

be gone and stood waiting for the princess's last word. But before her mother could speak, Faustina's voice was heard.

"I cannot tell you how dreadfully we feel — papa and I — at having been the cause of such a horrible accident! Is there nothing we can do to make you forget it?"

The princess stared at her daughter in the utmost astonishment at her forwardness. She would not have been surprised if Flavia had been guilty of such imprudence, but that Faustina should thus boldly address a young man who had not spoken to her, was such a shock to her belief in the girl's manners that she did not recover for several seconds. Anastase appreciated the situation, for as he answered, he looked steadily at the mother, although his words were plainly addressed to the brown-eyed beauty.

"Mademoiselle is too kind. She exaggerates. And yet, since she has put the question, I will say that I should forget my broken bones very soon if I might be permitted to paint Mademoiselle's portrait. I am a painter," he added, in modest explanation.

"Yes," said the princess, "I know. But, really — this is a matter which would require great consideration — and my husband's consent — and, for the present —"

She paused significantly, intending to convey a polite refusal, but Gouache completed the sentence.

"For the present, until my bones are mended, we will not speak of it. When I am well again I will do myself the honour of asking the prince's consent myself."

Flavia leaned towards her mother and whispered into her ear. The words were quite audible, and the girl's dark eyes turned to Gouache with a wicked laugh in them while she was speaking.

"Oh, mamma, if you tell papa it is for nothing he will be quite delighted!"

Gouache's lip trembled as he suppressed a smile, and the elderly princess's florid cheeks flushed with annoyance.

"For the present," she said, holding out her hand rather coldly, "we will not speak of it. Pray let us know of your speedy recovery, Monsieur Gouache."

As the artist took his leave he glanced once more at

Donna Faustina. Her face was pale and her eyes flashed angrily. She, too, had heard Flavia's stage whisper and was even more annoyed than her mother. Gouache went his way toward his lodging in the company of the surgeon, pondering on the inscrutable mysteries of the Roman household of which he had been vouchsafed a glimpse. He was in pain from his head and shoulder, but insisted that the walk would do him good and refused the cab which his companion had brought. A broken collar-bone is not a dangerous matter, but it can be very troublesome for a while, and the artist was glad to get back to his lodgings and to find himself comfortably installed in an easy chair with something to eat before him, of a more substantial nature than the Principessa Montevarchi's infusions of camomile and mallows.

CHAPTER III.

While Giovanni was at the Palazzo Montevarchi, and while Corona was busy with her dressmakers, Prince Saracinesca was dozing over the *Osservatore Romano* in his study. To tell the truth the paper was less dull than usual, for there was war and rumour of war in its columns. Garibaldi had raised a force of volunteers and was in the neighbourhood of Arezzo, beginning to skirmish with the outlying posts of the pontifical army along the frontier. The old gentleman did not know, of course, that on that very day the Italian Government was issuing its proclamation against the great agitator, and possibly if he had been aware of the incident it would not have produced any very strong impression upon his convictions. Garibaldi was a fact, and Saracinesca did not believe that any proclamations would interfere with his march unless backed by some more tangible force. Even had he known that the guerilla general had been arrested at Sinalunga and put in confinement as soon as the proclamation had appeared, the prince would have foreseen clearly enough that the prisoner's escape would be only

a question of a few days, since there were manifold evidences that an understanding existed between Ratazzi and Garibaldi of much the same nature as that which in 1860 had been maintained between Garibaldi and Cavour during the advance upon Naples. The Italian Government kept men under arms to be ready to take advantage of any successes obtained by the Garibaldian volunteers, and at the same time to suppress the republican tendencies of the latter, which broke out afresh with every new advance, and disappeared, as by magic, under the depressing influence of a forced retreat.

The prince knew all these things, and had reflected upon them so often that they no longer afforded enough interest to keep him awake. The warm September sun streamed into the study and fell upon the paper as it slowly slipped over the old gentleman's knees, while his head sank lower and lower on his breast. The old enamelled clock upon the chimney-piece ticked more loudly, as clocks seem to do when people are asleep and they are left to their own devices, and a few belated flies chased each other in the sunbeams.

The silence was broken by the entrance of a servant, who would have withdrawn again when he saw that his master was napping, had not the latter stirred and raised his head before the man had time to get away. Then the fellow came forward with an apology and presented a visiting-card. The prince stared at the bit of pasteboard, rubbed his eyes, stared again, and then laid it upon the table beside him, his eyes still resting on the name, which seemed so much to surprise him. Then he told the footman to introduce the visitor, and a few moments later a very tall man entered the room, hat in hand, and advanced slowly towards him with the air of a person who has a perfect right to present himself but wishes to give his host time to recognise him.

The prince remembered the newcomer very well. The closely-buttoned frock-coat showed the man's imposing figure to greater advantage than the dress in which Saracinesca had last seen him, but there was no mistaking the personality. There was the same lean but massive face, broadened by the high cheekbones and the prominent square jaw; there were the same piercing black

eyes, set near together under eyebrows that met in the midst of the forehead, the same thin and cruel lips, and the same strongly-marked nose, set broadly on at the nostrils, though pointed and keen. Had the prince had any doubts as to his visitor's identity they would have been dispelled by the man's great height and immense breadth of shoulder, which would have made it hard indeed for him to disguise himself had he wished to do so. But though very much surprised, Saracinesca had no doubts whatever. The only points that were new to him in the figure before him were the outward manner and appearance, and the dress of a gentleman.

"I trust I am not disturbing you, prince?" The words were spoken in a deep, clear voice, and with a notable southern accent.

"Not at all. I confess I am astonished at seeing you in Rome. Is there anything I can do for you? I shall always be grateful to you for having been alive to testify to the falsehood of that accusation made against my son. Pray sit down. How is your Signora? And the children? All well, I hope?"

"My wife is dead," returned the other, and the grave tones of his bass voice lent solemnity to the simple statement.

"I am sincerely sorry —" began the prince, but his visitor interrupted him.

"The children are well. They are in Aquila for the present. I have come to establish myself in Rome, and my first visit is naturally to yourself, since I have the advantage of being your cousin."

"Naturally," ejaculated Saracinesca, though his face expressed considerable surprise.

"Do not imagine that I am going to impose myself upon you as a poor relation," continued the other with a faint smile. "Fortune has been kind to me since we met, perhaps as a compensation for the loss I suffered in the death of my poor wife. I have a sufficient independence and can hold my own."

"I never supposed —"

"You might naturally have supposed that I had come to solicit your favour, though it is not the case. When we parted I was an innkeeper in Aquila. I have no

cause to be ashamed of my past profession. I only wish to let you know that it is altogether past, and that I intend to resume the position which my great-grandfather foolishly forfeited. As you are the present head of the family I judged that it was my duty to inform you of the fact immediately."

"By all means. I imagined this must be the case from your card. You are entirely in your rights, and I shall take great pleasure in informing every one of the fact. You are the Marchese di San Giacinto, and the inn at Aquila no longer exists."

"As these things must be done, once and for always, I have brought my papers to Rome," answered the Marchese. "They are at your disposal, for you certainly have a right to see them, if you like. I will recall to your memory the facts of our history, in case you have forgotten them."

"I know the story well enough," said Saracinesca. "Our great-grandfathers were brothers. Yours went to live in Naples. His son grew up and joined the French against the King. His lands were forfeited, he married and died in obscurity, leaving your father, his only son. Your father died young and you again are his only son. You married the Signora Felice——"

"Baldi," said the Marchese, nodding in confirmation of the various statements.

"The Signora Felice Baldi, by whom you have two children——"

"Boys."

"Two boys. And the Signora Marchesa, I grieve to hear, is dead. Is that accurate?"

"Perfectly. There is one circumstance, connected with our great-grandfathers, which you have not mentioned, but which I am sure you remember."

"What is that?" asked the prince, fixing his keen eyes on his companion's face.

"It is only this," replied San Giacinto, calmly. "My great-grandfather was two years older than yours. You know he never meant to marry, and resigned the title to his younger brother, who had children already. He took a wife in his old age, and my grandfather was the son born to him. That is why you are so much older

than I, though we are of the same generation in the order of descent."

"Yes," assented the prince. "That accounts for it. Will you smoke?"

Giovanni Saracinesca, Marchese di San Giacinto, looked curiously at his cousin as he took the proffered cigar. There was something abrupt in the answer which attracted his attention and roused his quick suspicions. He wondered whether that former exchange of titles, and consequent exchange of positions were an unpleasant subject of conversation to the prince. But the latter, as though anticipating such a doubt in his companion's mind, at once returned to the question with the boldness which was natural to him.

"There was a friendly agreement," he said, striking a match and offering it to the Marchese. "I have all the documents, and have studied them with interest. It might amuse you to see them, some day."

"I should like to see them, indeed," answered San Giacinto. "They must be very curious. As I was saying, I am going to establish myself in Rome. It seems strange to me to be playing the gentleman — it must seem even more odd to you."

"It would be truer to say that you have been playing the innkeeper," observed the prince, courteously. "No one would suspect it," he added, glancing at his companion's correct attire.

"I have an adaptable nature," said the Marchese, calmly. "Besides, I have always looked forward to again taking my place in the world. I have acquired a little instruction — not much, you will say, but it is sufficient as the times go; and as for education, it is the same for every one, innkeeper or prince. One takes off one's hat, one speaks quietly, one says what is agreeable to hear — is it not enough?"

"Quite enough," replied the prince. He was tempted to smile at his cousin's definition of manners, though he could see that the man was quite able to maintain his position. "Quite enough, indeed, and as for instruction, I am afraid most of us have forgotten our Latin. You need have no anxiety on that score. But, tell me, how comes it that, having been bred in the south, you prefer

to establish yourself in Rome rather than in Naples? They say that you Neapolitans do not like us."

"I am a Roman by descent, and I wish to become one in fact," returned the Marchese. "Besides," he added, in a peculiarly grave tone of voice, "I do not like the new order of things. Indeed, I have but one favour to ask of you, and that is a great one."

"Anything in my power——"

"To present me to the Holy Father as one who desires to become his faithful subject. Could you do so, do you think, without any great inconvenience?"

"Eh! I shall be delighted! *Magari!*" answered the prince, heartily. "To tell the truth, I was afraid you meant to keep your Italian convictions, and that, in Rome, would be against you, especially in these stormy days. But if you will join us heart and soul you will be received with open arms. I shall take great pleasure in seeing you make the acquaintance of my son and his wife. Come and dine this evening."

"Thank you," said the Marchese. "I will not fail."

After a few more words San Giacinto took his leave, and the prince could not but admire the way in which this man, who had been brought up among peasants, or at best among the small farmers of an outlying district, assumed at once an air of perfect equality while allowing just so much of respect to appear in his manner as might properly be shown by a younger member to the head of a great house. When he was gone Saracinesca rang the bell.

"Pasquale," he said, addressing the old butler who answered the summons, "that gentleman who is just gone is my cousin, Don Giovanni Saracinesca, who is called Marchese di San Giacinto. He will dine here this evening. You will call him *Eccellenza*, and treat him as a member of the family. Go and ask the princess if she will receive me."

Pasquale opened his mental eyes very wide as he bowed and left the room. He had never heard of this other Saracinesca, and the appearance of a new member of the family upon the scene, who must, from his appearance, have been in existence between thirty and forty years, struck him as astonishing in the extreme; for the

old servant had been bred up in the house from a boy and imagined himself master of all the secrets connected with the Saracinesca household.

He was, indeed, scarcely less surprised than his master, who, although he had been aware for some time past that Giovanni Saracinesca existed and was his cousin, had never anticipated the event of his coming to Rome, and had expected still less that the innkeeper would ever assume the title to which he had a right and play the part of a gentleman, as he himself had expressed it. There was a strange mixture of boldness and foresight in the way the old prince had received his new relation. He knew the strength of his own position in society, and that the introduction of a humble cousin could not possibly do him harm. At the worst, people might laugh a little among themselves and remark that the Marchese must be a nuisance to the Saracinesca. On the other hand, the prince was struck from the first with the air of self-possession which he discerned in San Giacinto, and foresaw that the man would very probably play a part in Roman life. He was a man who might be disliked, but who could not be despised; and since his claims to consideration were undeniably genuine, it seemed wiser to accept him from the first as a member of the family and unhesitatingly to treat him as such. After all, he demanded nothing to which he had not a clear right from the moment he announced his intention of taking his place in the world, and it was certainly far wiser to receive him cordially at once, than to draw back from acknowledging the relationship because he had been brought up in another sphere.

This was the substance of what Prince Saracinesca communicated to his daughter-in-law a few minutes later. She listened patiently to all he had to say, only asking a question now and then in order to understand more clearly what had happened. She was curious to see the man whose name had once been so strangely confounded with her husband's by the machinations of the Conte Del Ferice and Donna Tullia Mayer, and she frankly confessed her curiosity and her satisfaction at the prospect of meeting San Giacinto that evening. While she was talking with the prince, Giovanni unexpectedly returned

from his walk. He had turned homewards as soon as he had sent the military surgeon to Gouache.

"Well, Giovannino," cried the old gentleman, "the prodigal innkeeper has returned to the bosom of the family."

"What innkeeper?"

"Your worthy namesake, and cousin, Giovanni Saracinesca, formerly of Aquila."

"Does Madame Mayer want to prove that it is he who has married Corona?" inquired Sant' Ilario with a laugh.

"No, though I suppose he is a candidate for marriage. I never was more surprised in my life. His wife is dead. He is rich, or says he is. He has his card printed in full, 'Giovanni Saracinesca, Marchese di San Giacinto,' in the most correct manner. He wears an excellent coat, and announces his intention of being presented to the Pope and introduced to Roman society."

Sant' Ilario stared incredulously at his father, and then looked inquiringly at his wife as though to ask if it were not all a jest. When he was assured that the facts were true he looked grave and slowly stroked his pointed black beard, a gesture which was very unusual with him, and always accompanied the deepest meditation.

"There is nothing to be done but to receive him into the family," he said at last. "But I do not wholly believe in his good intentions. We shall see. I shall be glad to make his acquaintance."

"He is coming to dinner."

The conversation continued for some time and the arrival of San Giacinto was discussed in all its bearings. Corona took a very practical view of the question, and said that it was certainly best to treat him well, thereby relieving her father-in-law of a considerable anxiety. He had indeed feared lest she should resent the introduction of a man who might reasonably be supposed to have retained a certain coarseness of manner from his early surroundings, and he knew that her consent was all-important in such a case, since she was virtually the mistress of the house. But Corona regarded the matter in much the same light as the old gentleman himself, feeling that nothing of such a nature could possibly injure the imposing position of her husband's family,

and taking it for granted that no one who had good blood in his veins could ever behave outrageously. Of all the three, Sant' Ilario was the most silent and thoughtful, for he feared certain consequences from the arrival of this new relation which did not present themselves to the minds of the others, and was resolved to be cautious accordingly, even while appearing to receive San Giacinto with all due cordiality. Later in the day he was alone with his father for a few minutes.

"Do you like this fellow?" he asked, abruptly.

"No," answered the prince.

"Neither do I, though I have not seen him."

"We shall see," was the old gentleman's answer.

The evening came, and at the appointed hour San Giacinto was announced. Both Corona and her husband were surprised at his imposing appearance, as well as at the dignity and self-possession he displayed. His southern accent was not more noticeable than that of many Neapolitan gentlemen, and his conversation, if neither very brilliant nor very fluent, was not devoid of interest. He talked of the agricultural condition of the new Italy, and old Saracinesca and his son were both interested in the subject. They noticed, too, that during dinner no word escaped him which could give any clue to his former occupation or position, though afterwards, when the servants were not present, he alluded more than once with a frank smile to his experiences as an innkeeper. On the whole, he seemed modest and reserved, yet perfectly self-possessed and conscious of his right to be where he was.

Such conduct on the part of such a man did not appear so surprising to the Saracinesca household, as it would have seemed to foreigners. San Giacinto had said that he had an adaptable character, and that adaptability is one of the most noticeable features of the Italian race. It is not necessary to discuss the causes of this peculiarity. They would be incomprehensible to the foreigner at large, who never has any real understanding of Italians. I do not hesitate to say that, without a single exception, every foreigner, poet or prose-writer, who has treated of these people has more or less grossly misunderstood them. That is a sweeping statement, when it

is considered that few men of the highest genius in our century have not at one time or another set down upon paper their several estimates of the Italian race. The requisite for accurately describing people, however, is not genius, but knowledge of the subject. The poet commonly sees himself in others, and the modern writer upon Italy is apt to believe that he can see others in himself. The reflection of an Italian upon the mental retina of the foreigner is as deceptive as his own outward image is when seen upon the polished surface of a concave mirror; and indeed the character studies of many great men, when the subject is taken from a race not their own, remind one very forcibly of what may be seen by contemplating oneself in the bowl of a bright silver spoon. To understand Italians a man must have been born and bred among them; and even then the harder, fiercer instinct, which dwells in northern blood, may deceive the student and lead him far astray. The Italian is an exceedingly simple creature, and is apt to share the opinion of the ostrich, who ducks his head and believes his whole body is hidden. Foreigners use strong language concerning the Italian lie; but this only proves how extremely transparent the deception is. It is indeed a singular fact, but one which may often be observed, that two Italians who lie systematically will frequently believe each other, to their own ruin, with a childlike faith rarely found north of the Alps. This seems to me to prove that their dishonesty has outgrown their indolent intelligence; and indeed they deceive themselves nearly as often as they succeed in deceiving their neighbours. In a country where a lie easily finds credence, lying is not likely to be elevated to the rank of a fine art. I have often wondered how such men as Cesare Borgia succeeded in entrapping their enemies by snares which a modern northerner would detect from the first and laugh to scorn as mere child's play.

There is an extraordinary readiness in Italians to fit themselves and their lives to circumstances whenever they can save themselves trouble by doing so. Their constitutions are convenient to this end, for they are temperate in most things and do not easily fall into habits which they cannot change at will. The desire to

avoid trouble makes them the most courteous among nations; and they are singularly obliging to strangers when, by conferring an obligation, they are able to make an acquaintance who will help them to pass an idle hour in agreeable conversation. They are equally surprised, whether a stranger suspects them of making advances for the sake of extracting money from him, or expresses resentment at having been fraudulently induced to part with any cash. The beggar in the street howls like a madman if you refuse an alms, and calls you an idiot to his fellow-mendicant if you give him five centimes. The servant says in his heart that his foreign employer is a fool, and sheds tears of rage and mortification when his shallow devices for petty cheating are discovered. And yet the servant, the beggar, the shopkeeper, and the gentleman, are obliging sometimes almost to philanthropy, and are ever ready to make themselves agreeable.

The Marchese di San Giacinto differed from his relations, the Saracinesca princes, in that he was a full-blooded Italian, and not the result of a cosmopolitan race-fusion, like so many of the Roman nobles. He had not the Roman traditions, but, on the other hand, he had his full share of the national characteristics, together with something individual which lifted him above the common herd in point of intelligence and in strength. He was a noticeable man; all the more so because, with many pleasant qualities, his countrymen rarely possess that physical and mental combination of size, energy, and reserve, which inspires the sort of respect enjoyed by imposing personages.

As he sat talking with the family after dinner on the evening of his first introduction to the household what passed in his mind and in the minds of his hosts can be easily stated.

Sant' Ilario, whose ideas were more clear upon most subjects than those of his father or his wife, said to himself that he did not like the man; that he suspected him, and believed he had some hidden intention in coming to Rome; that it would be wise to watch him perpetually and to question everything he did; but that he was undeniably a relation, possessing every right to consideration, and entitled to be treated with a certain

familiarity; that, finally and on the whole, he was a nuisance, to be borne with a good grace and a sufficient show of cordiality.

San Giacinto, for his part, was deeply engaged in maintaining the exact standard of manners which he knew to be necessary for the occasion, and his thoughts concerning his relatives were not yet altogether defined. It was his intention to take his place among them, and he was doing his best to accomplish this object as speedily and quietly as possible. He had not supposed that princes and princesses were in any way different from other human beings except by the accidents of wealth and social position. Master of these two requisites there was no reason why he should not feel as much at home with the Saracinesca as he had felt in the society of the mayor and municipal council of Aquila, who possessed those qualifications also, though in a less degree. The Saracinesca probably thought about most questions very much as he himself did, or if there were any difference in their mode of thinking it was due to Roman prejudice and tradition rather than to any peculiarity inherent in the organisation of the members of the higher aristocracy. If he should find himself in any dilemma owing to his ignorance of social details he would not hesitate to apply to the prince for information, since it was by no means his fault if he had been brought up an innkeeper and was now to be a nobleman. His immediate object was to place himself among his equals, and his next purpose was to marry again, in his new rank, a woman of good position and fortune. Of this matter he intended to speak to the prince in due time, when he should have secured the first requisite to his marriage by establishing himself firmly in society. He meant to apply to the prince, ostensibly as to the head of the family, thereby showing a deference to that dignity, which he supposed would be pleasing to the old gentleman; but he had not forgotten in his calculations the pride which old Saracinesca must naturally feel in his race, and which would probably induce him to take very great pains in finding a suitable wife for San Giacinto rather than permit the latter to contract a discreditable alliance.

San Giacinto left the house at half-past nine o'clock, under the pretext of another engagement, for he did not mean to weary his relations with too much of his company in the first instance. When he was gone the three looked at each other in silence for some moments.

"He has surprisingly good manners, for an innkeeper," said Corona at last. "No one will ever suspect his former life. But I do not like him."

"Nor I," said the prince.

"He wants something," said Sant' Ilario. "And he will probably get it," he added, after a short pause. "He has a determined face."

CHAPTER IV.

Anastase Gouache recovered rapidly from his injuries, but not so quickly as he wished. There was trouble in the air, and many of his comrades were already gone to the frontier where the skirmishing with the irregular volunteers of Garibaldi's guerilla force had now begun in earnest. To be confined to the city at such a time was inexpressibly irksome to the gallant young Frenchman, who had a genuine love of fighting in him, and longed for the first sensation of danger and the first shower of whistling bullets. But his inactivity was inevitable, and he was obliged to submit with the best grace he could, hoping only that all might not be over before he was well enough to tramp out and see some service with his companions-in-arms.

The situation was indeed urgent. The first article of the famous convention between France and Italy, ratified in September, 1864, read as follows:—

"Italy engages not to attack the actual territory of the Holy Father, and to prevent, even by force, all attack coming from outside against such territory."

Relying upon the observance of this chief clause, France had conscientiously executed the condition imposed by the second article, which provided that all