

Giuseppe. You yet lack discretion, the tranquil glance, the sure hand! You always suffer yourself to become excited, which is unartistic and even dangerous. We went out to-day only to obtain information; we were only to discover and observe the signora, and perhaps to watch for an opportunity. But to fall upon her in this garden would have been the extreme of stupidity, for we had all the servants and the hounds against us, and it is one of the first principles of our profession to put others in danger, but never to incur it ourselves."

"Wherefore, then, have we come here?" cried Giuseppe, with vehemence.

"To see her and know her, that we may surely recognize her again when the right hour comes. And that hour will come—I will answer for it. Did not the signora tell us that this lady would probably attend the festival of Cardinal Bernis?"

"She said so."

"Well, and we have come here that we might see and know her in advance. She is very beautiful, and a truly respectable person, Giuseppe. I am pleased with the idea of this festival of the French cardinal. I think it will afford much business in our line."

CHAPTER XXV.

DIPLOMATIC QUARRELS.

IN the palace of the French ambassador at Rome, Cardinal Bernis, there was an unusually busy movement to-day. From the kitchen-boys to the major-domo, all were in a most lively motion, in the most passionate activity. For this morning, while taking his chocolate, the cardinal had sent for his major-domo, and, quite contrary to the usual joviality of his manner, had very seriously and solemnly said to him: "Signor Brunelli, I to-day intrust you with a very important and responsible duty, that of making as splendid as possible the grand festival we are three days hence to give in honor of the Archduke Ferdinand. No pains must be spared, nothing must be wanting; the most luxurious richness, the most tasteful decoration, the most extravagant splendor must be exhibited. For this entertainment must excite the attention not only of Rome, but of all Europe; it must become the subject of conversation at all the courts, and, above all, it must cause the despair of all present ambassadorial housekeeping. I have very important diplomatic reasons for this. All Europe shall see how devoted France is to the empire of Austria, and what a good understanding subsists between the two courts. Therefore, Signor Brunelli, strain your inventive head, that it may on this occasion hit upon whatever is most distinguished and pre-eminent, for this must be an entertainment never before equalled. That is what I expect, what I demand of you; and if you satisfy my demands, it will give

me pleasure to reward your zeal by a present of a hundred ducats."

Thus with solemn dignity spoke the cardinal, while sipping his chocolate; and Signor Brunelli had pledged himself by a solemn oath punctually to fulfil his master's commands, and to astonish Rome with an entertainment such as had never been recorded in the annals of diplomatic history.

With a proud step had Brunelli gone to his own private cabinet, where, having shut himself up, he had devoted several hours to serious meditation upon the deep plans presenting themselves to his mind. But Signor Brunelli had, in fact, a very experienced and inventive head, and the cardinal acted wisely in confiding in his major-domo and leaving to him the ordering of the entertainment.

He had now, with the sharp glance of a military commander, arranged his plan of battle, and felt perfectly sure of victory. He therefore rang for a servant, and commanded the attendance of the chief cook in the cabinet of the major-domo. Then with a gentlemanlike listlessness he threw himself upon a divan and began to sip his coffee with the exact dignified deportment that had been displayed by his excellency the cardinal.

"Signor Gianettino," said he, to the entering cook, "I propose honoring you to-day with a very important and significant affair. I wish, on the day after to-morrow, to prepare an entertainment which in splendor and magnificence shall surpass anything hitherto seen. You know that the major-domos of the other diplomatists have become my irreconcilable enemies through envy; they cannot forgive

me for having more inventive faculties and better taste than any of them! We must bring these major-domos to despair, and with a gnashing of teeth they shall acknowledge that in all things I am their master. You, however, must aid me in this great work; in your hands, Signor Gianettino, lies a considerable part of my triumph and my laurels. For what does it help me, if the arrangements and decorations, if the whole establishment, are excellent, should there be a failure in the highest and most sublime part of the entertainment—in the food. The food, my dear sir, and a well-ordered table, is the gist of a festival, and should there be the least failure in that, the whole is profaned and desecrated, and must be covered with a mourning-veil. Take my words to heart, signor; let us have a table covered with food the mere odor of which shall set our first gourmets in ecstatic astonishment, while its judicious arrangement will give pleasure to the poetic mind! This is what I expect of you, and if you succeed in satisfying my requirements, I am ready to reward your exertions with fifty bottles of our best French wines."

Signor Gianettino returned his thanks with a pleasant, thoughtful smile, and with a majestic step repaired to his boudoir, where he was seen for a long time, walking back and forth in deep thought and with a wrinkled brow. Then, stepping to his writing-table, he sketched the plan of this inordinately great dinner, at first slowly and thoughtfully, and then with constantly more and more fire and enthusiasm, carried away by the greatness of the occasion, and animated by the importance of his mission and his calling.

Then, throwing aside the pen, and exhausted by so great an effort, he gently glided down upon the divan, at the same time ringing for a servant whom he directed to bring his breakfast and afterward to summon all the cooks and scullions to his cabinet. He then stretched himself with eminent grace upon the divan, as he had seen the majordomo do; with a serious thoughtfulness he sipped the glass of Malvoisie the servant had brought him, with sundry *pâtés* and rare *entremets*.

And they came, the cooks and scullions, they came in their white jackets, with their white aprons and snow-white caps; they came in solemn silence, fully impressed with the importance of the moment.

"Signors," said the chief cook, "it is on a beautiful and sublime affair that I have assembled you here to-day. It concerns an increase of the fame and triumphs we have so many times gained over our diplomatic rivals, and an increase of the laurels we have won in the sacred realms of our art! I propose to prepare a banquet for to-morrow, and for that I require your support and aid, gentlemen. For what is the use of ever so good a plan of battle of a commander-in-chief, if his troops fail in courage and skill to carry out the plan of their general? Gentlemen, I doubt not your courage or skill! You will contend for the sake of the fame we have acquired and hitherto enjoyed without dispute, for the sake of the fame which the French *cuisine* has enjoyed for centuries, and which must be preserved until the end of all things! You will stand by me, gentlemen, in the praiseworthy effort to acquire new glory for France, by showing these little Austrian princes and these gentle-

men diplomatists what wonderful things the French art of cookery can bring to pass. The plan is devised and sketched, and all that is now required is its execution. If this great work succeeds, then, gentlemen, you may feel assured of my eternal gratitude—a gratitude which I will prove to you by leaving all the remains of the dinner to your free use and sole benefit! Here is the plan, hasten to the work; I have assigned to each one the part he is to take in its accomplishment. Hasten, therefore! I, however, by way of exception, will myself go to the market to-day and make the necessary purchases. On such an important occasion, no one, however highly placed, must decline labor and the faithful performance of duty. I go, therefore, and six of the kitchen-boys may follow me with their baskets."

Thus speaking, the chief cook, Signor Gianettino, took his hat and gold-headed cane to go to the market. Six kitchen-boys, armed with large baskets, followed him at a respectful distance.

At the great vegetable and fish-market of Rome there was to-day a very unusual and extraordinary life and movement. There was a crowd and tumult, a roaring and screaming, a shouting and laughing, such as had not been heard for a long time. It was partly in consequence of the fact that the whole diplomatic corps had been for some days agitated with preparations for entertainments in honor of the Archduke Ferdinand, who had come to Rome to see the wonders of the holy city, and who could hardly find time and leisure for the festivities offered him. But for the tradesmen and dealers, for the country people in the vicinity of Rome, this presence of the Austrian prince was a

happy circumstance; for these banquets and festivals scattered money among the people, and the dealers and honest country people could fearlessly raise their prices, as they were sure of a sale for their commodities. The cooks and servants of the diplomatists and cardinals were seen running hither and thither in busy haste, everywhere selecting the best, everywhere buying and cheapening.

But in one place in the market there was to-day an especial liveliness and activity among the crowd, and to that spot Signor Gianettino bent his steps. He had seen the cook of the Spanish ambassador, the Duke of Grimaldi, among those collected there, and as this cook was one of his bitterest enemies and opponents, Signor Gianettino resolved to watch him, and, if possible, to play him a trick. He therefore cautiously mingled with the crowd, and made a sign to his followers to keep at a distance from him.

It was certainly a very important affair with which the Spanish cook Don Bempo was occupied, as it concerned the purchase of a fish that a countryman had brought to the city, of such a monstrous size and weight that the like had never been seen there. It was the most remarkable specimen with which the Roman fish-market had ever been honored. But the lucky fisherman was fully aware of the extraordinary beauty of his fish, and in his arrogant pride demanded twenty ducats for it.

That was what troubled Don Bempo. Twenty ducats for one single fish, and the major-domo of the Spanish ambassador had urged upon him the most stringent economy; but he had, indeed, at the same time urged upon him to provide everything as splendid as possible for the banquet

which the Duke of Grimaldi was to give in honor of the Archduke Ferdinand; indeed, he had with an anxious sigh commanded him to outdo if possible the next day's feast of Cardinal Bernis, and to provide yet rarer and more costly viands than the French cook.

That was what Don Bempo was now considering, and what made him waver in his first determination not to buy the fish.

There was only this one gigantic fish in the market; and, if he bought it, Signor Gianettino, his enemy, of course could not possess it; the triumph of the day would then inure to the Spanish embassy, and Don Bempo would come off conqueror. That was indeed a very desirable object, but—twenty ducats was still an enormous price, and was not at all reconcilable with the recommended economy.

At any rate he dared not buy the fish without first consulting the major-domo of the duke.

“You will not, then, sell this fish for twelve ducats?” asked Don Bempo, just as Gianettino had unnoticedly approached. “Reflect, man, twelve ducats are a fortune—it is a princely payment!”

The fisherman contemptuously shook his head. “Rather than sell it for twelve ducats I would eat it myself,” said he, “and invite my friends, these good Romans, as guests! Go, go, sublime Spanish Don, and buy gudgeons for your pair of miserable ducats! Such a fish as this is too dear for you; you Spanish gentlemen should buy gudgeons!”

“Bravo! bravo!” cried the laughing spectators. “Gudgeons for the Spanish gentlemen with high-nosed faces and empty pockets!”

Don Bempo blushed with anger and wounded pride. "I shall unquestionably buy this fish," said he, "for nothing is too dear for my master when the honor of our nation is to be upheld. But you must allow me time to go home and get the money from the major-domo. Keep the fish, therefore, so long, and I will return with the twenty ducats for it."

And majestically Don Bempo made himself a path through the crowd, which laughingly stepped aside for him, shouting: "Gudgeons for the Spanish gentleman! Viva Don Bempo, who pays twenty ducats for a fish!"

"He will certainly not come back," said the fisherman, shaking his head.

"He goes to buy gudgeons!" cried another.

"What will you bet that he returns to buy the fish?" said a third.

"He will not buy it!" interposed a fourth. "These Spaniards have no money; they are poor devils!"

"Who dares say that?" shrieked another, and now suddenly followed one of those quarrels which are so quickly excited on the least occasion among the passionate people of the south. There was much rage, abuse, and noise. How flashed the eyes, how shook the fists, what threats resounded there!

"Peace, my dear friends, be quiet, I tell you!" cried the fisherman, with his stentorian voice. "See, there comes a new purchaser for my fish. Bè quiet, and let us see how much France is disposed to offer us."

The disturbance subsided as suddenly as it had arisen, and all pressed nearer; all directed interrogating, curious,

expectant glances at Signor Gianettino, who just at that moment approached with a proud and grave step, followed by the solemn train of six scullions with their baskets.

No one had before remarked him in the crowd, for they had been all eyes and ears for Don Bempo, and hence every one supposed that he had only just then arrived.

The shrewd chief cook also assumed the appearance of having only accidentally passed that way without the intention of buying any thing.

But he suddenly stopped before the great fish as if astonished at its enormous size, and seemed to view it with admiration and delight.

"What a rare and splendid animal is this!" he finally exclaimed with animation. "Really, one must come to Rome to see such a wonder!"

"That is understood!" exultingly cried the bystanders, who had a reverence for the fishes of Rome.

"This is no niggard! *He* will not be so mean as to offer twelve ducats for such a miracle as this!"

"Twelve ducats!" cried Gianettino, folding his hands. "How can you think me so pitiful as to offer such a miserable sum for so noble a fish. No, truly, he must have a bold forehead who would offer so little money for this splendid animal!"

"Hear him! hear!" cried the people. "This is a learned man. He knows something of the value of rarities!"

"Viva! Long life to the French cook, *il grande ministro della cucina!*"

Gianettino bowed politely in response to the compliment, and then civilly asked the price of the fish.

The fisherman stood there with an expression of regretful sadness upon his face. "I fear it will be of little use to name the price!" said he, "the fish is as good as sold!"

"Nevertheless, name the price!"

"Twenty ducats!"

"Twenty ducats!" exclaimed Gianettino, with an expression of the liveliest astonishment. "You jest, my friend! How can such a splendid animal be possibly sold for twenty ducats?"

"Hear! hear!" shouted the crowd. "He finds the price too low!"

"He is a real gentleman!"

"He will not buy gudgeons like the Spaniard!"

"In earnest, friend, tell me the price of this fish!" said Gianettino.

"I have demanded twenty ducats for it," sadly responded the fisherman, "and it is sold for that sum."

"Impossible! In that case it would not be lying here!" replied Gianettino. "Or has the man paid you the money, and now gone for a cart for the conveyance of the giant?"

"I have not yet been paid."

"The purchaser, then, has given you earnest money?"

"No, not even that. I have yet received nothing upon it."

"And you can pretend that you have sold this fish," cried Gianettino, "and that, too, for the ridiculously small sum of twenty ducats! Ah, you are a joker, my good man; you wish to excite in me a desire for this rare specimen,

and therefore you say it is sold. But how can a fish that yet lies exposed for sale, and for which no one has made you a suitable offer, be already sold?"

And gravely approaching the giant of the waters, Gianettino laid his hand upon his head and solemnly said: "The fish is mine. I purchase it; you demand twenty ducats! But I shall give you what you ought to have, and what the creature is worth! I shall pay you six-and-thirty ducats for him!"*

The crowd, which had maintained an anxious and breathless silence during this negotiation, now broke out with a loud and exulting shout.

"That is a real nobleman!"

"*Evviva il ministro della cucina! Il grande Gianettino!*"

"That is no parsimonious Spaniard! He is a French cavalier. He will buy no gudgeons, but will have the right Roman fish."

"Gentlemen," said Gianettino, modestly casting down his eyes, "I do not understand your praises, and it seems to me I only deal like a man of honor, as every one of you would do! This honest man taxes his wares too low; I give him what they are worth! That is all. If I acted otherwise I should not long remain in the service of the lofty and generous Cardinal Bernis! Justice and generosity, that is the first command of his excellency!"

"*Evviva the French ambassador!*"

"Praise and honor to Cardinal Bernis!"

* Archenholz, "England and Italy," vol. iv., p. 217.

And while the people were thus shouting, Gianettino from his well-filled purse paid down the six-and-thirty ducats upon the fisherman's board. He then commanded his six attendant scullions to bear off the fish.

It was, indeed, a heavy work to place the enormous animal upon their baskets, but the active Romans cheerfully lent a hand, and when they had succeeded in the difficult task, and the six youngsters bent under their heavy load, Signor Gianettino gravely put himself at the head of the train, and proudly gave the order: "Forward to the kitchen of his excellency Cardinal Bernis!"

At this moment a man was seen making his way through the crowd; thrusting right and left with his elbows, he incessantly pushed on, and, just as Signor Gianettino had fairly got his troop in motion, the man, who was no other than Don Bempo, succeeded in reaching the fisherman's table.

"Here, I bring you the twenty ducats," he proudly called out. "They will no longer say that the Spaniards buy gudgeons. The fish is mine! There are your twenty ducats!"

And, with a supercilious air, Don Bempo threw the money upon the table.

But just as proudly did the fisherman push back the money. "The fish is sold!" said he.

"Forward, march!" repeated Signor Gianettino his word of command. "Forward to the kitchen of his excellency Cardinal Bernis!"

And with solemn dignity the train began to move.

Don Bempo with a cry of rage rushed upon the fish.

"This fish is mine," he wildly cried, "I was the first to

offer its price, I offered twenty ducats, and only went home to get the money!"

"And I," exclaimed Signor Gianettino, "I offered thirty-six ducats, and immediately paid the cash, as I always have money by me."

"It is Signor Gianettino, the cook of the French ambassador, and I am ruined!" groaned Don Bempo, staggering back.

"Yes, it is the cook of his excellency the cardinal!" cried the crowd.

"And the cardinal is an honorable man!"

"He is no Spanish niggard!"

"He does not haggle for a giant fish; he pays more than is demanded!"

"I hope," said Signor Gianettino to Don Bempo, who still convulsively grasped the fish, "that you will now take your hands from my property and leave me to go my way without further hinderance. It is not noble to lay hands on the goods of another, Don Bempo, and this fish is mine!"

"But this is contrary to all international law!" exclaimed the enraged Don Bempo. "You forget, signor, that you insult my master, that you insult Spain, by withholding from me by main force what I have purchased in the name of Spain."

"France will never stand second to Spain!" proudly responded Gianettino, "and where Spain *offers* twenty ducats, France *pays* six-and-thirty!—Forward, my youngsters! To the kitchen of the French ambassador!"

And ungently pushing back Don Bempo, Gianettino

solemnly marched through the crowd with his retinue, the people readily making a path for him and cheering him as he went.

It was a brilliant triumph in the person of the chief cook of their ambassador, which the French celebrated to-day; it was a shameful defeat which Spain suffered to-day in the person of her ambassador's chief cook.

Proud and happy marched Signor Gianettino through the streets, accompanied by his gigantic fish, and followed by the shouts of a Roman mob.

Humiliated, with eyes cast down, with rage in his heart sneaked Don Bempo toward the Spanish ambassador's hotel, and long heard behind him the whistling, laughter, and cat-calls of the Roman people.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FISH FEUD.

CARDINAL BERNIS was in his boudoir. Before him lay the list of those persons whom he had invited to his entertainment of the next day, and he saw with proud satisfaction that all had accepted his invitation.

"I shall, then, have a brilliant and stately society to meet this Austrian archduke," said the well-contented cardinal to himself. "The *élite* of the nobility, all the cardinals and ambassadors, will make their appearance, and Austria will be compelled to acknowledge that France maintains the best understanding with all the European powers, and

that she is not the less respected because the Marquise de Pompadour is in fact King of France."

"Ah, this good marquise," continued the cardinal, stretching himself comfortably upon his lounge and taking an open letter from the table, "this good marquise gives me in fact some cause for anxiety. She writes me here that France is in favor of the project of Portugal for the suppression of the order of the Jesuits, and I am so to inform the pope! This is a dangerous thing, marquise, and may possibly burn your tender fingers. The suppression of the Jesuits! Is not that to explode a powder-barrel in the midst of Europe, that may shatter all the states? No, no, it is foolhardiness, and I have not the courage to apply the match to this powder-barrel! I fear it may blow us all into the air."

And the cardinal began to read anew the letter of Madame de Pompadour which a French courier had brought him a few hours before.

"Ahem, that will be dangerous for the good father!" said he, shaking his head. "Austria also agrees to this magnificent plan of the Portuguese Minister Pombal, and I am inclined to think that this Austrian archduke has come to Rome only for the purpose of bringing to the pope the consent of the Empress Maria Theresa! Ha, ha! how singular! their chaste and virtuous Maria Theresa and our good Pompadour are both agreed in this matter, and in taking this course are both acting against their own will. The women love the Jesuits, these good fathers who furnish them with an excuse for every weakness, and hold a little back door open for every sin. That is very