

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

convenient for these good women! Yes, yes, the women—I think I know them.”

And, smiling, the cardinal sank deeper into himself, dreaming of past, of charming times, when he had not yet counted sixty-five years. He dreamed of Venice, and of a beautiful nun he had loved there, and who for him had often left her cloister in the night-time, and, warm and glowing with passion, had come to him. He dreamed of those heavenly hours, where all pleasure and all happiness had been compressed into one blessed intoxication of bliss, where the chaste priestess of the Church had for him changed into a sparkling priestess of joy!

“Yes, that was long ago!” murmured the cardinal, as at length he awoke from his blissful dreams of the past.

“Those were beautiful times—I was then young and happy; I was then a man, and now—now am old; love has withered, and with it poesy! I am now nothing but a diplomatist.”

There was a low knock at the door. The cardinal hastily but carefully returned the portrait of his beautiful nun to the secret drawer in his writing-table whence it had been taken, and bade the knocker to enter.

It was Brunelli, the major-domo of the cardinal, who came with a proud step, and face beaming with joy, to make a report of his plans and preparations for the morrow’s entertainment.

“In the evening the park will be illuminated with many thousand lamps, which will outshine the sun, so that the guests will there wander in a sea of light,” said he, in closing his report.

The cardinal smiled, and with a stolen glance at the small box that contained the portrait of his beautiful nun, he said: “Spare some of the walks in the alleys from your sea of light, and leave them in a partial obscurity. A little duskiness is sometimes necessary for joy and happiness! But how is it with your *carte du dîner*? What has Signor Gianettino to offer us? I hope he has something very choice, for you know the cardinals like a good table, and my friend Duke Grimaldi has a high opinion of our cuisine.”

“Ah, the Spanish ambassador, your excellency?” exclaimed Brunelli, contemptuously. “The Spanish ambassador knows nothing of the art of cookery, or he would not possibly be satisfied with his cook! He is a niggard, a poor fellow, of whom all Rome is speaking to-day, and laughing at him and his master, while they are praising you to the skies!”

And Signor Brunelli related to his listening master the whole story of the gigantic fish, and of the humiliation of the Spanish cook.

The cardinal listened with attention, and a dark cloud gradually gathered upon his thoughtful brow.

“That is a very unfortunate occurrence,” said he, shaking his head, as Brunelli ended.

“But at least it was an occurrence in which France triumphed, your excellency,” responded Brunelli.

“I much fear the Duke of Grimaldi will do as you have done,” said the cardinal; “he will confound my cook with France, and in his cook see all Spain insulted.”

“Then your excellency is not satisfied?” asked Brunelli,

with consternation. "The whole palace is full of jubilation; all the servants and lackeys and even the secretary of the legation are delighted with this divine affair!"

The cardinal paid no attention to these panegyrics of his major-domo, but thoughtfully paced the room with long strides.

"And you think Gianettino had the right of it?" at length he asked.

"He was entirely in the right, your excellency. Nothing had been paid for the fish, and Gianettino's right to purchase was perfect, and nobody could dispute it!"

"Well, when we are in the right, we must maintain our right," said the cardinal, after a pause, "and as the affair is known to all Rome, it must be fought through with *éclat*! The fish, in all its pride of greatness shall grace our table to-morrow!"

"We have no dish of sufficient size in which to serve it."

"Then let a new one be made," laughed the cardinal. "Take the measure of this Goliath, and hasten to the silversmith, that he may make a silver dish of the proper size. But see that it is completed by to-morrow morning, and that it is richly ornamented. If Rome has heard of the fish, so also must it hear of the dish. Hasten, therefore, Signor Brunelli, and see that all is done as I have ordered!"

"This is, in fact, a very diverting story," said the cardinal, laughing, when he was again alone. "We have here a monster fish which will probably swallow my friendship with the Duke of Grimaldi! Well, we shall see!"

The cardinal then rang for his body-servant, whom he ordered to dress him.

"Court toilet?" asked the servant, astonished at being called to this service at so unusual an hour.

"No, house toilet!" said the cardinal. "I shall soon receive visitors."

The shrewd cardinal had not deceived himself! In a few minutes an equipage rolled into the court and the footman announced his highness the Spanish ambassador, the Duke of Grimaldi.

"He is a thousand times welcome!" cried the cardinal, and as the door now opened and the Spanish duke entered, the cardinal advanced to receive him with open arms and a friendly smile.

"My dear, much-beloved friend, what a delightful surprise is this!" said the cardinal.

But the duke observed neither the open arms nor the pleasant smile, nor yet the friendly welcome of the cardinal. He strode forward with a serious, majestic *grandezza*, and placing himself directly before the cardinal, he solemnly asked: "Know you of the outrage which a servant of your house has inflicted on mine?"

"Of an outrage?" asked the cardinal, without embarrassment. "I have been told that your cook had a dispute with mine, because mine had bought a fish that was too dear for yours. That is all I know."

"Then they have not told you," thundered the duke, "that your servant, like an impudent street robber, has wrongfully seized my property. For that fish was mine, it belonged to the Spanish embassy, and therefore to

Spain; and your servant has with outrageous insolence committed a trespass upon the property of a foreign power!"

"Did this fish, then, actually belong to the Spanish crown?" asked Bernis. "Was it already paid for, and legally yours?"

"It was not paid for, but was ordered, and my servant had gone home for the money."

"As long as it was not paid for, no one could have any claim upon it."

"You are, then, disposed to dispute the fish with me?" cried the duke.

"Should I dispute it," smilingly responded the cardinal, "that would be equivalent to a recognition of your right to it, which I have no idea of making. Besides, my friend, what does this quarrel of our cooks concern us, and what has Spain and France to do with these disputes of our servants? They may fight out their own quarrels with each other; let us give them leave to do so, and if they give each other bloody heads, very well, we will bind them up, that is all!"

"You take the affair with your usual practical indifference," said the duke with bitterness, "and I can only regret being compelled to look at it in a different light. The question here is not of a difficulty between our servants, but of an insult which Spain has received from France in the face of all Rome. Yes, all Rome has witnessed this insult, and these miserable Romans have even dared to dishonor us with irony and satire, and to mock and deride Spain, while they overload you with their praises!"

"The good Romans, as you know, are like children. This contest of our cooks has delighted them, and they shouted a *viva* to the conqueror. But I beg you not to forget that I have nothing at all to do with the victories of my cook."

"But I have something to do with the defeats of mine! Whoever insults my servant insults me; and whoever insults me, insults the kingdom I represent—insults Spain! It is therefore in the name of Spain that I come to demand satisfaction. Spain has a right to this fish! I demand my right, I demand the surrender of the fish!"

"If you take this matter in earnest," said the cardinal, "then am I sorry to be compelled also to be serious! If Spain can find offence in the fact that France has bought a fish which was too dear for the Spanish cook, I cannot see how I can here make satisfaction, as we cannot be taxed with any fault."

"You refuse me the fish, then?" exclaimed the duke, bursting with rage.

"As you say that all Rome knows of this affair, and takes an interest in it, I cannot act otherwise. It must not have the appearance that France feels herself less great and powerful than Spain; that France pusillanimously yields when Spain makes an unjust demand!"

"That is to say, you wish to break off all friendly relations with us?"

"And can those relations be seriously endangered by this affair?" asked the cardinal, with vivacity. "Is it possible that this trifling misunderstanding between two servants can exercise an influence upon a long-cherished friend-

ship and harmony of two powers whose relations, whether friendly or otherwise, may uphold or destroy the peace of Europe?"

"Honor is the first law of the Spaniard," proudly responded the duke, "and whoever wounds that can no longer be my friend! France has attacked the honor of Spain, and all Rome has chimed in with the insulting acclamations of France—all Rome knows the story of this fish!"

"Then let us show to these silly Romans that we both look upon the whole affair merely as a jest. When you to-morrow laughingly eat of this fish, the good Romans will feel ashamed of themselves and their childish conduct."

"You propose then, to-morrow, when the nobility of Rome, when all the diplomatists are assembled, to parade before them this fish, which to-day sets all tongues in motion?" asked the duke, turning pale.

"The fish was bought for this dinner, and must be eaten!" said the cardinal, laughing.

"Then I regret that I cannot be present at this festival!" cried the duke, rising. "You cannot desire that I should be a witness to my own shame and your triumph. You are no Roman emperor, and I am no conquered hero compelled to appear in your triumphal train! I recall my consent, and shall not appear at your to-morrow's festival!"

"Reflect and consider this well!" said the cardinal, almost sadly. "If you fail to appear to-morrow, when the whole diplomacy are assembled at my house for an official

dinner, that will signify not only that the duke breaks with his old friend the cardinal, but also that Spain wishes to dissolve her friendly relations with France."

"Let it be so considered!" said the duke. "Better an open war than a clandestine defeat! Adieu, Sir Cardinal!"

And the duke made for the door. But the cardinal held him back.

"Have you reflected upon the consequences?" he asked. "You know what important negotiations at this moment occupy the Catholic courts. Of the abolition of the greatest and most powerful of orders, of the extirpation of the Jesuits, is the question. The pope is favorable to this idea of the Portuguese minister, Pombal, but he desires the cooperation of the other Catholic courts. Austria gives her consent, as do Sardinia and all the other Italian states; only the court of Spain has declared itself the friend and defender of the Jesuits, and for your sake has France hitherto remained passive on this most important question, and has affected not to hear the demands of her subjects; for your sake has France stifled her own convictions and joined in your support. Therefore, think well of what you are about to do! To break off your friendly relations with France, is to compel France to take sides against Spain; and if the powerful voice of France is heard against the Jesuits, the single voice of Spain will be powerless to uphold them."

"Well, then, let them go!" cried the duke. "What care I for the Jesuits when the defence of our honor is concerned? Sir Cardinal, farewell; however France may decide, Spain will never submit to her arrogance!"

The duke abruptly left the room, slamming the door after him.

Cardinal Bernis saw his departure with an expression of sadness.

“And such are the friendships of man,” he murmured to himself; “the slightest offence is sufficient to destroy a friendship of many years. Well, we must reconcile ourselves to it,” he continued after a pause, “and, at all events, it has its very diverting side. For many months I have taken pains to support Grimaldi with the pope in his defence of the Jesuits, and now that celebrated order will be abolished because a French cook has bought a fish that was too dear for the Spanish cook! By what small influences are the destinies of mankind decided!

“But now I have not a moment to lose,” continued the cardinal, rousing himself from his troubled thoughts. “Grimaldi has rendered it impossible for me longer to oppose the views of the Marquise de Pompadour; I must now give effect to the commands of my feminine sovereign, and announce to the pope the assent of France to his policy. To the pope, then, the letter of the marquise may make known the will of Louis!”

The cardinal hastily donned his official costume, and ordered his carriage for a visit to the Vatican.

CHAPTER XXVII.

POPE GANGANELLI (CLEMENT XIV).

Two men were walking up and down in the garden of the Quirinal, engaged in a lively discourse. One of them was an old man of more than sixty years. Long white locks waved about his forehead, falling like a halo on both sides of his cheeks. An infinite mildness and clearness looked out from his dreamy eyes, and a smile of infinite kindness played about his mouth, but so full of sorrow and resignation that it filled one's heart with sadness and his eyes with tears. His tall, herculean form was bent and shrunken; age had broken it, but could not take away that noble and dignified expression which distinguished that old man and involuntarily impelled every one to reverence and a sort of adoration. To his friends and admirers this old man seemed a super-terrestrial being, and often in their enthusiasm they called him their Saviour, the again-visible Son of God! The old man would smile at this, and say: “You are right in one respect, I am indeed a son of God, as you all are, but when you compare me with our Saviour, it can only be to the crucified. I am, indeed, a crucified person like Him, and have suffered many torments. But I have also overcome many.”

And, when so speaking, there lay in his face an almost celestial clearness and joyfulness, which would impel one involuntarily to bow down before him, had he not been, as he was, the vicegerent of God upon earth, the Pope Ganganelli.