

"And must remain so, in this case," observed the librarian with an evil smile.

"Yes, unfortunately, in this case we shall not reap the worldly praise which so kind an action undoubtedly deserves. But we must have patience under these trials. Good-bye, Meschini, good-bye, my friend. I must busy myself with the affairs of my household. Every man must do his duty in this world, you know."

The scholar bowed his employer to the door, and then went back to the parchment, which he studied attentively for more than an hour, keeping a huge folio volume open before him, into which he might slip the precious deed in case he were interrupted in his occupation.

CHAPTER XIII.

Sant' Ilario could not realise that the course of events had been brought to a standstill at the very moment when his passions were roused to fury. He could not fight Gouache for the present and Corona was so ill that he could not see her. Had he wished to visit her, the old-fashioned physician would probably have forbidden him to do so, but in reality he was glad to be spared the emotions of a meeting which must necessarily be inconclusive. His first impulse had been to take her away from Rome and force her to live alone with him in the mountains. He felt that no other course was open to him, for he knew that in spite of all that had happened he could not bear to live without her, and yet he felt that he could no longer suffer her to come and go in the midst of society, where she must necessarily often meet the man she had chosen to love. Nor could he keep her in Rome and at the same time isolate her as he desired to do. If the world must talk, he would rather not be where he could hear what it said. The idea of a sudden journey, terminating in the gloomy fortress of Saracinesca, was pleasant to his humour. The old place was ten times more grim and dismal in winter than in sum-

mer, and in his savage mood he fancied himself alone with his wife in the silent halls, making her feel the enormity of what she had done, while jealously keeping her a prisoner at his mercy.

But her illness had put a stop to his plans for her safety, while the revolution had effectually interfered with the execution of his vengeance upon Gouache. He could find no occupation which might distract his mind from the thoughts that beset him, and no outlet for the restless temper that craved some sort of action, no matter what, as the expression of what he suffered. He and his father met in silence at their meals, and though Giovanni felt that he had the old man's full sympathy, he could not bring himself to speak of what was nearest to his heart. He remembered that his marriage had been of his own seeking, and his pride kept him from all mention of the catastrophe by which his happiness had been destroyed. Old Saracinesca suffered in his own way almost as much as his son, and it was fortunate that he was prevented from seeing Corona at that time, for it is not probable that he would have controlled himself had he been able to talk with her alone. When little Orsino was brought in to them, the two men looked at each other, and while the younger bit his lip and suppressed all outward signs of his agony, the tears more than once stole into the old prince's eyes so that he would turn away and leave the room. Then Giovanni would take the child upon his knee and look at it earnestly until the little thing was frightened and held out its arms to its nurse, crying to be taken away. Thereupon Sant' Ilario's mood grew more bitter than before, for he was foolish enough to believe that the child had a natural antipathy for him, and would grow up to hate the sight of its father. Those were miserable days, never to be forgotten, and each morning and evening brought worse news of Corona's state, until it was clear, even to Giovanni, that she was dangerously ill. The sound of voices grew rare in the Palazzo Saracinesca and the servants moved noiselessly about at their work, oppressed by the sense of coming disaster, and scarcely speaking to each other.

San Giacinto came daily to make inquiries and spent some time with the two unhappy men without wholly

understanding what was passing. He was an astute man, but not possessed of the delicacy of feeling whereby real sympathy sometimes reaches the truth by its own intuitive reasoning. Moreover, he was wholly ignorant of having played a very important part in bringing about the troubles which now beset Casa Saracinesca. No one but himself knew how he had written the note that had caused such disastrous results, and he had no intention of confiding his exploit to any one of his acquaintance. He had of course not been able to ascertain whether the desired effect had been produced, for he did not know at what church the meeting between Faustina and Gouache was to take place, and he was too cunning to follow her as a spy when he had struck so bold a blow at her affection for the artist-soldier. His intellect was keen, but his experience had not been of a high order, and he naturally thought that she would reason as he had reasoned himself, if she chanced to see him while she was waiting for the man she loved. She knew that he was to marry her sister, and that he might therefore be supposed to disapprove of an affair which could only lead to a derogatory match for herself, and he had therefore carefully abstained from following her on that Sunday morning when she had met Anastase.

Nevertheless he could see that something had occurred in his cousin's household which was beyond his comprehension, for Corona's illness was not alone enough to account for the manner of the Saracinesca. It is a social rule in Italy that a person suffering from any calamity must be amused, and San Giacinto used what talents he possessed in that direction, doing all he could to make the time hang less heavily on Giovanni's hands. He made a point of gathering all the news of the little war in order to repeat it in minute detail to his cousins. He even prevailed upon Giovanni to walk with him sometimes in the middle of the day, and Sant' Ilario seemed to take a languid interest in the barricades erected at the gates of the city, and in the arrangements for maintaining quiet within the walls. Rome presented a strange aspect in those days. All who were not Romans kept their national flags permanently hung from their windows, as a sort of protection in case the mob should rise,

or in the event of the Garibaldians suddenly seizing the capital. Patrols marched everywhere about the streets and mounted gendarmes were stationed at the corners of the principal squares and at intervals along the main thoroughfares. Strange to say, the numerous flags and uniforms that were to be seen produced an air of festivity strongly at variance with the actual state of things, and belied by the anxious expressions visible in the faces of the inhabitants. All these sights interested San Giacinto, whose active temperament made him very much alive to what went on around him, and even Giovanni thought less of his great sorrow when he suffered himself to be led out of the house by his cousin.

When at last it was known that the French troops were on their way from Civita Vecchia, the city seemed to breathe more freely. General Kanzler, the commander-in-chief of the Pontifical forces, had done all that was humanly possible to concentrate his little army, and the arrival of even a small body of Frenchmen made it certain that Garibaldi could be met with a fair chance of success. Of all who rejoiced at the prospect of a decisive action, there was no one more sincerely delighted than Anastase Gouache.

So long as the state of siege lasted and he was obliged to follow the regular round of his almost mechanical duty, he was unable to take any step in the direction whither all his hopes tended, and he lived in a state of perpetual suspense. It was a small consolation that he found time to reflect upon the difficulties of his situation and to revolve in his mind the language he should use when he went to ask the hand of Montevarchi's daughter. He was fully determined to take this bold step, and though he realised the many objections which the old prince would certainly raise against the match, he had not the slightest doubt of his power to overcome them all. He could not imagine what it would be like to fail, and he cherished and reared what should have been but a slender hope until it seemed to be a certainty. The unexpected quarrel thrust upon him by Sant' Ilario troubled him very little, for he was too hopeful by nature to expect any serious catastrophe, and he more than once laughed to himself when he thought Giovanni was really

jealous of him. The feeling of reverence and respectful admiration which he had long entertained for Corona was so far removed from love as to make Giovanni's wrath appear ridiculous. He would far sooner have expected a challenge from one of Faustina's brothers than from Corona's husband, but, since Sant' Ilario had determined to quarrel, there was no help for it, and he must give him all satisfaction as soon as possible. That Giovanni had insulted him by entering his lodgings unbidden, and by taking certain objects away which were practically the artist's property, was a minor consideration, since it was clear that Giovanni had acted all along under an egregious misapprehension. One thing alone puzzled Anastase, and that was the letter itself. It seemed to refer to his meeting with Faustina, but she had made no mention of it when he had seen her in the church. Gouache did not suspect Giovanni of having concocted the note for any purposes of his own, and quite believed that he had found it as he had stated, but the more the artist tried to explain the existence of the letter, the further he found himself from any satisfactory solution of the question. He interrogated his landlady, but she would say nothing about it, for the temptation of Giovanni's money sealed her lips.

The week passed somehow, unpleasantly enough for most of the persons concerned in this veracious history, but Saturday night came at last, and brought with it a series of events which modified the existing situation. Gouache was on duty at the barracks when orders were received to the effect that the whole available force in Rome was to march soon after midnight. His face brightened when he heard the news, although he realised that in a few hours he was to leave behind him all that he held most dear and to face death in a manner new to him, and by no means pleasant to most men.

Between two and three o'clock on Sunday morning Gouache found himself standing in the midst of a corps of fifteen hundred Zouaves, in almost total darkness and under a cold, drizzling November rain. His teeth chattered and his wet hands seemed to freeze to the polished fittings of his rifle, and he had not the slightest doubt that every one of his comrades experienced the same unenvi-

able sensations. From time to time the clear voice of an officer was heard giving an order, and then the ranks closed up nearer, or executed a sidelong movement by which greater space was afforded to the other troops that constantly came up towards the Porta Pia. There was little talking during an hour or more while the last preparations for the march were being made, though the men exchanged a few words from time to time in an undertone. The splashing tramp of feet on the wet road was heard rapidly approaching every now and then, followed by a dead silence when the officers' voices gave the order to halt. Then a shuffling sound followed as the ranks moved into the exact places assigned to them. Here and there a huge torch was blazing and spluttering in the fine rain, making the darkness around it seem only thicker by the contrast, but lighting up fragments of ancient masonry and gleaming upon little pools of water in the open spaces between the ranks. It was a dismal night, and it was fortunate that the men who were to march were in good spirits and encouraged by the arrival of the French, who made the circuit of the city and were to join them upon the road in order to strike the final blow against Garibaldi and his volunteers.

The Zouaves were fifteen hundred, and there were about as many more of the native troops, making three thousand in all. The French were two thousand. The Garibaldians were, according to all accounts, not less than twelve thousand, and were known to be securely entrenched at Monte Rotondo and further protected by the strong outpost of Mentana, which lies nearly on the direct road from Rome to the former place. Considering the relative positions of the two armies, the odds were enormously in favour of Garibaldi, and had he possessed a skill in generalship at all equal to his undoubted personal courage, he should have been able to drive the Pope's forces back to the very gates of Rome. He was, however, under a twofold disadvantage which more than counterbalanced the numerical superiority of the body he commanded. He possessed little or no military science, and his men were neither confident nor determined. His plan had been to create a revolution in Rome and to draw out the papal army at the same time,

in order that the latter might find itself between two fires. His men had expected that the country would rise and welcome them as liberators, whereas they were received as brigands and opposed with desperate energy at every point by the peasants themselves, a turn of affairs for which they were by no means prepared. Monte Rotondo, defended by only three hundred and fifty soldiers, resisted Garibaldi's attacking force of six thousand during twenty-seven hours, a feat which must have been quite impracticable had the inhabitants themselves not joined in the defence. The revolution in Rome was a total failure, the mass of the people looking on with satisfaction, while the troops shot down the insurgents, and at times even demanding arms that they might join in suppressing the disturbance.

The Rome of 1867 was not the Rome of 1870, as will perhaps be understood hereafter. With the exception of a few turbulent spirits, the city contained no revolutionary element, and very few who sympathised with the ideas of Italian Unification.

But without going any further into political considerations for the present, let us follow Anastase Gouache and his fifteen hundred comrades who marched out of the Porta Pia before dawn on the third of November. The battle that followed merits some attention as having been the turning-point of a stirring time, and also as having produced certain important results in the life of the French artist, which again reacted in some measure upon the family history of the Saracinesca.

Monte Rotondo itself is sixteen miles from Rome, but Mentana, which on that day was the outpost of the Garibaldians and became the scene of their defeat, is two miles nearer to the city. Most people who have ridden much in the Campagna know the road which branches to the left about five miles beyond the Ponte Nomentano. There is perhaps no more desolate and bleak part of the undulating waste of land that surrounds the city on all sides. The way is good as far as the turning, but after that it is little better than a country lane, and in rainy weather is heavy and sometimes almost impassable. As the rider approaches Mentana the road sinks between low hills and wooded knolls that dominate it on both sides,

affording excellent positions from which an enemy might harass and even destroy an advancing force. Gradually the country becomes more broken until Mentana itself appears in view, a formidable barrier rising upon the direct line to Monte Rotondo. On all sides are irregular hillocks, groups of trees growing upon little elevations, solid stone walls surrounding scattered farmhouses and cattle-yards, every one of which could be made a strong defensive post. Mentana, too, possesses an ancient castle of some strength, and has walls of its own like most of the old towns in the Campagna, insignificant perhaps, if compared with modern fortifications, but well able to resist for many hours the fire of light field-guns.

It was past midday when Gouache's column first came in view of the enemy, and made out the bright red shirts of the Garibaldians, which peeped out from among the trees and from behind the walls, and were visible in some places massed in considerable numbers. The intention of the commanding officers, which was carried out with amazing ease, was to throw the Zouaves and native troops in the face of the enemy, while the French chasseurs, on foot and mounted, made a flanking movement and cut off Garibaldi's communication with Monte Rotondo, attacking Mentana at the same time from the opposite side.

Gouache experienced an odd sensation when the first orders were given to fire. His experience had hitherto been limited to a few skirmishes with the outlaws of the Samnite hills, and the idea of standing up and deliberately taking aim at men who stood still to be shot at, so far as he could see, was not altogether pleasant. He confessed to himself that though he wholly approved of the cause for which he was about to fire his musket, he felt not the slightest hatred for the Garibaldians, individually or collectively. They were extremely picturesque in the landscape, with their flaming shirts and theatrical hats. They looked very much as though they had come out of a scene in a comic opera, and it seemed a pity to destroy anything that relieved the dismal grayness of the November day. As he stood there he felt much more like the artist he was, than like a soldier, and he felt a ludicrously strong desire to step aside and

seat himself upon a stone wall in order to get a better view of the whole scene.

Presently as he looked at a patch of red three or four hundred yards distant, the vivid colour was obscured by a little row of puffs of smoke. A rattling report followed, which reminded him of the discharges of the tiny mortars the Italian peasants love to fire at their village festivals. Then almost simultaneously he heard the curious swinging whistle of a dozen bullets flying over his head. This latter sound roused him to an understanding of the situation, as he realised that any one of those small missiles might have ended its song by coming into contact with his own body. The next time he heard the order to fire he aimed as well as he could, and pulled the trigger with the best possible intention of killing an enemy.

For the most part, the Garibaldians retired after each round, reappearing again to discharge their rifles from behind the shelter of walls and trees, while the Zouaves slowly advanced along the road, and began to deploy to the right and left wherever the ground permitted such a movement. The firing continued uninterruptedly for nearly half an hour, but though the rifles of the papal troops did good execution upon the enemy, the bullets of the latter seldom produced any effect.

Suddenly the order was given to fix bayonets, and immediately afterwards came the command to charge. Gouache was all at once aware that he was rushing up hill at the top of his speed towards a small grove of trees that crowned the eminence. The bright red shirts of the enemy were visible before him amongst the dry underbrush, and before he knew what he was about he saw that he had run a Garibaldian through the calf of the leg. The man tumbled down, and Gouache stood over him, looking at him in some surprise. While he was staring at his fellow-foe the latter pulled out a pistol and fired at him, but the weapon only snapped harmlessly.

"As the thing won't go off," said the man coolly, "perhaps you will be good enough to take your bayonet out of my leg."

He spoke in Italian, with a foreign accent, but in a tone of voice and with a manner which proclaimed him

a gentleman. There was a look of half comic discomfiture in his face that amused Gouache, who carefully extracted the steel from the wound, and offered to help his prisoner to his feet. The latter, however, found it hard to stand.

"Circumstances point to the sitting posture," he said, sinking down again. "I suppose I am your prisoner. If you have anything to do, pray do not let me detain you. I cannot get away and you will probably find me here when you come back to dinner. I will occupy myself in cursing you while you are gone."

"You are very kind," said Gouache, with a laugh. "May I offer you a cigarette and a little brandy?"

The stranger looked up in some astonishment as he heard Gouache's voice, and took the proffered flask in silence, as well as a couple of cigarettes from the case.

"Thank you," he said after a pause. "I will not curse you quite as heartily as I meant to do. You are very civil."

"Do not mention it," replied Gouache. "I wish you a very good-morning, and I hope to have the pleasure of your company at dinner to-night."

Thereupon the Zouave shouldered his rifle and trotted off down the hill. The whole incident had not occupied more than three minutes and his comrades were not far off, pursuing the Garibaldians in the direction of a large farmhouse, which afforded the prospect of shelter and the means of defence. Half a dozen killed and wounded remained upon the hill besides Gouache's prisoner.

The Vigna di Santucci, as the farmhouse was called, was a strong building surrounded by walls and fences. A large number of the enemy had fallen back upon this point and it now became evident that they meant to make a determined resistance. As the Zouaves came up, led by Charette in person, the Reds opened a heavy fire upon their advancing ranks. The shots rattled from the walls and windows in rapid succession, and took deadly effect at the short range. The Zouaves blazed away in reply with their chassepots, but the deep embrasures and high parapets offered an excellent shelter for the riflemen, and it was no easy matter to find an aim. The colonel's magnificent figure and great fair beard were conspicuous

as he moved about the ranks, encouraging the men and searching for some means of scaling the high walls. Though anxious for the safety of his troops, he seemed as much at home as though he were in a drawing-room, and paid no more attention to the whistling bullets than if they had been mere favours showered upon him in an afternoon's carnival. The firing grew hotter every moment and it was evident that unless the place could be carried by assault at once, the Zouaves must suffer terrible losses. The difficulty was to find a point where the attempt might be made with a good chance of success.

"It seems to me," said Gouache, to a big man who stood next to him, "that if we were in Paris, and if that were a barricade instead of an Italian farmhouse, we should get over it."

"I think so, too," replied his comrade, with a laugh.

"Let us try," suggested the artist quietly. "We may as well have made the attempt, instead of standing here to catch cold in this horrible mud. Come along," he added quickly, "or we shall be too late. The colonel is going to order the assault — do you see?"

It was true. A loud voice gave a word of command which was echoed and repeated by a number of officers. The men closed in and made a rush for the farmhouse, trying to scramble upon each other's shoulders to reach the top of the wall and the windows of the low first story. The attempt lasted several minutes, during which the enemies' rifles poured down a murderous fire upon the struggling soldiers. The latter fell back at last, leaving one man alone clinging to the top of the wall.

"It is Gouache!" cried a hundred voices at once. He was a favourite with officers and men and was recognised immediately.

He was in imminent peril of his life. Standing upon the shoulders of the sturdy comrade to whom he had been speaking a few minutes before he had made a spring, and had succeeded in getting hold of the topmost stones. Taking advantage of the slight foothold afforded by the crevices in the masonry, he drew himself up with catlike agility till he was able to kneel upon the narrow summit. He had chosen a spot for his attempt where he had previously observed that no enemy appeared, rightly

judging that there must be some reason for this peculiarity, of which he might be able to take advantage. This proved to be the case, for he found himself immediately over a horse pond, which was sunk between two banks of earth that followed the wall on the inside up to the water, and upon which the riflemen stood in safety behind the parapet. The men so stationed had discharged their pieces during the assault, and were busily employed in reloading when they noticed the Zouave perched upon the top of the wall. One or two who had pistols fired them at him, but without effect. One or two threw stones from the interior of the vineyard.

Gouache threw himself on his face along the wall and began quickly to throw down the topmost stones. The mortar was scarcely more solid than dry mud, and in a few seconds he had made a perceptible impression upon the masonry. But the riflemen had meanwhile finished reloading and one of them, taking careful aim, fired upon the Zouave. The bullet hit him in the fleshy part of the shoulder, causing a stinging pain and, what was worse, a shock that nearly sent him rolling over the edge. Still he clung on desperately, loosening the stones with a strength one would not have expected in his spare frame. A minute longer, during which half a dozen more balls whizzed over him or flattened themselves against the stones, and then his comrades made another rush, concentrating their force this time at the spot where he had succeeded in lowering the barrier. His left arm was almost powerless from the flesh-wound in his shoulder, but with his right he helped the first man to a footing beside him. In a moment more the Zouaves were swarming over the wall and dropping down by scores into the shallow pool on the other side.

The fight was short but desperate. The enemy, driven to bay in the corners of the yard and within the farmhouse, defended themselves manfully, many of them being killed and many more wounded. But the place was carried and the great majority fled precipitately through the exits at the back and made the best of their way towards Mentana.

An hour later Gouache was still on his legs, but exhausted by his efforts in scaling the wall and by loss of

blood from his wound, he felt that he could not hold out much longer. The position at that time was precarious. It was nearly four o'clock and the days were short. The artillery was playing against the little town, but the guns were light field-pieces of small calibre, and though their position was frequently changed they made but little impression upon the earthworks thrown up by the enemy. The Garibaldians massed themselves in large numbers as they retreated from various points upon Mentana, and though their weapons were inferior to those of their opponents their numbers made them still formidable. The Zouaves, gendarmes, and legionaries, however, pressed steadily though slowly onward. The only question was whether the daylight would last long enough. Should the enemy have the advantage of the long night in which to bring up reinforcements from Monte Rotondo and repair the breaches in their defences the attack might last through all the next day.

The fortunes of the little battle were decided by the French chasseurs, who had gradually worked out a flanking movement under cover of the trees and the broken country. Just as Gouache felt that he could stand no longer, a loud shout upon the right announced the charge of the allies, and a few minutes later the day was practically won. The Zouaves rushed forward, cheered and encouraged by the prospect of immediate success, but Anastase staggered from the ranks and sank down under a tree unable to go any farther. He had scarcely settled himself in a comfortable position when he lost consciousness and fainted away.

Mentana was not taken, but it surrendered on the following morning, and as Monte Rotondo had been evacuated during the night and most of the Garibaldians had escaped over the frontier, the fighting was at an end, and the campaign of twenty-four hours terminated in a complete victory for the Roman forces.

When Gouache came to himself his first sensation was that of a fiery stream of liquid gurgling in his mouth and running down his throat. He swallowed the liquor half unconsciously, and opening his eyes for a moment was aware that two men were standing beside him, one of them holding a lantern in his hand, the rays from which

dazzled the wounded Zouave and prevented him from recognising the persons.

"Where is he hurt?" asked a voice that sounded strangely familiar in his ears.

"I cannot tell yet," replied the other man, kneeling down again beside him and examining him attentively.

"It is only my shoulder," gasped Gouache. "But I am very weak. Let me sleep, please." Thereupon he fainted again, and was conscious of nothing more for some time.

The two men took him up and carried him to a place near, where others were waiting for him. The night was intensely dark, and no one spoke a word, as the little party picked its way over the battle-field, occasionally stopping to avoid treading upon one of the numerous prostrate bodies that lay upon the ground. The man who had examined Gouache generally stooped down and turned the light of his lantern upon the faces of the dead men, expecting that some one of them might show signs of life. But it was very late, and the wounded had already been carried away. Gouache alone seemed to have escaped observation, an accident probably due to the fact that he had been able to drag himself to a sheltered spot before losing his senses.

During nearly an hour the men trudged along the road with their burden, when at last they saw in the distance the bright lamps of a carriage shining through the darkness. The injured soldier was carefully placed among the cushions, and the two gentlemen who had found him got in and closed the door.

Gouache awoke in consequence of the pain caused by the jolting of the vehicle. The lantern was placed upon one of the vacant seats and illuminated the faces of his companions, one of whom sat behind him and supported his weight by holding one arm around his body. Anastase stared at this man's face for some time in silence and in evident surprise. He thought he was in a dream, and he spoke rather to assure himself that he was awake than for any other reason.

"You were anxious lest I should escape you after all," he said. "You need not be afraid. I shall be able to keep my engagement."

"I trust you will do nothing of the kind, my dear Gouache," answered Giovanni Saracinesca.