPTER IV

The Play—The Russian—Petri—Rosalie at the Convent

When the marquis had gone, seeing Rosalie engaged with Veronique, I set myself to translate the 'Ecoissaise' for the actors at Genoa, who seemed pretty good ones, to play.

I thought Rosalie looking sad at dinner, and said,

"What is the matter, dearest? You know I do not like to see you looking melancholy."

"I am vexed at Veronique's being prettier than I."

"I see what you mean; I like that! But console your self, Veronique is nothing compared to you, in my eyes at all events. You are my only beauty; but to reassure you I will ask M. de Grimaldi to tell her mother to come and fetch her away, and to get me another maid as ugly as possible."

"Oh, no! pray do not do so; he will think I am jealous, and I wouldn't have him think so for the world."

"Well, well, smile again if you do not wish to vex me."

"I shall soon do that, if, as you assure me, she will not make me lose your love. But what made the old gentleman get me a girl like that? Do you think he did it out of mischief?"

"No, I don't think so. I am sure, on the other hand, that he wanted to let you know that you need not fear being compared with anybody. Are you pleased with her in other respects?"

"She works well, and she is very respectful. She does not speak four words without addressing me as signora, and she is careful to translate what she says from Italian into French. I hope that in a month I shall speak well enough for us to dispense with her services when we go to Florence. I have ordered Le Duc to clear out the room I have chosen for her, and I will send her her dinner from our own table. I will be kind to her, but I hope you will not make me wretched."

"I could not do so; and I do not see what there can be in common between the girl and myself."

"Then you will pardon my fears."

"The more readily as they shew your love."

"I thank you, but keep my secret."

I promised never to give a glance to Veronique, of whom I was already afraid, but I loved Rosalie and would have done anything to save her the least grief.

I set to at my translation after dinner; it was work I liked. I did not go out that day, and I spent the whole of the next morning with M. de Grimaldi.

I went to the banker Belloni and changed all my gold into gigliati sequins. I made myself known after the money was changed, and the head cashier treated me with great courtesy. I had bills on this banker for forty thousand Roman crowns, and on Lepri bills for twenty thousand.

Rosalie did not want to go to the play again, so I got her a piece of embroidery to amuse her in the evening. The theatre was a necessity for me; I always went unless it interfered with some still sweeter pleasure. I went by myself, and when I got home I found the marquis talking to my mistress. I was pleased, and after I had embraced the worthy nobleman I complimented Rosalie on having kept him till my arrival, adding gently that she should have put down her work.

"Ask him," she replied, "if he did not make me keep on. He said he would go if I didn't, so I gave in to keep him."

She then rose, stopped working, and in the course of an interesting conversation she succeeded in making the marquis promise to stay to supper, thus forestalling my intention. He was not accustomed to take anything at that hour, and ate little; but I saw he was enchanted with my treasure, and that pleased me, for I did not think I had anything to fear from a man of sixty; besides, I was glad at the opportunity of accustoming Rosalie to good society. I wanted her to be a little coquettish, as a woman never pleases in society unless she shews a desire to please.

Although the position was quite a strange one for her, she made me admire the natural aptitude of women, which may be improved or spoiled by art but which exists more or less in them all, from the throne to the milk-pail. She talked to M. de Grimaldi in a way that seemed to hint she was willing to give a little hope. As our guest did not eat, she said graciously that he must come to dinner some day that she might have an opportunity of seeing whether he really had any appetite.

When he had gone I took her on my knee, and covering her with kisses asked her where she had learnt to talk to great people so well.

"It's an easy matter," she replied. "Your eyes speak to my soul, and tell me what to do and what to say."

A professed rhetorician could not have answered more elegantly or more flatteringly.

I finished the translation; I had it copied out by Costa and took it to Rossi, the manager, who said he would put it on directly, when I told him I was going to make him a present of the play. I named the actors of my choice, and asked him to bring them to dine with me at my inn, that I might read the play and distribute the parts.

As will be guessed, my invitation was accepted, and Rosalie enjoyed dining with the actors and actresses, and especially hearing herself called Madame Casanova every moment. Veronique explained everything she did not understand.

When my actors were round me in a ring, they begged me to tell them their parts, but I would not give in on this point.

"The first thing to be done," said I, "is for you to listen attentively to the whole piece without minding about your parts. When you know the whole play I will satisfy your curiosity."

I knew that careless or idle actors often pay no attention to anything except their own parts, and thus a piece, though well played in its parts, is badly rendered as a whole.

They submitted with a tolerably good grace, which the high and mighty players of the Comedie Francaise would certainly not have done. Just as I was beginning my heading the Marquis de Grimaldi and the banker Belloni came in to call on me. I was glad for them to be present at the trial, which only lasted an hour and a quarter.

After I had heard the opinion of the actors, who by their praise of various situations shewed me that they had taken in the plot, I told Costa to distribute the parts; but no sooner was this done than the first actor and the first actress began to express their displeasure; she, because I had given her the part of Lady Alton; he, because I had not given him Murray's part; but they had to bear it as it was my will. I pleased everybody by asking them all to dinner for the day after the morrow, after dinner the piece to be rehearsed for the first time.

The banker Belloni asked me to dinner for the following day, including my lady, who excused herself with great politeness, in the invitation; and M. Grimaldi was glad to take my place at dinner at her request.

When I got to M. Belloni's, I was greatly surprised to see the impostor Ivanoff, who instead of pretending not to know me, as he ought to have done, came forward to embrace me. I stepped back and bowed, which might be put down to a feeling of respect, although my coldness and scant ceremony would have convinced any observant eye of the contrary. He was well dressed, but seemed sad, though he talked a good deal, and to some purpose, especially on politics. The conversation turned on the Court of Russia, where Elizabeth Petrovna reigned; and he said nothing, but sighed and turned away pretending to wipe the tears from his eyes. At dessert, he asked me if I had heard

anything of Madame Morin, adding, as if to recall the circumstance to my memory, that we had supped together there:

"I believe she is quite well," I answered.

His servant, in yellow and red livery, waited on him at table. After dinner he contrived to tell me that he had a matter of the greatest importance he wanted to discuss with me.

"My only desire sir, is to avoid all appearance of knowing anything about you."

"One word from you will gain me a hundred thousand crowns, and you shall have half."

I turned my back on him, and saw him no more at Genoa.

When I got back to the inn I found M. de Grimaldi giving Rosalie a lesson in Italian.

"She has given me an exquisite dinner," said he, "you must be very happy with her."

In spite of his honest face, M. Grimaldi was in love with her, but I thought I had nothing to fear. Before he went she invited him to come to the rehearsal next day.

When the actors came I noticed amongst them a young man whose face I did not know, and on my enquiring Rossi told me he was the prompter.

"I won't have any prompter; send him about his business."

"We can't get on without him."

"You'll have to; I will be the prompter."

The prompter was dismissed, but the three actresses began to complain.

"If we knew our parts as well as the 'pater noster' we should be certain to come to a dead stop if the prompter isn't in his box."

"Very good," said I to the actress, who was to play Lindane, "I will occupy the box myself, but I shall see your drawers."

"You would have some difficulty in doing that," said the first actor, "she doesn't wear any."

"So much the better."

"You know nothing about it," said the actress.

These remarks put us all in high spirits, and the ministers of Thalia ended by promising that they would dispense with a prompter. I was pleased with the way the piece was read, and they said they would be letter-perfect in three days. But something happened.

On the day fixed for the rehearsal they came without the Lindane and Murray. They were not well, but Rossi said they would not fail useventually. I took the part of Murray, and asked Rosalie to be the Lindane.

"I don't read Italian well enough," she whispered, "and I don't wish to have the actors laughing at me; but Veronique could do it."

"Ask if she will read the part."

However, Veronique said that she could repeat it by heart.

"All the better," said I to her, laughing internally, as I thought of Soleure, for I saw that I should thus be obliged to make love to the girl to whom I had not spoken for the fortnight she had been with us. I had not even had a good look at her face. I was so afraid of Rosalie (whom I loved better every day) taking fright.

What I had feared happened. When I took Veronique's hand, and said, "Si, bella Lindana, debbe adorarvi!" everybody clapped, because I gave the words their proper expression; but glancing at Rosalie I saw a shadow on her face, and I was angry at not having controlled myself better. Nevertheless, I could not help feeling amazed at the way Veronique played the part. When I told her that I adored her she blushed up to her eyes; she could not have played the love-sick girl better.

We fixed a day for the dress-rehearsal at the theatre, and the company announced the first night a week in advance to excite public curiosity. The bills ran:

"We shall give Voltaire's *Ecosseise*, translated by an anonymous author: no prompter will be present."

I cannot give the reader any idea of the trouble I had to quiet Rosalie. She refused to be comforted; wept incessantly, and touched my heart by gentle reproaches.

"You love Veronique," said she, "and you only translated that piece to have an opportunity of declaring your love."

I succeeded in convincing her that she wronged me, and at last after I had lavished caresses on her she suffered herself to be calmed. Next morning she begged pardon for her jealousy, and to cure it insisted on my speaking constantly to Veronique. Her heroism went farther. She got up before me and sent me my coffee by Veronique, who was as astonished as I was.

At heart Rosalie was a great creature, capable of noble resolves, but like all women she gave way to sudden emotions. From that day she gave me no more signs of jealousy, and treated her maid with more kindness than ever. Veronique was an intelligent and well-mannered girl, and if my heart had not been already occupied she would have reigned there.

The first night of the play I took Rosalie to a box, and she would have Veronique with her. M. de Grimaldi did not leave her for a moment. The play was praised to the skies; the large theatre was full of the best people in Genoa. The actors surpassed themselves, though they had no prompter, and were loudly applauded. The piece ran five nights and was performed to full houses. Rossi, hoping perhaps that I would make him a present of another play, asked my leave to give my lady a superb pelisse of lynx-fur, which pleased her immensely.

I would have done anything to spare my sweetheart the least anxiety, and yet from my want of thought I contrived to vex her. I should never have forgiven myself if Providence had not ordained that I should be the cause of her final happiness.

"I have reason to suspect," she said one day, "that I am with child, and I am enchanted at the thought of giving you a dear pledge of my love."

"If it comes at such a time it will be mine, and I assure you I shall love it dearly."

"And if it comes two or three weeks sooner you will not be sure that you are the parent?"

"Not quite sure; but I shall love it just as well, and look upon it as my child as well as yours."

"I am sure you must be the father. It is impossible the child can be Petri's, who only knew me once, and then very imperfectly, whilst you and I have lived in tender love for so long a time."

She wept hot tears.

"Calm yourself, dearest, I implore you! You are right; it cannot be Petri's child. You know I love you, and I cannot doubt that you are with child by me and by me alone. If you give me a baby as pretty as yourself, it will be mine indeed. Calm yourself."

"How can I be calm when you can have such a suspicion?"

We said no more about it; but in spite of my tenderness, my caresses, and all the trifling cares which bear witness to love, she was often sad and thoughtful. How many times I reproached myself bitterly for having let out my silly calculations.

A few days later she gave me a sealed letter, saying,—

"The servant has given me this letter when you were away. I am offended by his doing so, and I want you to avenge me."

I called the man, and said,—

"Where did you get this letter?"

"From a young man, who is unknown to me. He gave me a crown, and begged me to give the letter to the lady without your seeing me, and he promised to give me two crowns more if I brought him a reply tomorrow. I did not think I was doing wrong, sir, as the lady was at perfect liberty to tell you."

"That's all very well, but you must go, as the lady, who gave me the letter unopened, as you can see for yourself, is offended with you."

I called Le Duc, who paid the man and sent him away. I opened the letter, and found it to be from Petri. Rosalie left my side, not wishing to read the contents. The letter ran as follows:

"I have seen you, my dear Rosalie. It was just as you were coming out of the theatre, escorted by the Marquis de Grimaldi, who is my godfather. I have not deceived you; I was still intending to come and marry you at Marseilles next spring, as I promised. I love you faithfully, and if you are still my good Rosalie I am ready to marry you here in the presence of my kinfolk. If you have done wrong I promise never to speak of it, for I know that it was I who led you astray. Tell me, I entreat you, whether I may speak to the Marquis de Grimaldi with regard to you. I am ready to receive you from the hands of the gentleman with whom you are living, provided you are not his wife. Be sure, if you are still free, that you can only recover your honour by marrying your seducer."

"This letter comes from an honourable man who is worthy of Rosalie," I thought to myself, "and that's more than I shall be, unless I marry her myself. But Rosalie must decide."

I called her to me, gave her the letter, and begged her to read it attentively. She did so, and gave it me back, asking me if I advised her to accept Petri's offer.

"If you do dear Rosalie, I shall die of grief; but if I do not yield you, my honour bids me marry you, and that I am quite ready to do."

At this the charming girl threw herself on my breast, crying in the voice of true love, "I love you and you alone, darling; but it is not true that your honour bids you marry me. Ours is a marriage of the heart; our love is mutual, and that is enough for my happiness."

"Dear Rosalie, I adore you, but I am the best judge of my own honour. If Petri is a well-to-do man and a man who would make you happy, I must either give you up or take you myself."

"No, no; there is no hurry to decide. If you love me I am happy, for I love you and none other. I shall not answer the letter, and I don't want to hear anything more of Petri."

"You may be sure that I will say no more of him, but I am sure that the marquis will have a hand in it."

"I daresay, but he won't speak to me twice on the subject."

After this treaty—a more sincere one than the Powers of Europe usually make—I resolved to leave Genoa as soon as I got some letters for Florence and Rome. In the meanwhile all was peace and love between myself and Rosalie. She had not the slightest shadow of jealousy in her soul, and M. de Grimaldi was the sole witness of our happiness.

Five or six days later I went to see the marquis at his casino at St. Pierre d'Arena, and he accosted me by saying that he was happy to see me as he had an important matter he wished to discuss with me. I guessed what it would be, but begged him to explain himself. He then spoke as follows:

"A worthy merchant of the town brought his nephew, a young man named Petri, to see me two days ago. He told me that the young man is my godson, and he asked me to protect him. I answered that as his godfather I owed him my protection, and I promised to do what I could."

"He left my godson to talk it over with me, and he informed me that he knew your mistress before you did at Marseilles, that he had promised to marry her next spring, that he had seen her in my company, and that having followed us he found out that she lived with you. He was told that she was your wife, but not believing it, wrote her a letter saying that he was ready to marry her; but this letter fell into your hands, and he has had no reply to it."

"He could not make up his mind to lose a hope which made his happiness, so he resolved to ascertain, through my good offices, whether Rosalie would accept his proposition. He flatters himself that on his informing me of his prosperous condition, I can tell you that he is a likely man to make his wife happy. I told him that I knew you, and would speak to you on the matter, and afterwards inform him of the result of our interview."

"I have made enquires into his condition, and find that he has already amassed a considerable sum of money. His credit, morals, and reputation, are all excellent; besides, he is his uncle's sole heir, and the uncle passes for a man very comfortably off. And now, my dear M. Casanova, tell me what answer I am to make."

"Tell him that Rosalie is much obliged to him, and begs him to forget her. We are going away in three or four days. Rosalie loves me, and I her, and I am ready to marry her whenever she likes."

"That's plain speaking; but I should have thought a man like you would prefer freedom to a woman, however beautiful, to whom you would be bound by indissoluble ties. Will you allow me to speak to Rosalie myself about it?"

"You need not ask, my leave; speak to her, but in your own person and not as representing my opinions. I adore her, and would not have her think that I could cherish the thought of separating from her."

"If you don't want me to meddle in the matter, tell me so frankly."

"On the contrary, I wish you to see for yourself that I am not the tyrant of the woman I adore."

"I will talk to her to-night."

I did not come home till supper-time, that the marquis might say what he had to say in perfect freedom. The noble Genoese supped with us, and the conversation turned on indifferent subjects. After he had gone, my sweetheart told me what had passed between them. He had spoken to her in almost the same words that he had addressed to me, and our replies were nearly identical, though she had requested the marquis to say no more about his godson, to which request he had assented.

We thought the matter settled, and busied ourselves with preparations for our departure; but three or four days after, the marquis (who we imagined had forgotten all about his godson) came and asked us to dine with him at St. Pierre d'Arena, where Rosalie had never been.

"I want you to see my beautiful garden before you go," said M. Grimaldi to her; "it will be one more pleasant recollection of your stay for me."

We went to see him at noon the next day. He was with an elderly man and woman, to whom he introduced us. He introduced me by name, and Rosalie as a person who belonged to me.

We proceeded to walk in the garden, where the two old people got Rosalie between them, and overwhelmed her with politeness and complimentary remarks. She, who was happy and in high spirits, answered in Italian, and delighted them by her intelligence, and the grace which she gave to her mistakes in grammar.

The servants came to tell us that dinner was ready, and what was my astonishment on entering the room to see the table laid for six. I did not want much insight now to see through the marquis's trick, but it was too late. We sat down, and just then a young man came in.

"You are a little late," said the marquis; and then, without waiting for his apology, he introduced him to me as M. Petri, his godson, and nephew to his other guests, and he made him sit down at his left hand, Rosalie being on his right. I sat opposite to her, and seeing that she turned as pale as death the blood rushed to my face; I was terribly enraged. This small despot's plot seemed disgraceful to me; it was a scandalous insult to Rosalie and myself—an insult which should be washed away in blood. I was tempted to stab him at his table, but in spite of my agitation I constrained myself. What could I do? Take Rosalie's arm, and leave the room with her? I thought it over, but foreseeing the consequences I could not summon up courage.

I have never spent so terrible an hour as at that fatal dinner. Neither Rosalie nor myself ate a morsel, and the marquis who helped all the guests was discreet enough not to see that we left one course after another untouched. Throughout dinner he only spoke to Petri and his uncle, giving them opportunities for saying how large a trade they did. At dessert the marquis told the young man that he had better go and look after his affairs, and after kissing his hand he withdrew with a bow to which nobody replied.

Petri was about twenty-four, of a moderate height, with ordinary but yet good-natured and honest features; respectful in his manner, and sensible though not witty in what he said. After all was said and done, I thought him worthy of Rosalie, but I shuddered at the thought that if she became his wife she was lost to me forever. After he had gone, the marquis said he was sorry he had not known him before as he might be of use to him in his business.

"However, we will see to that in the future," said he, meaningly, "I mean to make his fortune."

At this the uncle and aunt, who no doubt knew what to say, began to laud and extol their nephew, and ended by saying that as they had no children they were delighted that Petri, who would be their heir, was to have his excellency's patronage.

"We are longing," they added, "to see the girl from Marseilles he is going to marry. We should welcome her as a beloved daughter."

Rosalie whispered to me that she could bear it no longer, and begged me to take her away. We rose, and after we had saluted the company with cold dignity we left the room. The marquis was visibly disconcerted. As he escorted us to the door he stammered out compliments, for the want of something to say, telling Rosalie that he should not have the honour of seeing her that evening, but that he hoped to call on her the next day.

When we were by ourselves we seemed to breathe again, and spoke to one another to relieve ourselves of the oppression which weighed on our minds.

Rosalie thought, as well as I, that the marquis had played us a shameful trick, and she told me I ought to write him a note, begging him not to give himself the trouble of calling on us again.

"I will find some means of vengeance," said I; "but I don't think it would be a good plan to write to him. We will hasten our preparations for leaving, and receive him to-morrow with that cold politeness which bears witness to indignation. Above all, we will not make the slightest reference to his godson."

"If Petri really loves me," said she, "I pity him. I think he is a good fellow, and I don't feel angry with him for being present at dinner, as he may possibly be unaware that his presence was likely to give me offence. But I still shudder when I think of it: I thought I should have died when our eyes met! Throughout dinner he could not see my eyes, as I kept them nearly shut, and indeed he could hardly see me. Did he look at me while he was talking?"

"No, he only looked at me. I am as sorry for him as you are, for, as you say, he looks an honest fellow."

"Well, it's over now, and I hope I shall make a good supper. Did you notice what the aunt said? I am sure she was in the plot. She thought she would gain me over by saying she was ready to treat me like her own child. She was a decent-looking woman, too."

We made a good supper, and a pleasant night inclined us to forget the insult the marquis had put upon us. When we woke up in the morning we laughed at it. The marquis came to see us in the evening, and greeting me with an air of mingled confusion and vexation, he said that he knew he had done wrong in surprising me as he had, but that he was ready to do anything in his power by way of atonement, and to give whatever satisfaction I liked.

Rosalie did not give me time to answer. "If you really feel," said she, "that you have insulted us, that is enough; we are amply avenged. But all the same, sir, we shall be on our guard against you for the future, though that will be for a short while, as we are just leaving."

With this proud reply she made him a low bow and left the room.

When he was left alone with me M. Grimaldi addressed me as follows:

"I take a great interest in your mistress's welfare; and as I feel sure that she cannot long be happy in her present uncertain position, while I am sure that she would make my godson an excellent wife, I was determined that both of you should make his acquaintance, for Rosalie herself knows very little of him. I confess that the means I employed were dishonourable, but you will pardon the means for the sake of the excellent end I had in view. I hope you will have a pleasant journey, and that you may live for a long time in uninterrupted happiness with your charming mistress. I hope you will write to me, and always reckon on my standing your friend, and doing everything in my power for you. Before I go, I will tell you something which will give you an idea of the excellent disposition of young Petri, to whose happiness Rosalie seems essential.

"He only told me the following, after I had absolutely refused to take charge of a letter he had written to Rosalie, despairing of being able to send it any other way. After assuring me that Rosalie had loved him, and that consequently she could not have any fixed aversion for him, he added that if the fear of being with child was the reason why she would not marry him he would agree to put off the marriage till after the child was born, provided that she would agree to stay in Genoa in hiding, her presence to be unknown to all save himself. He offers to pay all the expenses of her stay. He made a remarkably wise reflection when we were talking it over.

"If she gave birth to a child too soon after our marriage,' said he, 'both her honour and mine would suffer hurt; she might also lose the liking of my relations, and if Rosalie is to be my wife I want her to be happy in everything.'"

At this Rosalie, who had no doubt been listening at the door after the manner of her sex, burst into the room, and astonished me by the following speech:

"If M. Petri chid not tell you that it was possible that I might be with child by him, he is a right honest man, but now I tell you so myself. I do not think it likely, but still it is possible. Tell him, sir, that I will remain at Genoa until the child is born, in the case of my being pregnant, of which I have no certain knowledge, or until I am quite sure that I am not with child. If I do have a child the truth will be made known. In the case of there being no doubt of M. Petri's being the parent, I am ready to marry him; but if he sees for himself that the child is not his I hope he will be reasonable enough to let me alone for the future. As to the expenses and my lodging at Genoa, tell him that he need not trouble himself about either."

I was petrified. I saw the consequence of my own imprudent words, and my heart seemed broken. The marquis asked me if this decision was given with my authority, and I replied that as my sweetheart's will was mine he might take her words for law. He went away in high glee, for he foresaw that all would go well with his plans when once he was able to exert his influence on Rosalie. The absent always fare ill.

"You want to leave me, then, Rosalie?" said I, when we were alone.

"Yes, dearest, but it will not be for long."

"I think we shall never see each other again."

"Why not, dearest? You have only to remain faithful to me. Listen to me. Your honour and my own make it imperative that I should convince Petri that I am not with child by him, and you that I am with child by you."

"I never doubted it, dear Rosalie."

"Yes, dear, you doubted it once and that is enough. Our parting will cost me many a bitter tear, but these pangs are necessary to my future happiness. I hope you will write to me, and after the child is born it will be for you to decide on how I shall rejoin you. If I am not pregnant I will rejoin you in a couple of months at latest."

"Though I may grieve at your resolve I will not oppose it, for I promised I would never cross you. I suppose you will go into a convent; and the marquis must find you a suitable one, and protect you like a father. Shall I speak to him on the subject? I will leave you as much money as you will want."

"That will not be much. As for M. de Grimaldi, he is bound in honour to procure me an asylum. I don't think it will be necessary for you to speak to him about it."

She was right, and I could not help admiring the truly astonishing tact of this girl.

In the morning I heard that the self-styled Ivanoff had made his escape an hour before the police were to arrest him at the suit of the banker, who had found out that one of the bills he had presented was forged. He had escaped on foot, leaving all his baggage behind him.

Next day the marquis came to tell Rosalie that his godson had no objection to make to her plan. He added that the young man hoped she would become his wife, whether the child proved to be his or not.

"He may hope as much as he likes," said Rosalie, with a smile.

"He also hopes that you will allow him to call on you now and then. I have spoken to my kinswoman, the mother-superior of convent. You are to have two rooms, and a very good sort of woman is to keep you company, wait on you, and nurse you when the time comes. I have paid the amount you are to pay every month for your board. Every morning I will send you a confidential man, who will see your companion and will bring me your orders. And I myself will come and see you at the grating as often as you please."

It was then my sad duty, which the laws of politeness enjoined, to thank the marquis for his trouble.

"'Tis to you, my lord," said I, "I entrust Rosalie. I am placing her, I am sure, in good hands. I will go on my way as soon as she is in the convent; I hope you will write a letter to the mother-superior for her to take."

"I will write it directly," said he.

And as Rosalie had told him before that she would pay for everything herself, he gave her a written copy of the agreement he had made.

"I have resolved," said Rosalie to the marquis, "to go into the convent to-morrow, and I shall be very glad to have a short visit from you the day after."

"I will be there," said the marquis, "and you may be sure that I will do all in my power to make your stay agreeable."

The night was a sad one for both of us. Love scarcely made a pause amidst our alternate complaints and consolations. We swore to be faithful for ever, and our oaths were sincere, as ardent lovers' oaths always are. But they are as nought unless they are sealed by destiny, and that no mortal mind may know.

Rosalie, whose eyes were red and wet with tears, spent most of the morning in packing up with Veronique, who cried too. I could not look at her, as I felt angry with myself for thinking how pretty she was. Rosalie would only take two hundred sequins, telling me that if she wanted more she could easily let me know.

She told Veronique to look after me well for the two or three days I should spend at Genoa, made me a mute curtsy, and went out with Costa to get a sedan-chair. Two hours after, a servant of the marquis's came to fetch her belongings, and I was thus left alone and full of grief till the marquis came and asked me to give him supper, advising that Veronique should be asked in to keep us company.

"That's a rare girl," said he, "you really don't know her, and you ought to know her better."

Although I was rather surprised, I did not stop to consider what the motives of the crafty Genoese might be, and I went and asked Veronique to come in. She replied politely that she would do so, adding that she knew how great an honour I did her.

I should have been the blindest of men if I had not seen that the clever marquis had succeeded in his well-laid plans, and that he had duped me as if I had been the merest freshman. Although I hoped with all my heart that I should get Rosalie back again, I had good reasons for suspecting that all the marquis's wit would be employed to seduce her, and I could not help thinking that he would succeed.

Nevertheless, in the position I was in, I could only keep my fears to myself and let him do his utmost.

He was nearly sixty, a thorough disciple of Epicurus, a heavy player, rich, eloquent, a master of state-craft, highly popular at Genoa, and well acquainted with the hearts of men, and still more so with the hearts of women. He had spent a good deal of time at Venice to be more at liberty, and to enjoy the pleasures of life at his ease. He had never married, and when asked the reason would reply that he knew too well that women would be either tyrants or slaves, and that he did not want to be a tyrant to any woman, nor to be under any woman's orders. He found some way of returning to his beloved Venice, in spite of the law forbidding any noble who has filled the office of doge to leave his native soil. Though he behaved to me in a very friendly manner he knew how to maintain an air of superiority which imposed on me. Nothing else could have given him the courage to ask me to

dinner when Petri was to be present. I felt that I had been tricked, and I thought myself in duty bound to make him esteem me by my behaviour for the future. It was gratitude on his part which made him smooth the way to my conquest of Veronique, who doubtless struck him as a fit and proper person to console me for the loss of Rosalie.

I did not take any part in the conversation at supper, but the marquis drew out Veronique, and she shone. It was easy for me to see that she had more wit and knowledge of the world than Rosalie, but in my then state of mind this grieved rather than rejoiced me. M. de Grimaldi seemed sorry to see me melancholy, and forced me, as it were, to join in the conversation. As he was reproaching me in a friendly manner for my silence, Veronique said with a pleasing smile that I had a good reason to be silent after the declaration of love I had made to her, and which she had received so ill. I was astonished at this, and said that I did not remember having ever made her such a declaration; but she made me laugh in spite of myself, when she said that her name that day was Lindane.

"Ah, that's in a play," said I, "in real life the man who declares his love in words is a simpleton; 'tis with deeds the true lover shews his love."

"Very true, but your lady was frightened all the same."

"No, no, Veronique; she is very fond of you."

"I know she is; but I have seen her jealous of me."

"If so, she was quite wrong."

This dialogue, which pleased me little, fell sweetly on the marquis's ears; he told me that he was going to call on Rosalie next morning, and that if I liked to give him a supper, he would come and tell me about her in the evening. Of course I told him that he would be welcome.

After Veronique had lighted me to my room, she asked me to let my servants wait on me, as if she did so now that my lady was gone, people might talk about her.

"You are right," said I, "kindly send Le Duc to me."

Next morning I had a letter from Geneva. It came from my Epicurean syndic, who had presented M. de Voltaire with my translation of his play, with an exceedingly polite letter from me, in which I begged his pardon for having taken the liberty of travestying his fine French prose in Italian. The syndic told me plainly that M. de Voltaire had pronounced my translation to be a bad one.

My self-esteem was so wounded by this, and by his impoliteness in not answering my letter, with which he could certainly find no fault, whatever his criticism of my translation might be, that I became the sworn enemy of the great Voltaire. I have censured him in all the works I have published, thinking that in wronging him I was avenging myself, to such an extent did passion blind me. At the present time I feel that even if my works survive, these feeble stings of mine can hurt nobody but myself. Posterity will class me amongst the Zoiluses whose own impotence made them attack this great man to whom civilization and human happiness owe so much. The only crime that can truthfully be alleged against Voltaire is his attacks on religion. If he had been a true philosopher he would never have spoken on such matters, for, even if his attacks were based on truth, religion is necessary to morality, without which there can be no happiness.

CHAPTER V

I Fall in Love With Veronique—Her Sister—Plot Against Plot—My Victory —Mutual Disappointment

I have never liked eating by myself, and thus I have never turned hermit, though I once thought of turning monk; but a monk without renouncing all the pleasures of life lives well in a kind of holy idleness. This dislike to loneliness made me give orders that the table should be laid for two, and indeed, after supping with the marquis and myself, Veronique had some right to expect as much, to say nothing of those rights which her wit and beauty gave her.

I only saw Costa, and asked him what had become of Le Duc. He said he was ill. "Then go behind the lady's chair," said I. He obeyed, but smiled as he did so. Pride is a universal failing, and though a servant's pride is the silliest of all it is often pushed to the greatest extremes.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

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

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