

been laid and arranged for firing in the vaults of one of the bastions, but the plot was betrayed at the very last moment by one of the conspirators. I may add that these men, who were tried, and condemned only to penal servitude, were liberated in 1870, three years later, by the Italian Government, on the ground that they were merely political prisoners. The attempt in which they had been engaged would, however, even in time of declared war, have been regarded as a crime against the law of nations.

Rome was immediately declared under a state of siege, and patrols of troops began to parade the streets, sending all stragglers whom they met to their homes, on the admirable principle that it is the duty of every man who finds himself in a riotous crowd to leave it instantly unless he can do something towards restoring order. Persons who found themselves in other people's houses, however, had some difficulty in at once returning to their own, and as it has been seen that the disturbance began precisely at the time selected by society for holding its confabulations, there were many who found themselves in that awkward situation.

As the sounds in the street subsided, the excitement in the drawing-room at the Palazzo Saracinesca diminished likewise. Several of those present announced their intention of departing at once, but to this the old prince made serious objections. The city was not safe, he said. Carriages might be stopped at any moment, and even if that did not occur, all sorts of accidents might arise from the horses shying at the noises, or running over people in the crowds. He had his own views, and as he was in his own house it was not easy to dispute them.

"The gates are shut," he said, with a cheerful laugh, "and none of you can get out at present. As it is nearly dinner-time you must all dine with me. It will not be a banquet, but I can give you something to eat. I hope nobody is gone already."

Every one, at these words, looked at everybody else, as though to see whether any one were missing.

"I saw Monsieur Gouache go out," said Flavia Montevarchi.

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed the princess, her mother. "I hope nothing will happen to him!" She paused a moment and looked anxiously round the room. "Good Heavens!" she cried suddenly, "where is Faustina?"

"She must have gone out of the room with my wife," said Sant' Ilario, quietly. "I will go and see."

The princess thought this explanation perfectly natural and waited till he should return. He did not come back, however, so soon as might have been expected. He found his wife just leaving the nursery. Her first impulse had been to go to the child, and having satisfied herself that he had not been carried off by a band of Garibaldians but was sound asleep in his cradle, she was about to rejoin her guests.

"Where is Faustina Montevarchi?" asked Giovanni, as though it were the most natural question in the world.

"Faustina?" repeated Corona. "In the drawing-room, to be sure. I have not seen her."

"She is not there," said Sant' Ilario, in a more anxious tone. "I thought she had come here with you."

"She must be with the rest. You have overlooked her in the crowd. Come back with me and see your son — he does not seem to mind revolution in the least!"

Giovanni, who had no real doubt but that Faustina was in the house, entered the nursery with his wife, and they stood together by the child's cradle.

"Is he not beautiful?" exclaimed Corona, passing her arm affectionately through her husband's, and leaning her cheek on his shoulder.

"He is a fine baby," replied Giovanni, his voice expressing more satisfaction than his words. "He will look like my father when he grows up."

"I would rather he should look like you," said Corona.

"If he could look like you, dear, there would be some use in wishing."

Then they both gazed for some seconds at the swarthy little boy, who lay on his pillows, his arms thrown back above his head and his two little fists tightly clenched. The rich blood softly coloured the child's dark cheeks, and the black lashes, already long, like his mother's, gave a singularly expressive look to the small face.

Giovanni tenderly kissed his wife and then they softly left the room. As soon as they were outside Sant' Ilario's thoughts returned to Faustina.

"She was certainly not in the drawing-room," he said, "I am quite sure. It was her mother who asked for her and everybody heard the question. I dare not go back without her."

They stopped together in the corridor, looking at each other with grave faces.

"This is very serious," said Corona. "We must search the house. Send the men. I will tell the women. We will meet at the head of the stairs."

Five minutes later, Giovanni returned in pursuit of his wife.

"She has left the house," he said, breathlessly. "The porter saw her go out."

"Good Heavens! Why did he not stop her?" cried Corona.

"Because he is a fool!" answered Sant' Ilario, very pale in his anxiety. "She must have lost her head and gone home. I will tell her mother."

When it was known in the drawing-room that Donna Faustina Montevarchi had left the palace alone and on foot every one was horrorstruck. The princess turned as white as death, though she was usually very red in the face. She was a brave woman, however, and did not waste words.

"I must go home at once," said she. "Please order my carriage and have the gates opened."

Giovanni obeyed silently, and a few minutes later the princess was descending the stairs, accompanied by Flavia, who was silent, a phenomenon seldom to be recorded in connection with that vivacious young lady. Giovanni went also, and his cousin, San Giacinto.

"If you will permit me, princess, I will go with you," said the latter as they all reached the carriage. "I may be of some use."

Just as they rolled out of the deep archway, the explosion of the barracks rent the air, the tremendous crash thundering and echoing through the city. The panes of the carriage-windows rattled as though they would break, and all Rome was silent while one might count a score.

Then the horses plunged wildly in the traces and the vehicle struck heavily against one of the stone pillars which stood before the entrance of the palace. The four persons inside could hear the coachman shouting.

"Drive on!" cried San Giacinto, thrusting his head out of the window.

"Eccellenza —" began the man in a tone of exposition.

"Drive on!" shouted San Giacinto, in a voice that made the fellow obey in spite of his terror. He had never heard such a voice before, so deep, so strong and so savage.

They reached the Palazzo Montevarchi without encountering any serious obstacle. In a few minutes they were convinced that Donna Faustina had not been heard of there, and a council was held upon the stairs. Whilst they were deliberating, Prince Montevarchi came out, and with him his eldest son, Bellegra, a handsome man about thirty years old, with blue eyes and a perfectly smooth fair beard. He was more calm than his father, who spoke excitedly, with many gesticulations.

"You have lost Faustina!" cried the old man in wild tones. "You have lost Faustina! And in such times as these! Why do you stand there? Oh, my daughter! my daughter! I have so often told you to be careful, Guendalina — move, in the name of God — the child is lost, lost, I tell you! Have you no heart? no feeling? Are you a mother? *Signori miei*, I am desperate!"

And indeed he seemed to be, as he stood wringing his hands, stamping his feet, and vociferating incoherently, while the tears began to flow down his cheeks.

"We are going in search of your daughter," said Sant' Ilario. "Pray calm yourself. She will certainly be found."

"Perhaps I had better go too," suggested Ascanio Bellegra, rather timidly. But his father threw his arms round him and held him tightly.

"Do you think I will lose another child?" he cried. "No, no, no — *figlio mio* — you shall never go out into the midst of a revolution."

Sant' Ilario looked on gravely, though he inwardly despised the poor old man for his weakness. San Gia-

cinto stood against the wall, waiting, with a grim smile of amusement on his face. He was measuring Ascanio Bellegra with his eye and thought he would not care for his assistance. The princess looked scornfully at her husband and son.

"We are losing time," said Sant' Ilario at last to his cousin. "I promise you to bring you your daughter," he added gravely, turning to the princess. Then the two went away together, leaving Prince Montevarchi still lamenting himself to his wife and son. Flavia had taken no part in the conversation, having entered the hall and gone to her room at once.

The cousins left the palace together and walked a little way down the street, before either spoke. Then Sant' Ilario stopped short.

"Does it strike you that we have undertaken rather a difficult mission?" he asked.

"A very difficult one," answered San Giacinto.

"Rome is not the largest city in the world, but I have not the slightest idea where to look for that child. She certainly left our house. She certainly has not returned to her own. Between the two, practically, there lies the whole of Rome. I think the best thing to do, will be to go to the police, if any of them can be found."

"Or to the Zouaves," said San Giacinto.

"Why to the Zouaves? I do not understand you."

"You are all so accustomed to being princes that you do not watch each other. I have done nothing but watch you all the time. That young lady is in love with Monsieur Gouache."

"Really!" exclaimed Sant' Ilario, to whom the idea was as novel and incredible as it could have been to old Montevarchi himself, "really, you must be mistaken. The thing is impossible."

"Not at all. That young man took Donna Faustina's hand and held it for some time there by the piano while I was shutting the windows in your drawing-room." San Giacinto did not tell all he had seen.

"What?" cried Sant' Ilario. "You are mad—it is impossible!"

"On the contrary, I saw it. A moment later Gouache left the room. Donna Faustina must have gone just after him. It is my opinion that she followed him."

Before Sant' Ilario could answer, a small patrol of foot-gendarmes came up, and peremptorily ordered the two gentlemen to go home. Sant' Ilario addressed the corporal in charge. He stated his name and that of his cousin.

"A lady has been lost," he then said. "She is Donna Faustina Montevarchi—a young lady, very fair and beautiful. She left the Palazzo Saracinesca alone and on foot half an hour ago and has not been heard of. Be good enough to inform the police you meet of this fact and to say that a large reward will be paid to any one who brings her to her father's house—to this palace here."

After a few more words the patrol passed on, leaving the two cousins to their own devices. Sant' Ilario was utterly annoyed at the view just presented to him, and could not believe the thing true, though he had no other explanation to offer.

"It is of no use to stand here doing nothing," said San Giacinto rather impatiently. "There is another crowd coming, too, and we shall be delayed again. I think we had better separate. I will go one way, and you take the other."

"Where will you go?" asked Sant' Ilario. "You do not know your way about——"

"As she may be anywhere, we may find her anywhere, so that it is of no importance whether I know the names of the streets or not. You had best think of all the houses to which she might have gone, among her friends. You know them better than I do. I will beat up all the streets between here and your house. When I am tired I will go to your palace."

"I am afraid you will not find her," replied Sant' Ilario. "But we must try for the sake of her poor mother."

"It is a question of luck," said the other, and they separated at once.

San Giacinto turned in the direction of the crowd which was pouring into the street at some distance farther on. As he approached, he heard the name "Serristori" spoken frequently in the hum of voices.

"What about the Serristori?" he asked of the first he met.

"Have you not heard?" cried the fellow. "It is blown up with gunpowder! There are at least a thousand dead. Half the Borgo Nuovo is destroyed, and they say that the Vatican will go next——"

The man would have run on for any length of time, but San Giacinto had heard enough and dived into the first byway he found, intending to escape the throng and make straight for the barracks. He had to ask his way several times, and it was fully a quarter of an hour before he reached the bridge. Thence he easily found the scene of the disaster, and came up to the hospital of Santo Spirito just after the gates had closed behind the bearers of the dead. He mixed with the crowd and asked questions, learning very soon that the first search, made by the people from the hospital, had only brought to light the bodies of two Zouaves and one woman.

"And I did not see her," said the man who was speaking, "but they say she was a lady and beautiful as an angel."

"Rubbish!" exclaimed another. "She was a little sewing woman who lived in the Borgo Vecchio. And I know it is true because her *innamorato* was one of the dead Zouaves they picked up."

"I don't believe there was any woman at all," said a third. "What should a woman be doing at the barracks?"

"She was killed outside," observed the first speaker, a timid old man. "At least, I was told so, but I did not see her."

"It was a woman bringing a baby to put into the *Rota*,"<sup>1</sup> cried a shrill-voiced washerwoman. "She got the child in and was running away, when the place blew up, and the devil carried her off. And serve her right, for throwing away her baby, poor little thing!"

In the light of these various opinions, most of which supported the story that some woman had been carried into the hospital, San Giacinto determined to find out the truth, and boldly rang the bell. A panel was opened

<sup>1</sup> The *Rota* was a revolving box in which foundlings were formerly placed. The box turned round and the infant was taken inside and cared for. It stands at the gate of the Santo Spirito Hospital, and is still visible, though no longer in use.

in the door, and the porter looked out at the surging crowd.

"What do you want?" he inquired roughly, on seeing that admittance had not been asked for a sick or wounded person.

"I want to speak with the surgeon in charge," replied San Giacinto.

"He is busy," said the man rather doubtfully. "Who are you?"

"A friend of one of the persons just killed."

"They are dead. You had better wait till morning and come again," suggested the porter.

"But I want to be sure that it is my friend who is dead."

"Then why do you not give your name? Perhaps you are a Garibaldian. Why should I open?"

"I will tell the surgeon my name, if you will call him. There is something for yourself. Tell him I am a Roman prince and must see him for a moment."

"I will see if he will come," said the man, shutting the panel in San Giacinto's face. His footsteps echoed along the pavement of the wide hall within. It was long before he came back, and San Giacinto had leisure to reflect upon the situation.

He had very little doubt but that the dead woman was no other than Donna Faustina. By a rare chance, or rather in obedience to an irresistible instinct, he had found the object of his search in half an hour, while his cousin was fruitlessly inquiring for the missing girl in the opposite direction. He had been led to the conclusion that she had followed Gouache by what he had seen in the Saracinesca's drawing-room, and by a process of reasoning too simple to suggest itself to an ordinary member of Roman society. What disturbed him most was the thought of the consequences of his discovery, and he resolved to conceal the girl's name and his own if possible. If she were indeed dead, it would be wiser to convey her body to her father's house privately; if she were still alive, secrecy was doubly necessary. In either case it would be utterly impossible to account to the world for the fact that Faustina Montevarchi had been alone in the Borgo Nuovo at such an hour; and San

Giacinto had a lively interest in preserving the good reputation of Casa Montevarchi, since he had been meditating for some time past a union with Donna Flavia.

At last the panel opened again, and when the porter had satisfied himself that the gentleman was still without, a little door in the heavy gate was cautiously unfastened and San Giacinto went in, bending nearly double to pass under the low entrance. In the great vestibule he was immediately confronted by the surgeon in charge, who was in his shirt sleeves, but had thrown his coat over his shoulders and held it together at the neck to protect himself from the night air. San Giacinto begged him to retire out of hearing of the porter, and the two walked away together.

"There was a lady killed just now by the explosion, was there not?" inquired San Giacinto.

"She is not dead," replied the surgeon. "Do you know her?"

"I think so. Had she anything about her to prove her identity?"

"The letter M embroidered on her handkerchief. That is all I know. She has not been here a quarter of an hour. I thought she was dead myself, when we took her up."

"She was not under the ruins?"

"No. She was struck by some small stone, I fancy. The two Zouaves were half buried, and are quite dead."

"May I see them? I know many in the corps. They might be acquaintances."

"Certainly. They are close by in the mortuary chamber, unless they have been put in the chapel."

The two men entered the grim place, which was dimly lighted by a lantern hanging overhead. It is unnecessary to dwell upon the ghastly details. San Giacinto bent down curiously and looked at the dead men's faces. He knew neither of them, and told the surgeon so.

"Will you allow me to see the lady?" he asked.

"Pardon me, if I ask a question," said the surgeon, who was a man of middle age, with a red beard and keen grey eyes. "To whom have I the advantage of speaking?"

"Signor Professore," replied San Giacinto, "I must

tell you that if this is the lady I suppose your patient to be, the honour of one of the greatest families in Rome is concerned, and it is important that strict secrecy should be preserved."

"The porter told me that you were a Roman prince," returned the surgeon rather bluntly. "But you speak like a southerner."

"I was brought up in Naples. As I was saying, secrecy is very important, and I can assure you that you will earn the gratitude of many by assisting me."

"Do you wish to take this lady away at once?"

"Heaven forbid! Her mother and sister shall come for her in half an hour."

The surgeon thrust his hands into his pockets, and stood staring for a moment or two at the bodies of the Zouaves.

"I cannot do it," he said, suddenly looking up at San Giacinto. "I am master here, and I am responsible. The secret is professional, of course. If I knew you, even by sight, I should not hesitate. As it is, I must ask your name."

San Giacinto did not hesitate long, as the surgeon was evidently master of the situation. He took a card from his case and silently handed it to the doctor. The latter took it and read the name, "Don Giovanni Saracinesca, Marchese di San Giacinto." His face betrayed no emotion, but the belief flashed through his mind that there was no such person in existence. He was one of the leading men in his profession, and knew Prince Saracinesca and Sant' Ilario, but he had never heard of this other Don Giovanni. He knew also that the city was in a state of revolution and that many suspicious persons were likely to gain access to public buildings on false pretences.

"Very well," he said quietly. "You are not afraid of dead men, I see. Be good enough to wait a moment here—no one will see you, and you will not be recognised. I will go and see that there is nobody in the way, and you shall have a sight of the young lady."

His companion nodded in assent and the surgeon went out through the narrow door. San Giacinto was surprised to hear the heavy key turned in the lock and

withdrawn, but immediately accounted for the fact on the theory that the surgeon wished to prevent any one from finding his visitor lest the secret should be divulged. He was not a nervous man, and had no especial horror of being left alone in a mortuary chamber for a few minutes. He looked about him, and saw that the room was high and vaulted. One window alone gave air, and this was ten feet from the floor and heavily ironed. He reflected with a smile that if it pleased the surgeon to leave him there he could not possibly get out. Neither his size nor his phenomenal strength could assist him in the least. There was no furniture in the place. Half a dozen slabs of slate for the bodies were built against the wall, solid and immovable, and the door was of the heaviest oak, thickly studded with huge iron nails. If the dead men had been living prisoners their place of confinement could not have been more strongly contrived.

San Giacinto waited a quarter of an hour, and at last, as the surgeon did not return, he sat down upon one of the marble slabs and, being very hungry, consoled himself by lighting a cigar, while he meditated upon the surest means of conveying Donna Faustina to her father's house. At last he began to wonder how long he was to wait.

"I should not wonder," he said to himself, "if that long-eared professor had taken me for a revolutionist."

He was not far wrong, indeed. The surgeon had despatched a messenger for a couple of gendarmes and had gone about his business in the hospital, knowing very well that it would take some time to find the police while the riot lasted, and congratulating himself upon having caught a prisoner who, if not a revolutionist, was at all events an impostor, since he had a card printed with a false name.

## CHAPTER VI.

The improvised banquet at the Palazzo Saracinesca was not a merry one, but the probable dangers to the city and the disappearance of Faustina Montevarchi

furnished matter for plenty of conversation. The majority inclined to the belief that the girl had lost her head and had run home, but as neither Sant' Ilario nor his cousin returned, there was much speculation. The prince said he believed that they had found Faustina at her father's house and had stayed to dinner, whereupon some malicious person remarked that it needed a revolution in Rome to produce hospitality in such a quarter.

Dinner was nearly ended when Pasquale, the butler, whispered to the prince that a gendarme wanted to speak with him on very important business.

"Bring him here," answered old Saracinesca, aloud. "There is a gendarme outside," he added, addressing his guests, "he will tell us all the news. Shall we have him here?"

Every one assented enthusiastically to the proposition, for most of those present were anxious about their houses, not knowing what had taken place during the last two hours. The man was ushered in, and stood at a distance holding his three-cornered hat in his hand, and looking rather sheepish and uncomfortable.

"Well?" asked the prince. "What is the matter? We all wish to hear the news."

"Excellency," began the soldier, "I must ask many pardons for appearing thus —" Indeed his uniform was more or less disarranged and he looked pale and fatigued.

"Never mind your appearance. Speak up," answered old Saracinesca in encouraging tones.

"Excellency," said the man, "I must apologise, but there is a gentleman who calls himself Don Giovanni, of your revered name —"

"I know there is. He is my son. What about him?"

"He is not the Senior Principe di Sant' Ilario, Excellency — he calls himself by another name — Marchese di — di — here is his card, Excellency."

"My cousin, San Giacinto, then. What about him, I say?"

"Your Excellency has a cousin —" stammered the gendarme.

"Well? Is it against the law to have cousins?" cried the prince. "What is the matter with my cousin?"