

PART II.

*THIRTEEN YEARS LATER.*

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CHAPTER I.

ONE evening in July, 1846, a few acquaintances met at Professor Fabrizi's house in Florence to discuss plans for future political work.

Several of them belonged to the Mazzinian party and would have been satisfied with nothing less than a democratic Republic and a United Italy. Others were Constitutional Monarchists and Liberals of various shades. On one point, however, they were all agreed; that of dissatisfaction with the Tuscan censorship; and the popular professor had called the meeting in the hope that, on this one subject at least, the representatives of the dissentient parties would be able to get through an hour's discussion without quarrelling.

Only a fortnight had elapsed since the famous amnesty which Pius IX. had granted, on his accession, to political offenders in the Papal States; but the wave of liberal enthusiasm caused by it was already spreading over Italy. In Tuscany even the government appeared to have been affected by the astounding event. It had occurred to Fabrizi and a few other leading Florentines that this was a propitious moment for a bold effort to reform the press-laws.

"Of course," the dramatist Lega had said, when the subject was first broached to him; "it would be impossible to start a newspaper till we can get the press-law changed; we should not bring out the first number. But we may be able to run some pamphlets through the censorship already; and the sooner we begin the sooner we shall get the law changed."

He was now explaining in Fabrizi's library his theory of the line which should be taken by liberal writers at the moment.

"There is no doubt," interposed one of the company, a gray-haired barrister with a rather drawling manner of speech, "that in some way we must take advantage of the moment. We shall not see such a favourable one again for bringing forward serious reforms. But I doubt the pamphlets doing any good. They will only irritate and frighten the government instead of winning it over to our side, which is what we really want to do. If once the authorities begin to think of us as dangerous agitators our chance of getting their help is gone."

"Then what would you have us do?"

"Petition."

"To the Grand Duke?"

"Yes; for an augmentation of the liberty of the press."

A keen-looking, dark man sitting by the window turned his head round with a laugh.

"You'll get a lot out of petitioning!" he said. "I should have thought the result of the Renzi case was enough to cure anybody of going to work that way."

"My dear sir, I am as much grieved as you are that we did not succeed in preventing the extra-

dition of Renzi. But really—I do not wish to hurt the sensibilities of anyone, but I cannot help thinking that our failure in that case was largely due to the impatience and vehemence of some persons among our number. I should certainly hesitate——"

"As every Piedmontese always does," the dark man interrupted sharply. "I don't know where the vehemence and impatience lay, unless you found them in the strings of meek petitions we sent in. That may be vehemence for Tuscany or Piedmont, but we should not call it particularly vehement in Naples."

"Fortunately," remarked the Piedmontese, "Neapolitan vehemence is peculiar to Naples."

"There, there, gentlemen, that will do!" the professor put in. "Neapolitan customs are very good things in their way and Piedmontese customs in theirs; but just now we are in Tuscany, and the Tuscan custom is to stick to the matter in hand. Grassini votes for petitions and Galli against them. What do you think, Dr. Riccardo?"

"I see no harm in petitions, and if Grassini gets one up I'll sign it with all the pleasure in life. But I don't think mere petitioning and nothing else will accomplish much. Why can't we have both petitions and pamphlets?"

"Simply because the pamphlets will put the government into a state of mind in which it won't grant the petitions," said Grassini.

"It won't do that anyhow." The Neapolitan rose and came across to the table. "Gentlemen, you're on the wrong tack. Conciliating the government will do no good. What we must do is to rouse the people."

"That's easier said than done; how are you going to start?"

"Fancy asking Galli that! Of course he'd start by knocking the censor on the head."

"No, indeed, I shouldn't," said Galli stoutly. "You always think if a man comes from down south he must believe in no argument but cold steel."

"Well, what do you propose, then? Sh! Attention, gentlemen! Galli has a proposal to make."

The whole company, which had broken up into little knots of twos and threes, carrying on separate discussions, collected round the table to listen. Galli raised his hands in expostulation.

"No, gentlemen, it is not a proposal; it is merely a suggestion. It appears to me that there is a great practical danger in all this rejoicing over the new Pope. People seem to think that, because he has struck out a new line and granted this amnesty, we have only to throw ourselves—all of us, the whole of Italy—into his arms and he will carry us to the promised land. Now, I am second to no one in admiration of the Pope's behaviour; the amnesty was a splendid action."

"I am sure His Holiness ought to feel flattered——" Grassini began contemptuously.

"There, Grassini, do let the man speak!" Riccardo interrupted in his turn. "It's a most extraordinary thing that you two never can keep from sparring like a cat and dog. Get on, Galli!"

"What I wanted to say is this," continued the Neapolitan. "The Holy Father, undoubtedly, is acting with the best intentions; but how far he will succeed in carrying his reforms is another

question. Just now it's smooth enough and, of course, the reactionists all over Italy will lie quiet for a month or two till the excitement about the amnesty blows over; but they are not likely to let the power be taken out of their hands without a fight, and my own belief is that before the winter is half over we shall have Jesuits and Gregorians and Sanfedists and all the rest of the crew about our ears, plotting and intriguing, and poisoning off everybody they can't bribe."

"That's likely enough."

"Very well, then; shall we wait here, meekly sending in petitions, till Lambruschini and his pack have persuaded the Grand Duke to put us bodily under Jesuit rule, with perhaps a few Austrian hussars to patrol the streets and keep us in order; or shall we forestall them and take advantage of their momentary discomfiture to strike the first blow?"

"Tell us first what blow you propose?"

"I would suggest that we start an organized propaganda and agitation against the Jesuits."

"A pamphleteering declaration of war, in fact?"

"Yes; exposing their intrigues, ferreting out their secrets, and calling upon the people to make common cause against them."

"But there are no Jesuits here to expose."

"Aren't there? Wait three months and see how many we shall have. It'll be too late to keep them out then."

"But really to rouse the town against the Jesuits one must speak plainly; and if you do that how will you evade the censorship?"

"I wouldn't evade it; I would defy it."

"You would print the pamphlets anonymously?"

That's all very well, but the fact is, we have all seen enough of the clandestine press to know——"

"I did not mean that. I would print the pamphlets openly, with our names and addresses, and let them prosecute us if they dare."

"The project is a perfectly mad one," Grassini exclaimed. "It is simply putting one's head into the lion's mouth out of sheer wantonness."

"Oh, you needn't be afraid!" Galli cut in sharply; "we shouldn't ask you to go to prison for our pamphlets."

"Hold your tongue, Galli!" said Riccardo. "It's not a question of being afraid; we're all as ready as you are to go to prison if there's any good to be got by it, but it is childish to run into danger for nothing. For my part, I have an amendment to the proposal to suggest."

"Well, what is it?"

"I think we might contrive, with care, to fight the Jesuits without coming into collision with the censorship."

"I don't see how you are going to manage it."

"I think that it is possible to clothe what one has to say in so roundabout a form that——"

"That the censorship won't understand it? And then you'll expect every poor artisan and labourer to find out the meaning by the light of the ignorance and stupidity that are in him! That doesn't sound very practicable."

"Martini, what do you think?" asked the professor, turning to a broad-shouldered man with a great brown beard, who was sitting beside him.

"I think that I will reserve my opinion till I have more facts to go upon. It's a question of trying experiments and seeing what comes of them."

"And you, Sacconi?"

"I should like to hear what Signora Bolla has to say. Her suggestions are always valuable."

Everyone turned to the only woman in the room, who had been sitting on the sofa, resting her chin on one hand and listening in silence to the discussion. She had deep, serious black eyes, but as she raised them now there was an unmistakable gleam of amusement in them.

"I am afraid," she said; "that I disagree with everybody."

"You always do, and the worst of it is that you are always right," Riccardo put in.

"I think it is quite true that we must fight the Jesuits somehow; and if we can't do it with one weapon we must with another. But mere defiance is a feeble weapon and evasion a cumbersome one. As for petitioning, that is a child's toy."

"I hope, signora," Grassini interposed, with a solemn face; "that you are not suggesting such methods as—assassination?"

Martini tugged at his big moustache and Galli sniggered outright. Even the grave young woman could not repress a smile.

"Believe me," she said, "that if I were ferocious enough to think of such things I should not be childish enough to talk about them. But the deadliest weapon I know is ridicule. If you can once succeed in rendering the Jesuits ludicrous, in making people laugh at them and their claims, you have conquered them without bloodshed."

"I believe you are right, as far as that goes," Fabrizi said; "but I don't see how you are going to carry the thing through."

"Why should we not be able to carry it through?" asked Martini. "A satirical thing has

a better chance of getting over the censorship difficulty than a serious one; and, if it must be cloaked, the average reader is more likely to find out the double meaning of an apparently silly joke than of a scientific or economic treatise."

"Then is your suggestion, signora, that we should issue satirical pamphlets, or attempt to run a comic paper? That last, I am sure, the censorship would never allow."

"I don't mean exactly either. I believe a series of small satirical leaflets, in verse or prose, to be sold cheap or distributed free about the streets, would be very useful. If we could find a clever artist who would enter into the spirit of the thing, we might have them illustrated."

"It's a capital idea, if only one could carry it out; but if the thing is to be done at all it must be well done. We should want a first-class satirist; and where are we to get him?"

"You see," added Lega, "most of us are serious writers; and, with all respect to the company, I am afraid that a general attempt to be humorous would present the spectacle of an elephant trying to dance the tarantella."

"I never suggested that we should all rush into work for which we are unfitted. My idea was that we should try to find a really gifted satirist—there must be one to be got somewhere in Italy, surely—and offer to provide the necessary funds. Of course we should have to know something of the man and make sure that he would work on lines with which we could agree."

"But where are you going to find him? I can count up the satirists of any real talent on the fingers of one hand; and none of them are available. Giusti wouldn't accept; he is fully occupied

as it is. There are one or two good men in Lombardy, but they write only in the Milanese dialect——"

"And moreover," said Grassini, "the Tuscan people can be influenced in better ways than this. I am sure that it would be felt as, to say the least, a want of political *savoir faire* if we were to treat this solemn question of civil and religious liberty as a subject for trifling. Florence is not a mere wilderness of factories and money-getting like London, nor a haunt of idle luxury like Paris. It is a city with a great history——"

"So was Athens," she interrupted, smiling; "but it was 'rather sluggish from its size and needed a gadfly to rouse it'——"

Riccardo struck his hand upon the table. "Why, we never thought of the Gadfly! The very man!"

"Who is that?"

"The Gadfly—Felice Rivarez. Don't you remember him? One of Muratori's band that came down from the Apennines three years ago?"

"Oh, you knew that set, didn't you? I remember your travelling with them when they went on to Paris."

"Yes; I went as far as Leghorn to see Rivarez off for Marseilles. He wouldn't stop in Tuscany; he said there was nothing left to do but laugh, once the insurrection had failed, and so he had better go to Paris. No doubt he agreed with Signor Grassini that Tuscany is the wrong place to laugh in. But I am nearly sure he would come back if we asked him, now that there is a chance of doing something in Italy."

"What name did you say?"

"Rivarez. He's a Brazilian, I think. At any

rate, I know he has lived out there. He is one of the wittiest men I ever came across. Heaven knows we had nothing to be merry over, that week in Leghorn; it was enough to break one's heart to look at poor Lambertini; but there was no keeping one's countenance when Rivarez was in the room; it was one perpetual fire of absurdities. He had a nasty sabre-cut across the face, too; I remember sewing it up. He's an odd creature; but I believe he and his nonsense kept some of those poor lads from breaking down altogether."

"Is that the man who writes political skits in the French papers under the name of 'Le Taon'?"

"Yes; short paragraphs mostly, and comic feuilletons. The smugglers up in the Apennines called him 'the Gadfly' because of his tongue; and he took the nickname to sign his work with."

"I know something about this gentleman," said Grassini, breaking in upon the conversation in his slow and stately manner; "and I cannot say that what I have heard is much to his credit. He undoubtedly possesses a certain showy, superficial cleverness, though I think his abilities have been exaggerated; and possibly he is not lacking in physical courage; but his reputation in Paris and Vienna is, I believe, very far from spotless. He appears to be a gentleman of—a—a—many adventures and unknown antecedents. It is said that he was picked up out of charity by Duprez's expedition somewhere in the wilds of tropical South America, in a state of inconceivable savagery and degradation. I believe he has never satisfactorily explained how he came to be in such a condition. As for the rising in the Apennines, I fear it is no

secret that persons of all characters took part in that unfortunate affair. The men who were executed in Bologna are known to have been nothing but common malefactors; and the character of many who escaped will hardly bear description. Without doubt, *some* of the participators were men of high character——"

"Some of them were the intimate friends of several persons in this room!" Riccardo interrupted, with an angry ring in his voice. "It's all very well to be particular and exclusive, Grassini; but these 'common malefactors' died for their belief, which is more than you or I have done as yet."

"And another time when people tell you the stale gossip of Paris," added Galli, "you can tell them from me that they are mistaken about the Duprez expedition. I know Duprez's adjutant, Martel, personally, and have heard the whole story from him. It's true that they found Rivarez stranded out there. He had been taken prisoner in the war, fighting for the Argentine Republic, and had escaped. He was wandering about the country in various disguises, trying to get back to Buenos Ayres. But the story of their taking him on out of charity is a pure fabrication. Their interpreter had fallen ill and been obliged to turn back; and not one of the Frenchmen could speak the native languages; so they offered him the post, and he spent the whole three years with them, exploring the tributaries of the Amazon. Martel told me he believed they never would have got through the expedition at all if it had not been for Rivarez."

"Whatever he may be," said Fabrizi; "there must be something remarkable about a man who

could lay his 'come hither' on two old campaigners like Martel and Duprez as he seems to have done. What do you think, signora?"

"I know nothing about the matter; I was in England when the fugitives passed through Tuscany. But I should think that if the companions who were with a man on a three years' expedition in savage countries, and the comrades who were with him through an insurrection, think well of him, that is recommendation enough to counterbalance a good deal of boulevard gossip."

"There is no question about the opinion his comrades had of him," said Riccardo. "From Muratori and Zambecari down to the roughest mountaineers they were all devoted to him. Moreover, he is a personal friend of Orsini. It's quite true, on the other hand, that there are endless cock-and-bull stories of a not very pleasant kind going about concerning him in Paris; but if a man doesn't want to make enemies he shouldn't become a political satirist."

"I'm not quite sure," interposed Lega; "but it seems to me that I saw him once when the refugees were here. Was he not hunch-backed, or crooked, or something of that kind?"

The professor had opened a drawer in his writing-table and was turning over a heap of papers "I think I have his police description somewhere here," he said. "You remember when they escaped and hid in the mountain passes their personal appearance was posted up everywhere, and that Cardinal—what's the scoundrel's name?—Spinola, offered a reward for their heads."

"There was a splendid story about Rivarez and that police paper, by the way. He put on a soldier's old uniform and tramped across country

as a carabineer wounded in the discharge of his duty and trying to find his company. He actually got Spinola's search-party to give him a lift, and rode the whole day in one of their waggons, telling them harrowing stories of how he had been taken captive by the rebels and dragged off into their haunts in the mountains, and of the fearful tortures that he had suffered at their hands. They showed him the description paper, and he told them all the rubbish he could think of about 'the fiend they call the Gadfly.' Then at night, when they were asleep, he poured a bucketful of water into their powder and decamped, with his pockets full of provisions and ammunition——"

"Ah, here's the paper," Fabrizi broke in: "'Felice Rivarez, called: *The Gadfly*. Age, about 30; birthplace and parentage, unknown, probably South American; profession, journalist. Short; black hair; black beard; dark skin; eyes, blue; forehead, broad and square; nose, mouth, chin——' Yes, here it is: 'Special marks: right foot lame; left arm twisted; two fingers missing on left hand; recent sabre-cut across face; stammers.' Then there's a note put: 'Very expert shot; care should be taken in arresting.'"

"It's an extraordinary thing that he can have managed to deceive the search-party with such a formidable list of identification marks."

"It was nothing but sheer audacity that carried him through, of course. If it had once occurred to them to suspect him he would have been lost. But the air of confiding innocence that he can put on when he chooses would bring a man through anything. Well, gentlemen, what do you think of the proposal? Rivarez seems to be pretty well known to several of the company. Shall we sug-

gest to him that we should be glad of his help here or not?"

"I think," said Fabrizi, "that he might be sounded upon the subject, just to find out whether he would be inclined to think of the plan."

"Oh, he'll be inclined, you may be sure, once it's a case of fighting the Jesuits; he is the most savage anti-clerical I ever met; in fact, he's rather rabid on the point."

"Then will you write, Riccardo?"

"Certainly. Let me see, where is he now? In Switzerland, I think. He's the most restless being; always flitting about. But as for the pamphlet question——"

They plunged into a long and animated discussion. When at last the company began to disperse Martini went up to the quiet young woman.

"I will see you home, Gemma."

"Thanks; I want to have a business talk with you."

"Anything wrong with the addresses?" he asked softly.

"Nothing serious; but I think it is time to make a few alterations. Two letters have been stopped in the post this week. They were both quite unimportant, and it may have been accidental; but we cannot afford to have any risks. If once the police have begun to suspect any of our addresses, they must be changed immediately."

"I will come in about that to-morrow. I am not going to talk business with you to-night; you look tired."

"I am not tired."

"Then you are depressed again."

"Oh, no; not particularly."

## CHAPTER II.

"Is the mistress in, Katie?"

"Yes, sir; she is dressing. If you'll just step into the parlour she will be down in a few minutes."

Katie ushered the visitor in with the cheerful friendliness of a true Devonshire girl. Martini was a special favourite of hers. He spoke English, like a foreigner, of course, but still quite respectably; and he never sat discussing politics at the top of his voice till one in the morning, when the mistress was tired, as some visitors had a way of doing. Moreover, he had come to Devonshire to help the mistress in her trouble, when her baby was dead and her husband dying there; and ever since that time the big, awkward, silent man had been to Katie as much "one of the family" as was the lazy black cat which now ensconced itself upon his knee. Pasht, for his part, regarded Martini as a useful piece of household furniture. This visitor never trod upon his tail, or puffed tobacco smoke into his eyes, or in any way obtruded upon his consciousness an aggressive biped personality. He behaved as a mere man should: provided a comfortable knee to lie upon and purr, and at table never forgot that to look on while human beings eat fish is not interesting for a cat. The friendship between them was of old date. Once, when Pasht was a kitten and his mistress too ill to think about him, he had come from England under Martini's care, tucked away in a basket. Since then, long experience had convinced him that this clumsy human bear was no fair-weather friend.

"How snug you look, you two!" said Gemma,