

GIACOMO CASANOVA

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

VOLUME 29: FLORENCE
TO TRIESTE

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Содержание

CHAPTER XVIII	5
CHAPTER XIX	17
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	19

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CHAPTER XVIII

Madame Denis—Dedini—Zanovitch—Zen—I Am Obligated to Leave—I
Arrive at Bologna—General Albergati

Without speaking at any length I asked the young grand duke to give me an asylum in his dominions for as long as I might care to stay. I anticipated any questions he might have asked by telling him the reasons which had made me an exile from my native land.

"As to my necessities," I added, "I shall ask for help of no one; I have sufficient funds to ensure my independence. I think of devoting the whole of my time to study."

"So long as your conduct is good," he replied, "the laws guarantee your freedom; but I am glad you have applied to me. Whom do you know in Florence?"

"Ten years ago, my lord, I had some distinguished acquaintances here; but now I propose to live in retirement, and do not intend renewing any old friendships."

Such was my conversation with the young sovereign, and after his assurances I concluded that no one would molest me.

My adventures in Tuscany the years before were in all probability forgotten, or almost forgotten, as the new Government had nothing in common with the old.

After my interview with the grand duke I went to a bookseller's shop and ordered some books. A gentleman in the shop, hearing me making enquiries about Greek works, accosted me, and we got on well together. I told him I was working at a translation of the "Iliad," and in return he informed me that he was making a collection of Greek epigrams, which he wished to publish in Greek and Italian. I told him I should like to see this work, whereupon he asked me where I lived. I told him, learnt his name and address, and called on him the next day. He returned the visit, and we became fast friends, though we never either walked or ate together.

This worthy Florentine was named (or is named, if he be still alive) Everard de Medici.

I was very comfortable with Allegranti; I had the quiet so necessary to literary labours, but nevertheless I made up my mind to change my lodging. Magdalena, my landlord's niece, was so clever and charming, though but a child, that she continually disturbed my studies. She came into my room, wished me good day, asked me what kind of a night I had spent, if I wanted anything, and the sight of her grace and beauty and the sound of her voice so ravished me, that I determined to seek safety in flight.

A few years later Magdalena became a famous musician.

After leaving Allegranti I took rooms in a tradesman's house; his wife was ugly, and he had no pretty daughters or seductive nieces. There I lived for three weeks like Lafontaine's rat, very discreetly.

About the same time, Count Stratico arrived at Florence with his pupil, the Chevalier Morosini, who was then eighteen. I could not avoid calling on Stratico. He had broken his leg some time before and was still unable to go out with his pupil, who had all the vices and none of the virtues of youth. Consequently, Stratico was always afraid of something happening to him, and he begged me to make myself his companion, and even to share his pleasures, so that he might not go into bad company and dangerous houses alone and undefended.

Thus my days of calm study vanished away. I had to partake in the debauchery of a young rake, and all out of pure sensibility.

The Chevalier Morosini was a thorough-paced profligate. He hated literature, good society, and the company of sensible people. His daily pleasures were furious riding, hard drinking, and hard dissipation with prostitutes, whom he sometimes almost killed.

This young nobleman paid a man for the sole service of getting him a woman or a girl every day.

During the two months which he passed in Florence I saved his life a score of times. I got very tired of my duty, but I felt bound to persevere.

He was liberal to the verge of recklessness, and would never allow me to pay for anything. Even here, however, disputes often arose between us; as he paid, he wanted me to eat, drink, and dissipate in the same measures as himself. However, I had my own way on most occasions, only giving in when it suited me to do so.

We went to see the opera at Lucca, and brought two of the dancers home to supper. As the chevalier was drunk as usual, he treated the woman he had chosen—a superb creature—very indifferently. The other was pretty enough, but I had done nothing serious with her, so I proceeded to avenge the beauty. She took me for the chevalier's father, and advised me to give him a better education.

After the chevalier was gone I betook myself to my studies again, but I supped every night with Madame Denis, who had formerly been a dancer in the King of Prussia's service, and had retired to Florence.

She was about my age, and therefore not young, but still she had sufficient remains of her beauty to inspire a tender passion; she did not look more than thirty. She was as fresh as a young girl, had excellent manners, and was extremely intelligent. Besides all these advantages, she had a comfortable apartment on the first floor of one of the largest cafes in Florence. In front of her room was a balcony where it was delicious to sit and enjoy the cool of the evening.

The reader may remember how I had become her friend at Berlin in 1764, and when we met again at Florence our old flames were rekindled.

The chief boarder in the house where she lived was Madame Brignonzi, whom I had met at Memel. This lady, who pretended that she had been my mistress twenty-five years before, often came into Madame Denis's rooms with an old lover of hers named Marquis Capponi.

He was an agreeable and well-educated man; and noticing that he seemed to enjoy my conversation I called on him, and he called on me, leaving his card as I was not at home.

I returned the visit, and he introduced me to his family and invited me to dinner. For the first time since I had come to Florence I dressed myself with elegance and wore my jewels.

At the Marquis Capponi's I made the acquaintance of Corilla's lover, the Marquis Gennori, who took me to a house where I met my fate. I fell in love with Madame a young widow, who had been spending a few months in Paris. This visit had added to her other attractions the charm of a good manner, which always counts for so much.

This unhappy love made the three months longer which I spent in Florence painful to me.

It was at the beginning of October, and about that time Count Medini arrived at Florence without a penny in his pocket, and without being able to pay his vetturino, who had arrested him.

The wretched man, who seemed to follow me wherever I went, had taken up his abode in the house of a poor Irishman.

I do not know how Medini found out that I was at Florence, but he wrote me a letter begging me to come and deliver him from the police, who besieged his room and talked of taking him to prison. He said he only wanted me to go bail for him, and protested that I should not run any risk, as he was sure of being able to pay in a few days.

My readers will be aware that I had good reason for not liking Medini, but in spite of our quarrel I could not despise his entreaty. I even felt inclined to become his surety, if he could prove

his capability of paying the sum for which he had been arrested. I imagined that the sum must be a small one, and could not understand why the landlord did not answer for him. My surprise ceased, however, when I entered his room.

As soon as I appeared he ran to embrace me, begging me to forget the past, and to extract him from the painful position in which he found himself.

I cast a rapid glance over the room, and saw three trunks almost empty, their contents being scattered about the floor. There was his mistress, whom I knew, and who had her reasons for not liking me; her young sister, who wept; and her mother, who swore, and called Medini a rogue, saying that she would complain of him to the magistrate, and that she was not going to allow her dresses and her daughter's dresses to be seized for his debts.

I asked the landlord why he did not go bail, as he had these persons and their effects as security.

"The whole lot," he answered, "won't pay the vetturino, and the sooner they are out of my house the better I shall be pleased."

I was astonished, and could not understand how the bill could amount to more than the value of all the clothes I saw on the floor, so I asked the vetturino to tell me the extent of the debt.

He gave me a paper with Medini's signature; the amount was two hundred and forty crowns.

"How in the world," I exclaimed, "could he contract this enormous debt?"

I wondered no longer when the vetturino told me that he had served them for the last six weeks, having conducted the count and the three women from Rome to Leghorn, and from Leghorn to Pisa, and from Pisa to Florence, paying for their board all the way.

"The vetturino will never take me as bail for such an amount," I said to Medini, "and even if he would I should never be so foolish as to contract such a debt."

"Let me have a word with you in the next room," said he; "I will put the matter clearly before you."

"Certainly."

Two of the police would have prevented his going into the next room, on the plea that he might escape through the window, but I said I would be answerable for him.

Just then the poor vetturino came in and kissed my hand, saying that if I would go bail for the count he would let me have three months wherein to find the money.

As it happened it was the same man who had taken me to Rome with the Englishwoman who had been seduced by the actor l'Etoile. I told him to wait a moment.

Medini who was a great talker and a dreadful liar thought to persuade me by shewing me a number of open letters, commending him in pompous terms to the best houses in Florence. I read the letters, but I found no mention of money in them, and I told him as much.

"I know," said he, "but there is play going on in these houses, and I am sure of gaining immense sums."

"You may be aware that I have no confidence in your good luck."

"Then I have another resource."

"What is that?"

He shewed me a bundle of manuscript, which I found to be an excellent translation of Voltaire's "Henriade" into Italian verse. Tasso himself could not have done it better. He said he hoped to finish the poem at Florence, and to present it to the grand duke, who would be sure to make him a magnificent present, and to constitute him his favourite.

I would not undeceive him, but I laughed to myself, knowing that the grand duke only made a pretence of loving literature. A certain Abbe Fontaine, a clever man, amused him with a little natural history, the only science in which he took any interest. He preferred the worst prose to the best verse, not having sufficient intellect to enjoy the subtle charms of poetry. In reality he had only two passions—women and money.

After spending two wearisome hours with Medini, whose wit was great and his judgment small, after heartily repenting of having yielded to my curiosity and having paid him a visit, I said shortly that I could do nothing for him. Despair drives men crazy; as I was making for the door, he seized me by the collar.

He did not reflect in his dire extremity that he had no arms, that I was stronger than he, that I had twice drawn his blood, and that the police, the landlord, the vetturirco, and the servants, were in the next room. I was not coward enough to call for help; I caught hold of his neck with both hands and squeezed him till he was nearly choked. He had to let go at last, and then I took hold of his collar and asked him if he had gone mad.

I sent him against the wall, and opened the door and the police came in.

I told the vetturino that I would on no account be Medini's surety, or be answerable for him in any way.

Just as I was going out, he leapt forward crying that I must not abandon him.

I had opened the door, and the police, fearing he would escape, ran forward to get hold of him. Then began an interesting battle. Medini, who had no arms, and was only in his dressing-gown, proceeded to distribute kicks, cuffs, and blows amongst the four cowards, who had their swords at their sides, whilst I held the door to prevent the Irishman going out and calling for assistance.

Medini, whose nose was bleeding and his dress all torn, persisted in fighting till the four policemen let him alone. I liked his courage, and pitied him.

There was a moment's silence, and I asked his two liveried servants who were standing by me why they had not helped their master. One said he owed him six months' wages, and the other said he wanted to arrest him on his own account.

As Medini was endeavouring to staunch the blood in a basin of water, the vetturino told him that as I refused to be his surety he must go to prison.

I was moved by the scene that I had witnessed, and said to the vetturino,

"Give him a fortnight's respite, and if he escapes before the expiration of that term I will pay you."

He thought it over for a few moments, and then said,—

"Very good, sir, but I am not going to pay any legal expenses."

I enquired how much the costs amounted to, and paid them, laughing at the policemen's claim of damages for blows they had received.

Then the two rascally servants said that if I would not be surety in the same manner on their account, they would have Medini arrested. However, Medini called out to me to pay no attention to them whatever.

When I had given the vetturino his acknowledgment and paid the four or five crowns charged by the police, Medini told me that he had more to say to me; but I turned my back on him, and went home to dinner.

Two hours later one of his servants came to me and promised if I would give him six sequins to warn me if his master made any preparations for flight.

I told him drily that his zeal was useless to me, as I was quite sure that the count would pay all his debts within the term; and the next morning I wrote to Medini informing him of the step his servant had taken. He replied with a long letter full of thanks, in which he exerted all his eloquence to persuade me to repair his fortunes. I did not answer.

However, his good genius, who still protected him, brought a person to Florence who drew him out of the difficulty. This person was Premislas Zanovitch, who afterwards became as famous as his brother who cheated the Amsterdam merchants, and adopted the style of Prince Scanderbeck. I shall speak of him later on. Both these finished cheats came to a bad end.

Premislas Zanolitch was then at the happy age of twenty-five; he was the son of a gentleman of Budua, a town on the borders of Albania and Dalmatia, formerly subject to the Venetian Republic and now to the Grand Turk. In classic times it was known as Epirus.

Premislas was a young man of great intelligence, and after having studied at Venice, and contracted a Venetian taste for pleasures and enjoyments of all sorts, he could not make up his mind to return to Budua, where his only associates would be dull Slavs—uneducated, unintellectual, coarse, and brutish. Consequently, when Premislas and his still more talented brother Stephen were ordered by the Council of Ten to enjoy the vast sums they had gained at play in their own country, they resolved to become adventurers. One took the north and the other the south of Europe, and both cheated and duped whenever the opportunity for doing so presented itself.

I had seen Premislas when he was a child, and had already heard reports of a notable achievement of his. At Naples he had cheated the Chevalier de Morosini by persuading him to become his surety to the extent of six thousand ducats, and now he arrived in Florence in a handsome carriage, bringing his mistress with him, and having two tall lackeys and a valet in his service.

He took good apartments, hired a carriage, rented a box at the opera, had a skilled cook, and gave his mistress a lady-in-waiting. He then shewed himself at the best club, richly dressed, and covered with jewellery. He introduced himself under the name of Count Premislas Zanolitch.

There is a club in Florence devoted to the use of the nobility. Any stranger can go there without being introduced, but so much the worse for him if his appearance fails to indicate his right to be present. The Florentines are ice towards him, leave him alone, and behave in such a manner that the visit is seldom repeated. The club is at once decent and licentious, the papers are to be read there, games of all kinds are played, food and drink may be had, and even love is available, for ladies frequent the club.

Zanolitch did not wait to be spoken to, but made himself agreeable to everyone, and congratulated himself on mixing in such distinguished company, talked about Naples which he had just left, brought in his own name with great adroitness, played high, lost merrily, paid after pretending to forget all about his debts, and in short pleased everyone. I heard all this the next day from the Marquis Capponi, who said that someone had asked him if he knew me, whereat he answered that when I left Venice he was at college, but that he had often heard his father speak of me in very high terms. He knew both the Chevalier Morosini and Count Medini, and had a good deal to say in praise of the latter. The marquis asked me if I knew him, and I replied in the affirmative, without feeling it my duty to disclose certain circumstances which might not have been advantageous to him; and as Madame Denis seemed curious to make his acquaintance the Chevalier Puzzi promised to bring him to see her, which he did in the course of a few days.

I happened to be with Madame Denis when Puzzi presented Zanolitch, and I saw before me a fine-looking young man, who seemed by his confident manner to be sure of success in all his undertakings. He was not exactly handsome, but he had a perfect manner and an air of gaiety which seemed infectious, with a thorough knowledge of the laws of good society. He was by no means an egotist, and seemed never at a loss for something to talk about. I led the conversation to the subject of his country, and he gave me an amusing description of it, talking of his fief-part of which was within the domains of the sultan—as a place where gaiety was unknown, and where the most determined misanthrope would die of melancholy.

As soon as he heard my name he began speaking to me in a tone of the most delicate flattery. I saw the makings of a great adventurer in him, but I thought his luxury would prove the weak point in his cuirass. I thought him something like what I had been fifteen years ago, but as it seemed unlikely that he had my resources I could not help pitying him.

Zanolitch paid me a visit, and told me that Medini's position had excited his pity, and that he had therefore paid his debts.

I applauded his generosity, but I formed the conclusion that they had laid some plot between them, and that I should soon hear of the results of this new alliance.

I returned Zanolitch's call the next day. He was at table with his mistress, whom I should not have recognized if she had not pronounced my name directly she saw me.

As she had addressed me as Don Giacomo, I called her Donna Ippolita, but in a voice which indicated that I was not certain of her identity. She told me I was quite right.

I had supped with her at Naples in company with Lord Baltimore, and she was very pretty then.

Zanolitch asked me to dine with him the following day, and I should have thanked him and begged to be excused if Donna Ippolita had not pressed me to come. She assured me that I should find good company there, and that the cook would excel himself.

I felt rather curious to see the company, and with the idea of shewing Zanolitch that I was not likely to become a charge on his purse, I dressed myself magnificently once more.

As I had expected, I found Medini and his mistress there, with two foreign ladies and their attendant cavaliers, and a fine-looking and well-dressed Venetian, between thirty-five and forty, whom I would not have recognized if Zanolitch had not told me his name, Alois Zen.

"Zen was a patrician name, and I felt obliged to ask what titles I ought to give him.

"Such titles as one old friend gives another, though it is very possible you do not recollect me, as I was only ten years old when we saw each other last."

Zen then told me he was the son of the captain I had known when I was under arrest at St. Andrews.

"That's twenty-eight years ago; but I remember you, though you had not had the small-pox in those days."

I saw that he was annoyed by this remark, but it was his fault, as he had no business to say where he had known me, or who his father was.

He was the son of a noble Venetian—a good-for-nothing in every sense of the word.

When I met him at Florence he had just come from Madrid, where he had made a lot of money by holding a bank at faro in the house of the Venetian ambassador, Marco Zen.

I was glad to meet him, but I found out before the dinner was over that he was completely devoid of education and the manners of a gentleman; but he was well content with the one talent he possessed, namely, that of correcting the freaks of fortune at games of chance. I did not wait to see the onslaught of the cheats on the dupes, but took my leave while the table was being made ready.

Such was my life during the seven months which I spent at Florence.

After this dinner I never saw Zen, or Medini, or Zanolitch, except by chance in the public places.

Here I must recount some incidents which took place towards the middle of December.

Lord Lincoln, a young man of eighteen, fell in love with a Venetian dancer named Lamberti, who was a universal favourite. On every night when the opera was given the young Englishman might be seen going to her camerino, and everyone wondered why he did not visit her at her own house, where he would be certain of a good welcome, for he was English, and therefore rich, young, and handsome. I believe he was the only son of the Duke of Newcastle.

Zanolitch marked him down, and in a short time had become an intimate friend of the fair Lamberti. He then made up to Lord Lincoln, and took him to the lady's house, as a polite man takes a friend to see his mistress.

Madame Lamberti, who was in collusion with the rascal, was not niggardly of her favours with the young Englishman. She received him every night to supper with Zanolitch and Zen, who had been presented by the Sclav, either because of his capital, or because Zanolitch was not so accomplished a cheat.

For the first few nights they took care to let the young nobleman win. As they played after supper, and Lord Lincoln followed the noble English custom of drinking till he did not know his

right hand from his left, he was quite astonished on waking the next morning to find that luck had been as kind to him as love. The trap was baited, the young lord nibbled, and, as may be expected, was finally caught.

Zen won twelve thousand pounds of him, and Zanovitch lent him the money by installments of three and four hundred louis at a time, as the Englishman had promised his tutor not to play, on his word of honour.

Zanovitch won from Zen what Zen won from the lord, and so the game was kept up till the young pigeon had lost the enormous sum of twelve thousand guineas.

Lord Lincoln promised to pay three thousand guineas the next day, and signed three bills of exchange for three thousand guineas each, payable in six months, and drawn on his London banker.

I heard all about this from Lord Lincoln himself when we met at Bologna three months later.

The next morning the little gaming party was the talk of Florence. Sasso Sassi, the banker, had already paid Zanovitch six thousand sequins by my lord's orders.

Medini came to see me, furious at not having been asked to join the party, while I congratulated myself on my absence. My surprise may be imagined, when, a few days after, a person came up to my room, and ordered me to leave Florence in three days and Tuscany in a week.

I was petrified, and called to my landlord to witness the unrighteous order I had received.

It was December 28th. On the same date, three years before, I had received orders to leave Barcelona in three days.

I dressed hastily and went to the magistrate to enquire the reason for my exile, and on entering the room I found it was the same man who had ordered me to leave Florence eleven years before.

I asked him to give me his reasons, and he replied coldly that such was the will of his highness.

"But as his highness must have his reasons, it seems to me that I am within my rights in enquiring what they are."

"If you think so you had better betake yourself to the prince; I know nothing about it. He left yesterday for Pisa, where he will stay three days; you can go there."

"Will he pay for my journey?"

"I should doubt it, but you can see for yourself."

"I shall not go to Pisa, but I will write to his highness if you will promise to send on the letter."

"I will do so immediately, for it is my duty."

"Very good; you shall have the letter before noon tomorrow, and before day-break I shall be in the States of the Church."

"There's no need for you to hurry yourself."

"There is a very great hurry. I cannot breathe the air of a country where liberty is unknown and the sovereign breaks his word; that is what I am going to write to your master."

As I was going out I met Medini, who had come on the same business as myself.

I laughed, and informed him of the results of my interview, and how I had been told to go to Pisa.

"What! have you been expelled, too?"

"Yes."

"What have you done?"

"Nothing."

"Nor I. Let us go to Pisa."

"You can go if you like, but I shall leave Florence tonight."

When I got home I told my landlord to get me a carriage and to order four post-horses for nightfall, and I then wrote the following letter to the grand duke:

"My Lord; The thunder which Jove has placed in your hands is only for the guilty; in launching it at me you have done wrong. Seven months ago you promised that I should remain unmolested so long as I obeyed the laws. I have done so scrupulously, and your lordship has therefore broken

your word. I am merely writing to you to let you know that I forgive you, and that I shall never give utterance to a word of complaint. Indeed I would willingly forget the injury you have done me, if it were not necessary that I should remember never to set foot in your realms again. The magistrate tells me that I can go and see you at Pisa, but I fear such a step would seem a hardy one to a prince, who should hear what a man has to say before he condemns him, and not afterwards.

"I am, etc."

When I had finished the letter I sent it to the magistrate, and then I began my packing.

I was sitting down to dinner when Medini came in cursing Zen and Zanovitch, whom he accused of being the authors of his misfortune, and of refusing to give him a hundred sequins, without which he could not possibly go.

"We are all going to Pisa," said he, "and cannot imagine why you do not come, too."

"Very good," I said, laughingly, "but please to leave me now as I have to do my packing."

As I expected, he wanted me to lend him some money, but on my giving him a direct refusal he went away.

After dinner I took leave of M. Medici and Madame Dennis, the latter of whom had heard the story already. She cursed the grand duke, saying she could not imagine how he could confound the innocent with the guilty. She informed me that Madame Lamberti had received orders to quit, as also a hunchbacked Venetian priest, who used to go and see the dancer but had never supped with her. In fact, there was a clean sweep of all the Venetians in Florence.

As I was returning home I met Lord Lincoln's governor; whom I had known at Lausanne eleven years before. I told him of what had happened to me through his hopeful pupil getting himself fleeced. He laughed, and told me that the grand duke had advised Lord Lincoln not to pay the money he had lost, to which the young man replied that if he were not to pay he should be dishonoured since the money he had lost had been lent to him.

In leaving Florence I was cured of an unhappy love which would doubtless have had fatal consequences if I had stayed on. I have spared my readers the painful story because I cannot recall it to my mind even now without being cut to the heart. The widow whom I loved, and to whom I was so weak as to disclose my feelings, only attached me to her triumphal car to humiliate me, for she disdained my love and myself. I persisted in my courtship, and nothing but my enforced absence would have cured me.

As yet I have not learnt the truth of the maxim that old age, especially when devoid of fortune, is not likely to prove attractive to youth.

I left Florence poorer by a hundred sequins than when I came there. I had lived with the most careful economy throughout the whole of my stay.

I stopped at the first stage within the Pope's dominions, and by the last day but one of the year I was settled at Bologna, at "St. Mark's Hotel."

My first visit was paid to Count Marulli, the Florentine charge d'affaires. I begged him to write and tell his master, that, out of gratitude for my banishment, I should never cease to sing his praises.

As the count had received a letter containing an account of the whole affair, he could not quite believe that I meant what I said.

"You may think what you like," I observed, "but if you knew all you would see that his highness has done me a very great service though quite unintentionally."

He promised to let his master know how I spoke of him.

On January 1st, 1772, I presented myself to Cardinal Braneaforte, the Pope's legate, whom I had known twenty years before at Paris, when he had been sent by Benedict XVI. with the holy swaddling clothes for the newly-born Duke of Burgundy. We had met at the Lodge of Freemasons, for the members of the sacred college were by no means afraid of their own anathemas. We had also some very pleasant little suppers with pretty sinners in company with Don Francesco Sensate and Count Ranucci. In short, the cardinal was a man of wit, and what is called a bon vivant.

"Oh, here you are!" cried he, when he saw me; "I was expecting you."

"How could you, my lord? Why should I have come to Bologna rather than to any other place?"

"For two reasons. In the first place because Bologna is better than many other places, and besides I flatter myself you thought of me. But you needn't say anything here about the life we led together when we were young men."

"It has always been a pleasant recollection to me."

"No doubt. Count Marulli told me yesterday that you spoke very highly of the grand duke, and you are quite right. You can talk to me in confidence; the walls of this room have no ears. How much did you get of the twelve thousand guineas?"

I told him the whole story, and shewed him a copy of the letter which I had written to the grand duke. He laughed, and said he was sorry I had been punished for nothing.

When he heard I thought of staying some months at Bologna he told me that I might reckon on perfect freedom, and that as soon as the matter ceased to become common talk he would give me open proof of his friendship.

After seeing the cardinal I resolved to continue at Bologna the kind of life that I had been leading at Florence. Bologna is the freest town in all Italy; commodities are cheap and good, and all the pleasures of life may be had there at a low price. The town is a fine one, and the streets are lined with arcades—a great comfort in so hot a place.

As to society, I did not trouble myself about it. I knew the Bolognese; the nobles are proud, rude, and violent; the lowest orders, known as the birichini, are worse than the lazzaroni of Naples, while the tradesmen and the middle classes are generally speaking worthy and respectable people. At Bologna, as at Naples, the two extremes of society are corrupt, while the middle classes are respectable, and the depository of virtue, talents, and learning.

However, my intention was to leave society alone, to pass my time in study, and to make the acquaintance of a few men of letters, who are easily accessible everywhere.

At Florence ignorance is the rule and learning the exception, while at Bologna the tincture of letters is almost universal. The university has thrice the usual number of professors; but they are all ill paid, and have to get their living out of the students, who are numerous. Printing is cheaper at Bologna than anywhere else, and though the Inquisition is established there the press is almost entirely free.

All the exiles from Florence reached Bologna four or five days after myself. Madame Lamberti only passed through on her way to Venice. Zanolich and Zen stayed five or six days; but they were no longer in partnership, having quarreled over the sharing of the booty.

Zanolich had refused to make one of Lord Lincoln's bills of exchange payable to Zen, because he did not wish to make himself liable in case the Englishman refused to pay. He wanted to go to England, and told Zen he was at liberty to do the same.

They went to Milan without having patched up their quarrel, but the Milanese Government ordered them to leave Lombardy, and I never heard what arrangements they finally came to. Later on I was informed that the Englishman's bills had all been settled to the uttermost farthing.

Medini, penniless as usual, had taken up his abode in the hotel where I was staying, bringing with him his mistress, her sister, and her mother, but with only one servant. He informed me that the grand duke had refused to listen to any of them at Pisa, where he had received a second order to leave Tuscany, and so had been obliged to sell everything. Of course he wanted me to help him, but I turned a deaf ear to his entreaties.

I have never seen this adventurer without his being in a desperate state of impecuniosity, but he would never learn to abate his luxurious habits, and always managed to find some way or other out of his difficulties. He was lucky enough to fall in with a Franciscan monk named De Dominis at Bologna, the said monk being on his way to Rome to solicit a brief of 'laicisation' from the Pope. He fell in love with Medini's mistress, who naturally made him pay dearly for her charms.

Medini left at the end of three weeks. He went to Germany, where he printed his version of the "Henriade," having discovered a Maecenas in the person of the Elector Palatin. After that he wandered about Europe for twelve years, and died in a London prison in 1788.

I had always warned him to give England a wide berth, as I felt certain that if he once went there he would not escape English bolts and bars, and that if he got on the wrong side of the prison doors he would never come out alive. He despised my advice, and if he did so with the idea of proving me a liar, he made a mistake, for he proved me to be a prophet.

Medini had the advantage of high birth, a good education, and intelligence; but as he was a poor man with luxurious tastes he either corrected fortune at play or went into debt, and was consequently obliged to be always on the wing to avoid imprisonment.

He lived in this way for seventy years, and he might possibly be alive now if he had followed my advice.

Eight years ago Count Torio told me that he had seen Medini in a London prison, and that the silly fellow confessed he had only come to London with the hope of proving me to be a liar.

Medini's fate shall never prevent me from giving good advice to a poor wretch on the brink of the precipice. Twenty years ago I told Cagliostro (who called himself Count Pellegrini in those days) not to set his foot in Rome, and if he had followed this counsel he would not have died miserably in a Roman prison.

Thirty years ago a wise man advised me to beware visiting Spain. I went, but, as the reader knows, I had no reason to congratulate myself on my visit.

A week after my arrival at Bologna, happening to be in the shop of Tartuffi, the bookseller, I made the acquaintance of a cross-eyed priest, who struck me, after a quarter of an hour's talk as a man of learning and talent. He presented me with two works which had recently been issued by two of the young professors at the university. He told me that I should find them amusing reading, and he was right.

The first treatise contended that women's faults should be forgiven them, since they were really the work of the matrix, which influenced them in spite of themselves. The second treatise was a criticism of the first. The author allowed that the uterus was an animal, but he denied the alleged influence, as no anatomist had succeeded in discovering any communication between it and the brain.

I determined to write a reply to the two pamphlets, and I did so in the course of three days. When my reply was finished I sent it to M. Dandolo, instructing him to have five hundred copies printed. When they arrived I gave a bookseller the agency, and in a fortnight I had made a hundred sequins.

The first pamphlet was called "Lutero Pensante," the second was in French and bore the title "La Force Vitale," while I called my reply "Lana Caprina." I treated the matter in an easy vein, not without some hints of deep learning, and made fun of the lucubrations of the two physicians. My preface was in French, but full of Parisian idioms which rendered it unintelligible to all who had not visited the gay capital, and this circumstance gained me a good many friends amongst the younger generation.

The squinting priest, whose name was Zacchierdi, introduced me to the Abbe Severini, who became my intimate friend in the course of ten or twelve days.

This abbe made me leave the inn, and got me two pleasant rooms in the house of a retired artiste, the widow of the tenor Carlani. He also made arrangements with a pastrycook to send me my dinner and supper. All this, plus a servant, only cost me ten sequins a month.

Severini was the agreeable cause of my losing temporarily my taste for study. I put by my "Iliad," feeling sure that I should be able to finish it again.

Severini introduced me to his family, and before long I became very intimate with him. I also became the favourite of his sister, a lady rather plain than pretty, thirty years old, but full of intelligence.

In the course of Lent the abbe introduced me to all the best dancers and operatic singers in Bologna, which is the nursery of the heroines of the stage. They may be had cheaply enough on their native soil.

Every week the good abbe introduced me to a fresh one, and like a true friend he watched carefully over my finances. He was a poor man himself, and could not afford to contribute anything towards the expenses of our little parties; but as they would have cost me double without his help, the arrangement was a convenient one for both of us.

About this time there was a good deal of talk about a Bolognese nobleman, Marquis Albergati Capacelli. He had made a present of his private theatre to the public, and was himself an excellent actor. He had made himself notorious by obtaining a divorce from his wife, whom he did not like, so as to enable him to marry a dancer, by whom he had two children. The amusing point in this divorce was that he obtained it on the plea that he was impotent, and sustained his plea by submitting to an examination, which was conducted as follows:

Four skilled and impartial judges had the marquis stripped before them, and did all in their power to produce an erection; but somehow or other he succeeded in maintaining his composure, and the marriage was pronounced null and void on the ground of relative impotence, for it was well known that he had had children by another woman.

If reason and not prejudice had been consulted, the procedure would have been very different; for if relative impotence was considered a sufficient ground for divorce, of what use was the examination?

The marquis should have sworn that he could do nothing with his wife, and if the lady had traversed this statement the marquis might have challenged her to put him into the required condition.

But the destruction of old customs and old prejudices is often the work of long ages.

I felt curious to know this character, and wrote to M. Dandolo to get me a letter of introduction to the marquis.

In a week my good old friend sent me the desired letter. It was written by another Venetian, M. de Zaguri, an intimate friend of the marquis.

The letter was not sealed, so I read it. I was delighted; no one could have commended a person unknown to himself but the friend of a friend in a more delicate manner.

I thought myself bound to write a letter of thanks to M. Zaguri. I said that I desired to obtain my pardon more than ever after reading his letter, which made me long to go to Venice, and make the acquaintance of such a worthy nobleman.

I did not expect an answer, but I got one. M. Zaguri said that my desire was such a flattering one to himself, that he meant to do his best to obtain my recall.

The reader will see that he was successful, but not till after two years of continuous effort.

Albergati was away from Bologna at the time, but when he returned Severini let me know, and I called at the palace. The porter told me that his excellence (all the nobles are excellences at Bologna) had gone to his country house, where he meant to pass the whole of the spring.

In two or three days I drove out to his villa. I arrived at a charming mansion, and finding no one at the door I went upstairs, and entered a large room where a gentleman and an exceedingly pretty woman were just sitting down to dinner. The dishes had been brought in, and there were only two places laid.

I made a polite bow, and asked the gentleman if I had the honour of addressing the Marquis Albergati. He replied in the affirmative, whereupon I gave him my letter of introduction. He took it, read the superscription, and put it in his pocket, telling me I was very kind to have taken so much trouble, and that he would be sure to read it.

"It has been no trouble at all," I replied, "but I hope you will read the letter. It is written by M. de Zaguri, whom I asked to do me this service, as I have long desired to make your lordship's acquaintance."

His lordship smiled and said very pleasantly that he would read it after dinner, and would see what he could do for his friend Zaguri.

Our dialogue was over in a few seconds. Thinking him extremely rude I turned my back and went downstairs, arriving just in time to prevent the postillion taking out the horses. I promised him a double gratuity if he would take me to some village at hand, where he could bait his horses while I breakfasted.

Just as the postillion had got on horseback a servant came running up. He told me very politely that his excellence begged me to step upstairs.

I put my hand in my pocket and gave the man my card with my name and address, and telling him that that was what his master wanted, I ordered the postillion to drive off at a full gallop.

When we had gone half a league we stopped at a good inn, and then proceeded on our way back to Bologna.

The same day I wrote to M. de Zaguri, and described the welcome I had received at the hands of the marquis. I enclosed the letter in another to M. Dandolo, begging him to read it, and to send it on. I begged the noble Venetian to write to the marquis that having offended me grievously he must prepare to give me due satisfaction.

I laughed with all my heart next day when my landlady gave me a visiting card with the inscription, General the Marquis of Albeygati. She told me the marquis had called on me himself, and on hearing I was out had left his card.

I began to look upon the whole of his proceedings as pure gasconnade, only lacking the wit of the true Gascon. I determined to await M. Zaguri's reply before making up my mind as to the kind of satisfaction I should demand.

While I was inspecting the card, and wondering what right the marquis had to the title of general, Severini came in, and informed me that the marquis had been made a Knight of the Order of St. Stanislas by the King of Poland, who had also given him the style of royal chamberlain.

"Is he a general in the Polish service as well?" I asked.

"I really don't know."

"I understand it all," I said to myself. "In Poland a chamberlain has the rank of adjutant-general, and the marquis calls himself general. But general what? The adjective without a substantive is a mere cheat."

I saw my opportunity, and wrote a comic dialogue, which I had printed the next day. I made a present of the work to a bookseller, and in three or four days he sold out the whole edition at a bajocco apiece.

CHAPTER XIX

Farinello and the Electress Dowager of Saxony—Madame Slopitz—
Nina—The Midwife—Madame Soavi—Abbe Bolini—Madame Viscioletta—The
Seamstress—The Sorry Pleasure of Revenge—Severini Goes to Naples—My
Departure—Marquis Mosca

Anyone who attacks a proud person in a comic vein is almost sure of success; the laugh is generally on his side.

I asked in my dialogue whether it was lawful for a provost-marshal to call himself simply marshal, and whether a lieutenant-colonel had a right to the title of colonel. I also asked whether the man who preferred titles of honour, for which he had paid in hard cash, to his ancient and legitimate rank, could pass for a sage.

Of course the marquis had to laugh at my dialogue, but he was called the general ever after. He had placed the royal arms of Poland over the gate of his palace, much to the amusement of Count Mischinski, the Polish ambassador to Berlin, who happened to be passing through Bologna at that time.

I told the Pole of my dispute with the mad marquis, and persuaded him to pay Albergati a visit, leaving his card. The ambassador did so, and the call was returned, but Albergati's cards no longer bore the title of general.

The Dowager Electress of Saxony having come to Bologna, I hastened to pay my respects to her. She had only come to see the famous castrato Farinello, who had left Madrid, and now lived at Bologna in great comfort. He placed a magnificent collation before the Electress, and sang a song of his own composition, accompanying himself on the piano. The Electress, who was an enthusiastic musician, embraced Farinello, exclaiming,—

"Now I can die happy."

Farinello, who was also known as the Chevalier Borschi had reigned, as it were, in Spain till the Parmese wife of Philip V. had laid plots which obliged him to leave the Court after the disgrace of Enunada. The Electress noticed a portrait of the queen, and spoke very highly of her, mentioning some circumstances which must have taken place in the reign of Ferdinand VI.

The famous musician burst into tears, and said that Queen Barbara was as good as Elizabeth of Parma was wicked.

Borschi might have been seventy when I saw him at Bologna. He was very rich and in the enjoyment of good health, and yet he was unhappy, continually shedding tears at the thought of Spain.

Ambition is a more powerful passion than avarice. Besides, Farinello had another reason for unhappiness.

He had a nephew who was the heir to all his wealth, whom he married to a noble Tuscan lady, hoping to found a titled family, though in an indirect kind of way. But this marriage was a torment to him, for in his impotent old age he was so unfortunate as to fall in love with his niece, and to become jealous of his nephew. Worse than all the lady grew to hate him, and Farinello had sent his nephew abroad, while he never allowed the wife to go out of his sight.

Lord Lincoln arrived in Bologna with an introduction for the cardinal legate, who asked him to dinner, and did me the honour of giving me an invitation to meet him. The cardinal was thus convinced that Lord Lincoln and I had never met, and that the grand duke of Tuscany had committed a great injustice in banishing me. It was on that occasion that the young nobleman told me how they had spread the snare, though he denied that he had been cheated; he was far too proud to acknowledge such a thing. He died of debauchery in London three or four years after.

I also saw at Bologna the Englishman Aston with Madame Slopitz, sister of the Charming Cailimena. Madame Slopitz was much handsomer than her sister. She had presented Aston with two babes as beautiful as Raphael's cherubs.

I spoke of her sister to her, and from the way in which I sang her praises she guessed that I had loved her. She told me she would be in Florence during the Carnival of 1773, but I did not see her again till the year 1776, when I was at Venice.

The dreadful Nina Bergonci, who had made a madman of Count Ricla, and was the source of all my woes at Barcelona, had come to Bologna at the beginning of Lent, occupying a pleasant house which she had taken. She had *carte blanche* with a banker, and kept up a great state, affirming herself to be with child by the Viceroy of Catalonia, and demanding the honours which would be given to a queen who had graciously chosen Bologna as the place of her confinement. She had a special recommendation to the legate, who often visited her, but in the greatest secrecy.

The time of her confinement approached, and the insane Ricla sent over a confidential man, Don Martino, who was empowered to have the child baptized, and to recognize it as Ricla's natural offspring.

Nina made a show of her condition, appearing at the theatre and in the public places with an enormous belly. The greatest noble of Bologna paid court to her, and Nina told them that they might do so, but that she could not guarantee their safety from the jealous dagger of Ricla. She was impudent enough to tell them what happened to me at Barcelona, not knowing that I was at Bologna.

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