

Tizianello

Alfred de Musset

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Done into English by M. Raoul Pellissier

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CHAPTER I

IN the month of February, in the year 1580, a young man was crossing, at break of day, the Piazzetta, in Venice. His clothes were in disorder: his hat, on which was a fine scarlet plume waving in the breeze, was pushed down over his forehead. He was walking rapidly toward the *Riva degli Schiavoni*, his sword and mantle dragging in the dust, while, with a disdainful air, he cautiously stepped over the forms of the fishermen scattered on the ground. Having reached the *Ponte della Paglia*, he stopped and looked about him. The moon was setting behind the *Giudecca*, and the aurora of the morning was gilding the Ducal Palace. A thick smoke and a brilliant light from time to time escaped from a neighboring palace. Beams, stones, enormous blocks of marble, and other debris encumbered the *Canal of Prisons*. In the midst of the waters a fire had just destroyed a patrician's home. Flying sparks rose upward every moment, and by this brilliant light an armed soldier was to be seen mounting guard over the ruins.

But our young man seemed struck neither by this spectacle of destruction nor by the beauty of a sky tinged with the most delicate colors. For a time he looked in the distance, as if to distract his dazzled eyes. But the light of day seemed to have a disagreeable influence on him, for he folded his mantle round him and hastened on his way. He soon came to a stop at the door of a palace, on which he knocked. A valet, holding a candle in his hand, opened immediately. At the moment of entering he turned, and, casting a look at the sky, cried:

"By Bacchus, my carnival is costing me dearly!" This young man was named Pomponio Filippo Vecellio. He was Titian's second son, a child full of spirits and imagination, whose father cherished fond hopes for him, but whose passion for play led him continually into riotous ways. It was scarce four years since the great painter and his eldest son Orazio had died, almost at the same time, and young Pippo, in four years, had already squandered the greater part of the immense fortune that this double inheritance had brought him. Instead of cultivating his natural abilities and sustaining the glory of his name, he spent his days in sleeping and his nights in playing at the house of a certain Comtesse, or at least so-called Comtesse, Orsini, who made the ruination of the young Venetians her business. There assembled at her house every night a numerous company of nobles and courtiers. There they supped and played, and as their supper cost them nothing, it goes without saying, that the dice took care to indemnify the mistress of the house. While the sequins were piling up in heaps, Cyprus wine was flowing, and the victims were ogling their hostess and, doubly dazed, left behind them both their money and their reason.

It was from this dangerous spot that we have just seen emerge the hero of this tale, and he had suffered that night more than one loss. Besides having emptied his pockets at dice, the only picture he had ever completed, a picture that the connoisseurs voted excellent, had just been destroyed in the fire at the Dolfino Palace. It was an historical subject, treated with a spirit and a boldness of touch almost worthy of Titian himself. Sold to a wealthy senator, this canvas had suffered the same lot as a great number of valuable works. The imprudence of a valet had reduced this wealth to ashes. But that was Pippo's smallest trouble. He thought only of the bad luck which had followed him with such unusual obstinacy and of the dice which had caused his loss.

On returning home, his first act was to remove the cloth that covered his table and to count the money remaining in his drawer: then, being naturally of a gay and heedless character, when he had undressed, he sat at the window in his dressing-gown. Seeing that it was broad daylight, he wondered if he should close the shutters and go to bed or wake up like the rest of the world. It was a long time since he had seen the sun in the quarter whence it rises, and he found the sky more pleasing than usual. Before deciding to get up or to sleep, and still struggling against slumber, he took his chocolate on the balcony. As soon as his eyes closed, he could see a table, agitated hands and pale figures, and could hear the sound of the dice-boxes. "What fatal luck!" he murmured. "It is scarcely credible for one to lose with fifteen." And he saw his usual adversary, the old Vespasiano Memmo, throwing eighteen and taking possession of the gold that lay piled on the table. He quickly opened his eyes, to remove this bad dream, and watched the young girls walking on the quay. He seemed to see afar off a masked woman. He was astonished, although a carnival was taking place, for poor people are not masked, and it was strange that a Venetian lady should be out alone and on foot at such an hour.[1] But he saw that what he had taken for a mask was the face of a negress. He saw her soon from a closer point of view and noticed that she was possessed of tolerable good looks. She walked very fast, and a gust of wind driving her dress, streaked with

flowers, tight against her hips, showed the outline of a graceful figure. Pippo leaned on the balcony and saw, not without surprise, that the negress was knocking at his door.

[1 In bygone times, the Venetians were out and masked as long as the carnival lasted.]

The porter was slow in opening.

"What do you want?" cried the young man. "Is it I that you want, brunette? My name is Vecellio, and, as they are keeping you waiting, I will come and open the door myself."

The negress raised her head.

"Is your name Pomponio Vecellio?"

"Yes, or Pippo, whichever you wish."

"You are Titian's son?"

"At your service. What can I do for you?"

After casting a rapid and curious glance at Pippo, the negress stepped back a pace or two and cleverly threw up on the balcony a small box done up in paper, then rushed off precipitately, occasionally turning round. Pippo picked up the box, opened it and found a delicate purse wrapped up in cotton. He suspected with reason that under the cotton there might be a note explaining this adventure. The note was there, all right, but was as mysterious as the rest, for it contained but these words:

"Do not spend too lavishly what I enclose. When you go out put to my charge a gold piece; that is sufficient for one day. And if in the evening there is anything left, however little it may be, you can find a beggar who will thank you for it."

When the young man had turned the box a hundred different ways, examined the purse, and again looked at the quay, at least he saw clearly that he could discover no more. "I must admit," he thought, "that this gift is peculiar, but is cruelly ill-timed. The advice I am given is good, but it is too late to tell any one he is drowning, when he is at the bottom of the Adriatic. Who the devil can have sent me this?"

Pippo had easily recognized that the negress was a servant. He began to rack his brains as to who was the woman, or the friend, likely to send him this present, and as his modesty did not blind him, he persuaded himself that it was more likely to be a woman than one of his friends. The purse was of velvet, embroidered with gold. It seemed to him that it was too delicately made to have come from any store. So he reviewed in his mind the most beautiful women in Venice, then those who were the opposite. But here he stopped and wondered what he could do to find out who had sent him the purse. Thereupon, he dreamed most deep and sweet dreams: more than once he thought he had guessed. His heart throbbed while he was doing his best to recognize the writing. There was a Princess of Bologna who formed her capital letters in this way, and a beautiful lady of Brescia whose writing was very similar.

Nothing is more disagreeable than an unpleasant idea suddenly gliding in among dreams of a like nature. It is just as if, while walking in a field of flowers, one stepped on a serpent. And it was just what Pippo felt when he suddenly remembered a certain Monna Bianchina, who latterly had particularly worried him. With this woman he had had an adventure at a masked ball, and although she was pretty, he felt no love whatever for her. Monna Bianchina, on the contrary, had suddenly fallen in love with him, and she had even forced herself to perceive love where, in reality, there was but politeness. She attached herself to him, wrote often and overwhelmed him with tender reproaches. But, on leaving her one day, he had sworn never to return, and he kept his word scrupulously. So he began to think that Monna Bianchina might well have made him a purse and sent it to him. This suspicion destroyed his gaiety and the illusions which buoyed him up. The more he reflected, the more likely he thought this supposition. Out of temper, he closed his window and decided to go to bed.

But he was unable to sleep. In spite of all the probabilities, it was impossible for him to give up a doubt that flattered his vanity. He continued involuntarily to dream. He wished to forget the purse and to think no more about it: he wanted to forget the very existence of Monna Bianchina. Nevertheless he had drawn the curtains and had turned his face toward the wall so as not to see daylight.

Suddenly he leaped out of bed and summoned his servants. He had suddenly thought of something, simple enough, that had hitherto escaped him. Monna Bianchina was far from rich. She had but one servant and this

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servant was not a negress, but a large girl from Chioja. How had she on this occasion been able to obtain this unknown messenger whom Pippo had never seen in Venice? "Blessed be your black skin," he cried, "and the African sun that colored it." And without waiting longer, he called for his doublet and ordered his gondola.

CHAPTER II

HE had resolved to call upon the Signora Dorothee, wife of Pasqualigo, the advocate. This lady, respected on account of her years, was one of the richest and most intelligent ladies of the republic. Besides, she was Pippo's godmother, and as there was no one of any distinction in Venice whom she did not know, he hoped she might help to fathom the mystery that surrounded him. Still, he thought it too early as yet to present himself before his patroness, and while waiting, strolled about under the Procuraties.

As luck willed it, whom should he meet there but Monna Bianchina, who was purchasing some cloth. He entered the store and without exactly knowing why, after a few commonplace remarks, he said to her, "Monna Bianchina, you sent me this morning a nice present, and gave me good advice. I tender you my most humble thanks."

Speaking in this tone of certainty, he perhaps expected at once to rid himself of the doubt that had tormented him. But Monna Bianchina was too cunning to exhibit surprise before having discovered if it was to her interest to show any. Although she had really sent nothing to the young man, she saw that here was the means of putting him off the scent. It is true, she answered that she did not know of what he was speaking, but she took good care, in saying this, to laugh so slyly and blush so modestly that Pippo remained convinced, despite appearances, that the purse was from her. "And since when," he asked her, "have you had that pretty negress at your command?"

Disconcerted by this question, and not knowing how to answer, Monna Bianchina hesitated a moment, and then gave a hearty laugh and bruskiy left him. Alone and disappointed Pippo gave up the visit he had planned, He went home, threw the purse in a corner, and no longer thought about it.

But some days later it happened that he lost a large sum in gambling and gave his note. As he went out to pay his debt, it seemed convenient for him to make use of this purse, which was large and looked well in his belt. So he took it, and that very night he played again and lost still more.

"Are you going on?" asked Ser Vespasiano, the old notary of the Chancellor's office, when Pippo had no more money.

"No," answered he, "I do not wish to play any more, on my note of hand."

"But I will lend you whatever you want," cried the Comtesse Orsini.

"And I also," said Ser Vespasiano.

"And I also," repeated one of the Comtesse's numerous nieces in a soft and sonorous voice; "but open your purse, Signor Vecellio, there is still another sequin inside."

Pippo smiled, and at the bottom of his purse found, in fact, a sequin, which he had forgotten. "So be it," said he, "let us have another throw, but I will risk no more." He took the dice-box, won, and, doubling the stakes, continued to play. In short, at the end of an hour he had made up his loss of the night before and that of the evening. "Are you going on?" in his turn he asked Ser Vespasiano, who no longer had anything in front of him.

"No! For I must be a big fool to allow myself to be drained by a man who would risk but one sequin. Cursed be that purse! No doubt it is bewitched."

The notary left the room furious. Pippo was preparing to follow him, when the niece, who had advised him, laughingly remarked, "Since it is to me you owe your luck, make me a present of the sequin which helped you to gain it."

This sequin had a small mark on it by which it could be recognized, Pippo looked for it, found it and he was already handing it over to the pretty niece, when he suddenly cried:

"No, my beautiful one, you can not have it. But to show you I am not greedy, here are ten others which I beg you to accept. As for this one, I wish to follow some advice lately given me and I present it to Providence."

So speaking, he threw the sequin out of the window. "Is it possible," he said to himself, on returning home, "that the purse of Monna Bianchina brings me luck? It would be a singular turn of fortune if a thing, which in itself is disagreeable to me, had a pleasing influence over me." And, in fact, it soon appeared to him that every time he made use of this purse, he won. When he placed a gold piece in it he could not help a certain superstitious feeling, and, in spite of himself, he sometimes reflected on the truth contained in the words he had found at the bottom of the box. "A sequin is a sequin," he would say to himself, "and there are plenty of people who do not

possess one for each day." This thought made him less imprudent and led him to somewhat curtail his expenses.

Unfortunately, Monna Bianchina had not forgotten her meeting with Pippo under the Procuraties. To confirm the mistake she had led him to believe in, from time to time she sent him a bouquet or some small nothing, accompanied by a short note. I have already stated that he was very tired of these attentions, to which he had made up his mind not to reply.

So it happened that Monna Bianchina, driven to desperation by this coldness, attempted a daring move, which greatly displeased the young man. She went alone to his house during his absence, bribed the servant, and succeeded in hiding in his room. On returning, he found her there, and felt himself obliged to tell her plainly that he had no love for her and that he begged her to leave him in peace.

La Bianchina, who, as I have said, was pretty, gave way to terrible anger. She overwhelmed Pippo with reproaches, but this time no longer tender ones. She told him he had deceived her in speaking of love, that she thought herself deeply injured, and finally, that she would be revenged. Pippo did not listen to all these threats, without himself being irritated. To show her that he was not afraid, he forced her, there and then, to take back a bouquet she had sent him that morning; and, as he happened to lay hands on the purse, he added: "Here, take this, too. This purse has brought me luck, but understand by this that I want nothing from you."

Hardly had he given way to this moment of anger, than he regretted it. Monna Bianchina took good care not to enlighten him regarding the lie she had told him. She was full of rage, but also of dissimulation. She took the purse and left, fully decided to make Pippo repent of the way in which he had treated her.

That evening he played as usual and lost. The following days brought no better luck. Ser Vespasiano always had the better dice and won considerable sums from him. He revolted against his luck and his superstition, became obstinate and lost again. At last, one day on leaving the Comtesse Orsini, he could not help crying on the stairs, "May God forgive me! I believe that old fool was right, and that my purse was bewitched, for I have not had a fair throw since the day I returned it to La Bianchina."

At this moment he perceived floating before him a dress embroidered with flowers, from which there appeared two active and slender legs; it was the mysterious negress. He doubled his pace, accosted her, and asked her who she was and to whom she belonged.

"Who knows?" answered the African, with a teasing laugh.

"You, I suppose. Are you not Monna Bianchina's servant?"

"No. Who is Monna Bianchina?"

"Well, by God! She it is who told you the other day to bring me that box which you so cleverly threw on to my balcony."

"Oh! Your Excellency, I do not think so."

"I know it; do not try to excuse yourself. It is she herself who told me."

"If she told you..." answered the negress in a hesitating manner. She shrugged her shoulders and thought for a moment. Then, giving Pippo a light tap on the cheek with her fan and running away, she cried:

"My fine gentleman, you have been tricked." The streets in Venice form a labyrinth so complicated, they cross in so many different ways, in such a various and unexpected way, that Pippo, after having let the young girl escape, could not find her again. He felt very embarrassed, for he had made two mistakes, the first in giving his purse to Bianchina, the second in not keeping the negress. Chancing to enter the town without being aware of it he went toward the palace of the Signora Dorothee, his godmother. He was sorry he had not made her the visit he had planned some days before. He was accustomed to consult her on everything that interested him and rarely had recourse to her without learning something.

He found her alone in the garden, and after having kissed her hand, remarked:

"My dear godmother, think of the foolishness of which I have just been capable. Not long ago, I received a purse..." But hardly had he said these words, when the Signora Dorothee began to laugh, "Well," said she, "is not the purse pretty? Do you find the golden flowers look well on the red velvet?"

"What!" cried the young man, "is it possible you know of this?"

At this moment, several senators entered the garden. The venerable lady rose to receive them and made no answer to the questions that Pippo, in his astonishment, continued to ask her.

CHAPTER III

WHEN the senators had left, the Signora Dorothee, in spite of her godson's prayers and importunity, absolutely refused to say more. She was annoyed that a sudden moment of mirth had made her acknowledge that she knew the secret of an adventure with which she wished to have nothing to do. Pippo still insisted.

"My dear child," said she, "all I can say is that it is true that I might be rendering you a service by giving you the name of the person who embroidered that purse for you, for she is assuredly one of the most noble and beautiful ladies in Venice. Let this be sufficient. In spite of my wish to oblige you, I must be silent. I will not betray a secret which I alone possess and which I could not tell you, unless requested to, for I could then honorably do so."

"Honorably, my dear godmother? But can you think that in confiding to me only..."

"I understand," answered the old lady. And as, despite her dignity, she could not help a little sarcasm, she added: "Since you sometimes write poetry, why not make this the subject of your verses?"

Seeing that he could find out nothing, Pippo put an end to his questions. But his curiosity, as one may think, was excited to no small degree. He stayed to dinner with the Pasqualigo, unable to make up his mind to leave his godmother and hoping that his fair unknown might possibly call that night. But he saw only senators, magistrates, and the most important men of the republic.

At sunset, the young man separated from the rest of the company and went and sat down in a little grove. He thought of what he must do and determined on two things: to make La Bianchina give up his purse, and to follow the advice that the Signora Dorothee had laughingly given him, that is to say, to write a poem on his adventure. He also resolved to give this poem, when finished, to his godmother, who would no doubt show it to his fair unknown. Not wishing to delay any longer, he at once put into execution his dual project.

After having arranged his doublet and carefully placed his hat on his head, he first examined himself in a mirror to see if he looked well, for his first thought had been to again deceive La Bianchina by fictitious protestations of love and to persuade her by kindness. But he soon gave up this idea, reflecting that in this way he would only bring to life the woman's passion and make further trouble for himself. He took the opposite course and hastily rushed to her house, as if he were furious. He prepared to create a scene and so well to intimidate her that she should henceforth leave him alone.

Monna Bianchina was one of those blonde Venetians with black eyes, whose resentment has always been looked upon as dangerous. Since he had so misused her, Pippo had not received a single message from her. She was, no doubt, preparing in silence the vengeance of which she had spoken. It was therefore necessary to strike a decisive blow, in default of increasing the harm done. She was about to go out when the young man arrived. He stopped her on the staircase and forced her to go back to her room.

"Unhappy woman!" he cried. "What have you done? You have destroyed all my hopes and your vengeance is accomplished!"

"Good God! What has happened to you?" asked La Bianchina, thunderstruck.

"Can you ask? Where is that purse that you told me came from you? Do you still dare lie to me?"

"What matters it if I have lied or not? I do not know where that purse has gone."

"You will die or return it!" cried Pippo, rushing at her. And, with no respect for a new gown which the poor woman had just put on, he violently tore away the cloth that covered her breast and placed his dagger on her heart.

La Bianchina thought her end had come and began to call for help, but Pippo choked her with his handkerchief, and without her being able to utter a sound, he forced her to return the purse, which happily she had kept. "You have caused trouble to a powerful family," he then told her. "You have forever troubled one of the most illustrious houses in Venice! Tremble! This redoubtable house watches you: neither you nor your husband will now take a single step without its being known. The Lords of the Night have inscribed your name in their book; think of the dungeons of the Ducal Palace! At the first word you say, that makes known the terrible secret that your malice has caused, your entire family disappears!"

With these words he left, and every one knows that in Venice none more terrifying could be uttered. The pitiless and secret arrests of the *Corte Maggiore* spread so great a terror that those who thought themselves even

suspected already looked upon themselves as dead. This was just what happened in the case of La Bianchina's husband, Ser Orio, whom she had told, in part, of the threat that Pippo had just made. It is true that she ignored the motives, and in fact Pippo himself ignored them, since all this was but a fable. But Ser Orio prudently thought it was not necessary to know why one had brought down upon oneself the wrath of the supreme court, and that the most important thing was to avoid it. He was not born in Venice. His parents lived on the mainland. So he embarked the next day with his wife and they were no longer spoken of. It was thus that Pippo found means of getting rid of La Bianchina, and of repaying her with interest for the injury she had done him. All her life she thought that a state secret was really connected with the purse, which she had wished to steal, and as in this strange event everything was a mystery to her, she could only conjecture. The parents of Ser Orio made this the subject of their particular conversation. Beginning with suppositions they finished by creating a plausible tale. "A great lady," said they, "had become enamored of Tizianello, that is to say, of Titian's son, who himself was in love with Monna Bianchina, and of course in vain. Now this great lady, who had herself embroidered a purse for Tizianello, was no other than the Doge's wife. Imagine her wrath on learning that Tizianello had sacrificed this gift of love to La Bianchina!"

Such was the family tradition repeated with lowered voices in the little house of Ser Orio in Padua.

Pleased with the success of his first enterprise, our hero now thought of attempting the second—to write a poem for his beautiful unknown. As the strange comedy in which he had taken part had moved him, in spite of himself, he commenced by rapidly writing one or two verses full of a certain rapture. Hope, love, mystery, all the impassioned expressions common to poets, rushed headlong through his mind. "But," thought he, "my godmother told me it was to do with one of the most noble and most beautiful ladies in Venice: I must therefore be proper and approach her with more respect."

He effaced what he had written, and passing from one extreme to the other, he put together a few sonorous lines to which he tried hard to adapt, not without trouble, thoughts similar to his lady; that is to say, the most beautiful and noble he could think of. For hope too bold, he substituted a fearful doubt; in the place of mystery and love, he spoke of respect and gratitude. Unable to eulogize the charms of a woman he had never seen, he, as delicately as possible, made use of some vague terms which might apply to all faces. Shortly, after two hours of thought and work, he had written twelve passable verses, extremely harmonious and very significant.

He made a careful copy on a fine sheet of parchment, and on the margins designed birds and flowers which he carefully colored. But directly his task was finished he read over his verses once more, and thereupon threw them out of the window into the canal, which passed close to the house. "Whatever am I doing?" he asked himself. "Of what use to follow up this adventure, if my conscience does not speak?"

He took his mandolin and walked up and down the room, singing and playing an old tune composed for some of Petrarch's sonnets. At the end of a quarter of an hour he stopped; his heart was throbbing. He no longer thought of conventionalities, nor of the effect he might produce. The purse he had seized from La Bianchina, and which he had just brought back in triumph, was lying on the table. He looked at it and said to himself: "The woman who made that for me must love me and know how to love, too. Such a work is long and difficult; those light threads, those brilliant colors take time, and in working, she thought of me. In the few words that accompanied that purse there was a friend's advice and not one ambiguous word. It is a love challenge sent by a woman with a heart. If she thought of me but for one day, I must bravely take up the glove."

He started again and in taking up his pen was more agitated by fear and hope than when he had risked the largest sums on the throw of the dice. Without reflecting and without stopping, he hastily wrote a sonnet, of which the following is about the meaning:

When first I conned the somber beauty of
 His song, I longed to tune my new-strung lyre
 And catch the wondrous harmony and fire—
 Whose endless fuel was brave Petrarch's love
 Of Laura sweet—that I might somehow prove
 Another Laura quite so loved. O, dire
 The effort! When did Boldness so aspire,
 Or tree-frog try to imitate the dove?

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Alas, I've Petrarch's message in my heart
And am a moody lover day and night
E'er breathing halting prose for poesy
And making putty ape the marbled art:
O, sweet, sad master of a death delight
For such fond sorrow I'd unhappy be!

Pippo then next day called at the house of the Signora Dorothee. As soon as he found himself alone with her, he placed his sonnet in the illustrious lady's lap, saying, "For your friend." The Signora at first appeared surprised, then she read the verses, and vowed she would never show them to any one. But Pippo only laughed, and as he was sure of the contrary, he left, assuring her he felt no uneasiness regarding the matter.

CHAPTER IV

NEVERTHELESS, he lived through the following week in great trouble, but this trouble was not without its charms. He remained at home and did not dare, so to speak, to stir up Fortune for fear of affecting it. In this he was wiser than one usually is, at his age, for he was only twenty-five, and the impatience of youth will often make us overreach ourselves in attempting too quickly to achieve our desires. Fortune wishes us to help ourselves and to know when the time is ripe: for, according to Napoleon's saying, she is a woman. But, for this very reason, she wishes to appear to grant that which is snatched from her, and she must be given time to open her hand.

It was on the ninth day, toward evening, that the capricious goddess knocked at the young man's door, and not for nothing, as you shall see. He went down and opened the door himself. The negress was on the step and held in her hand a rose, which she held to Pippo's lips.

"Kiss this flower," she said. "It carries a kiss from my mistress. Can she come and see you in safety?"

"It would be very imprudent," answered Pippo, "if she came in daylight. My servants could not help seeing her. Is it possible for her to go out in the evening?"

"No. Who would dare to in her place? She can neither go out in the evening, nor allow you to call on her."

"Then she must consent to go elsewhere, to some spot I will mention."

"No, she wishes to come here. See if you can not arrange it."

Pippo reflected for a few moments. "Can your mistress rise early?" he asked the negress.

"At the same hour as the sun."

"Well, listen. I generally get up very late, consequently every one sleeps to a late hour. If your mistress can come at daybreak I will await her, and she can reach here without being seen by a soul. As regards her leaving later on, I will look after that—that is, if she can stay with me till evening."

"She will do it. Will to-morrow be convenient?"

"To-morrow at daybreak," said Pippo. He slipped a handful of sequins under the messenger's gorget; then, without asking any further questions, he went back to his room and shut himself in, resolved to watch till daylight. He at first undressed, so that it might be thought he was going to bed. When he was alone, he lit a good fire, put on an embroidered shirt, a scented collar, and a white velvet doublet with sleeves of Chinese satin. Then, when all was in order, he sat by the window and began to think of his adventure.

He was not so favorably impressed as one might think by the promptitude with which his lady had accorded him an interview. You must not forget either that this story is taking place in the sixteenth century, and that love affairs were then much quicker arranged than now. From the most authentic testimony it appears certain that in these times what we should call indelicacy was classed as sincerity, and there are even grounds for thinking that what is to-day named virtue then appeared to be hypocrisy. However this may be, a woman in love with some fine fellow soon gave herself to him and he would for this reason have no worse an opinion of her. No one thought of blushing for that which appeared natural. In these times, a gentleman of the Court of France would carry on his hat, in the place of a plume, a silken stocking belonging to his mistress, and he would carelessly tell those who were surprised to see him in the Louvre in this attire, that it was the stocking of a woman who was making him die of love.

Besides, such was Pippo's character that, had he been born in the present century, he would perhaps still have been of the same mind. Despite much dissipation and folly, if he was capable of sometimes lying to others, he never lied to himself. By this I mean that he liked things for what they were worth and not for appearances, and that, while fully capable of dissimulation, he never intrigued unless his desires were real. If he thought the letter he had received was but a whim, at least he did not think it the whim of a coquette: I told you just now the reasons, which were, the care and delicacy with which the purse had been embroidered and the time it must have taken to do it.

While his spirit was endeavoring to anticipate the happiness in store for him, he thought of a Turkish marriage of which he had been told. When the Orientals take unto themselves a wife, they see the face of their fiancée only after marriage, and until then she remains veiled before him, as before every one else. They rely on what their parents have told them and marry in this way on what they have heard. The ceremony over, the young wife shows

herself to her husband, who can then settle for himself whether the bargain was good or bad. As it is too late to draw back, there remains nothing to be done but to find it good, and these unions do not seem any more unhappy than others.

Pippo found himself in just the same position as a Turkish fiance. It is true he did not expect to find a virgin in his unknown lady, but he easily consoled himself for this. Besides, there was this difference to his advantage, that it was not such a solemn tie he was about to contract. He could give himself up to the charms of expectation and surprise without troubling about the inconvenience, and this consideration seemed sufficient to make up for what might otherwise be lacking. So he imagined this night to be his bridal one, and it is not to be wondered at that at his age this thought caused him transports of joy.

The first bridal night, in fact, to an active imagination must be one of the greatest possible pleasures, for it is preceded by no trouble. Philosophers insist, it is true, that trouble gives more relish to the pleasure she accompanies, but Pippo thought that a strong sauce did not make fish any the fresher. He liked easy possession, but he did not wish it gross, and unhappily it is an almost invariable law that exquisite pleasure is dearly bought. But the marriage night is an exception to this rule. It is a unique circumstance in life, which at the same time satisfies the two longings most dear to a man, indolence and lust. It brings to a young man's bedroom a woman crowned with flowers, who ignores love, and whose mother has attempted, since she was fifteen, to ennoble her soul and to adorn her spirit. To obtain a look from this beautiful creature you might perhaps have to beg for a whole year; nevertheless, to possess this treasure, the husband has only to open his arms. The mother is absent and God himself allows it. If on awakening from such a beautiful dream one finds one is not married, who would not wish to do it every night ?

Pippo did not regret not having questioned the negress, for a servant, in such a case, can not help but praise her mistress were she even uglier than sin, and the two words let fall by the Signora Dorothee were sufficient. He would only have liked to know if she was a blonde or a brunette. To form an idea of a woman, when one knows she is beautiful, nothing is more important than to know the color of her hair. Pippo hesitated for a long time between the two colors; finally, so as to be at peace, he imagined her hair to be auburn.

But he was then unable to determine the color of her eyes. Had she been a brunette he would have supposed them black—blue if she were blonde. He pictured them as blue, not that clear and undefined blue that is by turn both gray and greenish, but that azure blue like the sky, which in moments of passion takes a more somber hue and becomes as dark as a raven's wing.

Hardly had these charming eyes appeared before him with a tender and profound look, than his imagination encircled them with a brow white as snow, and two cheeks as rosy as the rays of the sun on the summit of the Alps. Between these two cheeks, as soft as a peach, he imagined he saw a tapering nose like that of the ancient bust which has been called "Greek Love." Underneath, a vermilion mouth, neither too large nor too small, allowed a fresh and voluptuous breath to escape between two rows of pearls. The chin was well formed and slightly rounded, the expression frank but somewhat haughty. On a rather long neck, which was smooth and of an ivory white, this gracious and altogether sympathetic[2] head was softly poised like a flower on its stem. As for this beautiful image, created by imagination, it only lacked being real. "She is coming," thought Pippo, "she will be here when day arrives;" and what is not the least surprising part of his strange dream was that unknowingly he had just painted his future mistress's portrait exactly.

[2 *Simpatica*—An Italian word which has no equivalent in our language, perhaps because our character does not possess the equivalent of what it expresses.]

When the State Frigate, which guards the entrance to the Port, fired a gun to indicate six in the morning, Pippo saw that the light from his lamp was becoming reddish and that the glass in his window was of a light-blue tint. He immediately went to the casement. This time he no longer looked around him with half-closed eyes. Although he had not slept, he never felt more free and active. Dawn began to show itself, but Venice was still sleeping: that lazy home of pleasure does not awaken so early. At the hour when our shops are opening, the passers-by crossing the streets, carriages rolling, in Venice, the mist was playing on the deserted lagoon and covered the silent palaces as with a shroud. The wind hardly caused a ripple. A few sails appeared far off on the shores of Fusina, carrying

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the day's provisions to the "Queen of the Sea." Alone, at the summit of the sleeping city, the shining angel of the Campanile of Saint Mark's reared itself from out the twilight, and the sun's first rays gleamed on the golden wings.

But the innumerable churches of Venice were loudly ringing the Angelus. The pigeons of the republic, warned by the sound of the bells, the strokes of which they can count with marvelous instinct, were swiftly crossing the flank of the Riva degli Schiavoni in flocks, attracted by the grain regularly scattered for them at that hour in the great square. The mist was lifting, little by little, and the sun appeared. A few fishermen were shaking their cloaks and began to clean their boats: one of them was singing, in a clear voice, a verse from a national air. A bass voice answered from the depths of a merchant ship; another, further off, joined in the chorus of the second verse. Soon the choir was organized, each did his part while still working, and a beautiful matutinal saluted the daylight.

Pippo's house was situated on the bank of the Schiavoni, not far from the Nani Palace, at the junction of a small canal. At this instant, at the end of this obscure canal, shone the prow of a gondola. A solitary gondolier was on the stern, but the frail boat was cleaving the water with the rapidity of an arrow, and seemed to glide over the thick mirror in which its flat oar was dipped at regular intervals. At the moment when it passed under the bridge which separates the canal from the great lake, the gondola stopped. A masked woman, of a noble and slender figure, came out and went toward the quay. Pippo immediately went down and advanced toward her. "Is it you?" said he to her in a low voice. For all answer she took the hand he held out and followed him. Not a single domestic in the house was, as yet, awake. Without a word, on tiptoe they crossed the lower gallery where the porter slept. Having reached the young man's room, the lady sat on a sofa and remained thoughtful for a while. She removed her mask. Pippo understood then that the Signora Dorothee had not deceived him, and that he had before him, as she had said, one of the most beautiful women in Venice, and the heiress of two noble families, Beatrice Loredano, widow of the procurator Donato.

CHAPTER V

IT is impossible to paint in mere words the beauty of the first glances which Beatrice cast about her when she had uncovered her face. Although she had been a widow for eighteen months, she was but twenty-five, and if the step she had just taken has appeared bold to the reader, it was the first time in her life she had taken a similar one: for it is certain that until then she had loved no one but her husband. Besides, this proceeding had so worried her that, so as not to change her purpose on the way, she had been obliged to summon all her strength, and now her eyes were at the same time full of love, confusion, and courage.

Pippo looked at her with such admiration that he was incapable of speaking. Whatever the circumstances, it is impossible to see a perfectly beautiful woman without astonishment and without respect. Pippo had often met Beatrice when out walking, and at private parties. He had himself praised her beauty a hundred times and had heard others do the same. She was a daughter of Pietro Loredano, member of the Council of Ten, and great-granddaughter of the famous Loredano, who took such an active part in the trial of Giacomo Foscari. The pride of this family was but too well known in Venice, and Beatrice passed, in the eyes of all, as having inherited the spirit of her ancestors. When still quite young, she had been married to the procurator Marco Donato, and the death of the latter had left her free and in possession of great wealth. The first nobles of the republic were her suitors, but she answered the efforts they made to please her with but disdainful indifference. In a word, her lofty and almost savage character had, so to speak, become a proverb. Pippo was therefore doubly surprised, for if, on the one side, he had never supposed that his mysterious conquest was Beatrice Donato, on the other, it seemed to him, on looking at her, that he saw her for the first time, so different was she from herself. Love, which can give charms to the most vulgar face, at this moment was showing her omnipotence in thus embellishing one of nature's masterpieces.

After a few moments of silence, Pippo approached his lady and took her hand. He tried to picture to her his surprise and to thank her for his happiness, but she did not answer and did not appear to be listening. She remained immovable and seemed to distinguish nothing, as if all that surrounded her had been a dream. He spoke to her for a long time, without her making a single movement; nevertheless, he placed his arm round Beatrice's waist and sat down near her.

"You sent me yesterday," said he to her, "a kiss on a rose. Allow me to return what I have received, on a more beautiful and fresher flower."

While talking thus he kissed her on the lips. She made no effort to stop him, but her looks, which appeared to be wandering, suddenly became fixed on Pippo. She softly pushed him away, and shaking her head with a sadness full of grace, she said:

"You will not love me, but will only treat me as a fancy. But I love you and I wish, first of all, to kneel before you." And in fact she did bend before him. Pippo vainly held her, begging her to rise, but she slipped through his arms and knelt on the floor.

It is not usual nor even agreeable to see a woman take this humble position. Although it is a mark of love, it seems to exclusively belong to man. It is a penitent attitude that one can not see without emotion, and which has sometimes exacted, from a judge, pardon for the guilty. Pippo watched with growing surprise the admirable spectacle before him. If he had been seized with respect on seeing Beatrice, what must he have felt on seeing her at his feet? The widow of Donato, the daughter of Loredano, was on her knees. Her velvet robe, embroidered with silver flowers, covered the flagstones; her veil and her hair undone were trailing on the ground. In this beautiful frame there appeared her white shoulders and her joined hands, while her wet eyes were raised to Pippo. Moved to the depths of his heart, he retreated a step or two and felt intoxicated with pride. He was not noble and the patrician haughtiness that Beatrice threw off, passed like a flash of lightning through the young man's heart.

But this flash lasted only for a second and rapidly vanished. Such a sight is bound to produce more than a feeling of vanity. When we bend over a limpid spring our image immediately appears and our approach brings to life a brother who, at the bottom of the water, comes before us. So, in the human soul, love calls love and gives it birth with a look. Pippo also fell on his knees. In this position, one before the other, they both remained for a few moments, exchanging their first kisses.

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If Beatrice was a daughter of the Loredanos, the gentle blood of her mother, Bianca Contarini, also flowed in her veins. Never was there a better creature in the world than this mother, who was also one of the beauties of Venice. Always happy and pleasant, thinking only of living in peace, but in times of war loving her country, Bianca seemed the elder sister of her daughters. She died young, and dead, was still beautiful.

It was through her that Beatrice had learned to understand and to love art, and especially painting. Not that the young widow became very learned on this subject. She had been to Rome and to Florence and the masterpieces of Michelangelo had only inspired her with curiosity. As a Roman, she loved Raphael; but as a daughter of the Adriatic, she preferred Titian. While all around her every one was busy with the intrigues of the court or the affairs of the republic, she was bothered only about new pictures and as to what her favorite art would become after the death of old Vecellio. She had seen in the Dolfino Palace the picture of which I spoke at the beginning of this story, the only one that Tizianello had painted, and which had perished in a fire. After having admired this canvas, she had met Pippo at the Signora Dorothee's and had been seized with an irresistible love for him.

Painting in the time of Julius II. and Leo X. was not a business as it is to-day. It was a religion for the artists, an enlightened taste for the great nobles, a glory for Italy, and a passion for women. When a pope left the Vatican to visit Buonarotti, the daughter of a Venetian noble could love Tizianello without shame. But Beatrice had conceived an idea that elevated and emboldened her passion. She wished to make of Pippo more than her lover; she wished to make of him a great painter. She knew the dissipated life he led and had resolved to draw him away from it. She knew that in him, despite his follies, the sacred fire of Art was not dead but merely covered with cinders and she hoped that love might revive the divine spark. She had hesitated for a whole year, cherishing this idea in secret, meeting Pippo from time to time and looking at his windows when she passed along the quay. A whim had led her on: she had been unable to resist the temptation to embroider a purse and send it to him. She had promised herself, it is true, to go no further and never to attempt more. But when the Signora Dorothee had shown her the verses that Pippo had written for her, she had wept tears of joy. She was aware of the risk she was taking in trying to realize her dream, but it was the dream of a woman, and she had said on leaving her house—"What a woman wishes, God wills."

Led and sustained by this thought, by her love and by her sincerity, she felt herself under the shelter of her fear. In kneeling before Pippo, she had just made her first prayer to love, but after the sacrifice of her pride, the impatient god asked of her another. She hesitated no more about becoming the mistress of Tizianello than if she had been his wife.

She removed her veil and placed it on a statue of Venus that was in the room; then, as beautiful and as pale as the marble goddess, she abandoned herself to Fate.

She spent the day with Pippo, as had been arranged. At sunset the gondola that had brought her came to take her away. She left as secretly as she had entered. The servants had been sent off, under various pretexts, and the porter alone remained in the house. Accustomed to his master's manner of life, he was not surprised to see a masked woman cross the gallery with Pippo. But when he saw the lady, on nearing the door, lift her mask and Pippo give her a last kiss, he noiselessly advanced and listened.

"Had you never noticed me?" Beatrice was gaily asking.

"Yes," answered Pippo, "but I did not know your face. You yourself, I am sure, do not doubt your beauty."

"Nor you either. You are as beautiful as day, a thousand times more so than I thought. Shall you love me?"

"Yes, and for a long time."

"And I always."

With these words they separated and Pippo remained on the step, following with his eyes the gondola that was carrying Beatrice Donato.

CHAPTER VI

TWO weeks had passed and Beatrice had not yet spoken of the project she had formed. To tell the truth, she had somewhat forgotten it herself. The first days of an amorous union are like the voyages of the Spaniards when they discovered the new world. On embarking, they promised their government to follow precise instructions, to bring back maps, and to civilize America. But hardly had they arrived when the sight of an unknown sky, a virgin forest, a mine of gold or silver made them lose their memory. To run after a novelty, they forgot their promises and the whole of Europe, but they happened to discover a treasure: and thus will lovers sometimes act.

Still another reason gave Beatrice an excuse. During these two weeks Pippo had not gambled and had not once gone to the Comtesse Orsini's. It was the beginning of wisdom. At least Beatrice thought so, and I do not know if she was right or wrong. Pippo passed half the day with his mistress and the other half in watching the sea and in drinking the wine of Samos in an alehouse of the Lido. His friends no longer saw him. He had altered all his habits and worried neither about time, the hour of day, nor his actions.

In a word, he was enthused with the deep forgetfulness of all things which the first kisses of a beautiful woman always leave behind them, and can you say of a man, in such a case, that he was wise or foolish?

To make use of a word which expresses it all, Pippo and Beatrice were made for each other. They had noticed it since the first day, but still they wanted time to be convinced of it, and for that a month was not too long. So a month went by without a word about painting. On the other hand, love, music on the water and walks outside the city were much indulged in. Great ladies sometimes prefer a secret pleasure party at an inn in the suburbs, to a small supper in a boudoir. Beatrice was of this opinion, and she preferred a fresh fish eaten *tete-a-tete* with Pippo under the arbors of Quintavalle, to even the dinners of the Doge. The meal over, they would get into a gondola and go wandering around the Island of the Armenians. It is there, between the city and the Lido, between the sky and the sea, that I advise the reader to go, on a fine moonlight night, and make love to the ladies of Venice.

At the end of a month, one day when Beatrice had secretly come to Pippo, she found him happier than usual. When she entered, he had just breakfasted and was walking up and down, singing. The sun lit up his room and caused a silver dish full of sequins to glisten. He had gambled the previous night and had won fifteen hundred piasters from Ser Vespasiano. With this sum he had purchased a Chinese fan, perfumed gloves, and a gold chain made in Venice and wonderfully chased. He placed these all in a cedar box encrusted with mother-of-pearl, which he offered to Beatrice.

At first she received his present with pleasure. But soon after, when she had learned that it came from money won by gambling, she no longer wished to accept it. Instead of joining in Pippo's cheerfulness, she fell to dreaming. Perhaps she thought he already loved her less, since he had gone back to his old pleasures. However that may be, she saw that the moment had come for speaking, and for attempting to make him give up the bad habits into which he was again to fall.

It was a difficult undertaking. In a month she had been able to fathom Pippo's character. He was, it is true, extremely lazy as regards ordinary events of life, and he practised the *far niente* with delight. But for more important things it was not easy to master him, on account of this very idleness. For as soon as persons wished to master him, instead of struggling and disputing, he let them speak their mind and none the less had his own way. To accomplish her purpose, Beatrice asked him if he would paint her portrait.

He consented without demur. The next day he bought a canvas, and had brought into his room a fine easel of carved oak which had belonged to his father. Beatrice came in the morning, clothed in an ample brown gown, which she removed when Pippo was ready to start work. Then she appeared before him in a costume almost identical with that in which Paris Bordone had clothed his "Crowned Venus." Her hair, knotted in front and intermingled with pearls, fell over her arms and shoulders in long waving locks. A necklace of pearls which fell to her waist and was fastened in the middle of her bosom with a clasp of gold, followed and set off the perfect outline of her naked form. Her dress of variable taffeta, blue and pink, was held up at the knee by a ruby clasp, leaving uncovered a leg as polished as marble. She also wore rich bracelets and slippers of scarlet velvet, laced with gold.

The "Venus" of Bordone is, as is well known, nothing but the portrait of a Venetian lady; and this painter,

pupil of Titian, had a great reputation in Italy. But Beatrice, who possibly knew the model, well knew that she was possessed of far greater beauty. She wished to excite Pippo's emulation and she pointed out to him that in this way he could surpass Bordone. "By the blood of Diana!" cried the young man when he had examined her for some time, "the 'Crowned Venus' is but an oyster-woman from the Arsenal disguised as a goddess; but behold the mother of love and the mistress of the God of Battle!"

It is easy to believe that his first care, on seeing such a beautiful model, was not to begin painting. For a moment Beatrice thought she was too beautiful and had not set about her projects of reform in a manner at all likely to succeed. However, the portrait was begun, but was sketched by a heedless hand. By chance Pippo's brush fell. Beatrice picked it up, and on returning it to her lover, said to him: "Your father's brush one day fell from his hand in like manner. Charles V. picked it up and returned it to him. I wish to do as Caesar did, although I am no empress."

Pippo had always felt for his father the greatest affection and admiration, and never spoke of him but with respect. This reminder impressed him. He rose and opened a cupboard. "There is the paint-brush of which you speak," said he to Beatrice while pointing it out. "My poor father kept it like a relic, ever since the master of half the world had touched it."

"Were you present at this scene," asked Beatrice, "and could you tell me all about it?"

"I was very young," answered Pippo, "but I remember. It was at Bologna. There had been an interview between the Pope and the Emperor. It was a question of the Duchy of Florence, or rather of the destiny of Italy. Paul III. and Charles V. had been talking on a terrace, and during their conversation the entire town was still. At the end of an hour everything was settled. A great sound of men and horses succeeded the silence. They were ignorant of what had happened and anxious to find out, but the deepest secrecy had been enjoined. It was with curiosity and terror that the inhabitants watched pass even the smallest officer of the two courts. The dismemberment of Italy, exiles and new principalities were all hinted at. My father was working on a large picture and was at the top of a ladder which he used for painting, when some halberdiers, pike in hand, entered and ranged themselves against the wall. A page entered and cried in a loud voice, 'Caesar!' A few minutes after, the Emperor appeared in his stiff doublet and smiling through his red beard. My father, surprised and charmed at this unexpected visit, came down from his ladder as quickly as he could. He was old, and upon leaning on the rail, he let fall his paint-brush. Every one remained motionless, for the presence of the Emperor had turned us into statues. My father became confused at his slowness and awkwardness, but feared to fall should he hurry. Charles V. took a few steps forward, bent slowly and picked up the paint-brush. 'Titian,' said he, in a clear and imperious voice, 'Titian well deserves to be waited on by Caesar.' And with a majesty really unequalled, he returned the brush to my father, who knelt to receive it."

After this story, which Pippo was unable to tell without emotion, Beatrice remained silent for some time. She bent her head and appeared so absorbed that he asked her of what she was thinking.

"I am thinking of one thing," she answered. "Charles V. is dead now, and his son is King of Spain. What would be thought of Phillip, if instead of carrying his father's sword, he allowed it to rust in an armory?"

Pippo smiled, and although he had understood Beatrice's thoughts, he asked her what she meant.

"I mean to say," she answered, "that you, also, are a king's son, for Bordone, Moretto and Romanino are good painters; Tintoretto and Giorgione were artists; but Titian was a king—and who now wields his scepter?"

"My brother Orazio," answered Pippo, "would have been a great painter, had he lived."

"Without doubt," answered Beatrice, "and this is what will be said of the sons of Titian: 'One could have been great had he lived, and the other, if he had wished.'"

"Do you think so?" said Pippo, laughing. "Well, they will surely add: 'But he preferred going about in a gondola with Beatrice Donato.'"

As it was a different answer Beatrice had hoped for, she was rather disconcerted. However, she did not lose courage but spoke more seriously.

"Listen to me," said she, "and do not laugh. The only picture you have painted has been admired. There is no one who does not regret its loss, but the life you lead is something worse than the burning of the Dolfino Palace, for it is consuming you yourself. You think of nothing but enjoying yourself and do not reflect that what is for others but an amusement is a shame to you. The son of a rich merchant can play with the dice, but not Tizianello. Of what use is it that you know as much as our oldest painters and that you possess the youth they lack? You have

only to try to succeed, and you will not try. Your friends deceive you, but I do my duty in telling you that you disgrace your father's name; and who will tell you, if not myself? So long as you are rich, you will find people to assist in your ruin. So long as you are good-looking, women will love you. But what will happen if you are not told the truth while still young? I am your mistress, my Lord, but I wish also to be your lover. Would to God you had been born poor! If you love me, you must work. In a district far from the town, I have discovered a small unpretentious house, with but one floor. We will furnish it, if you wish, to our taste and we will have two keys: one shall be for you, and I will keep the other. There we need fear no one and shall be free. You shall have an easel brought there, and if you will promise to work just two hours a day, I will come and see you there every day. Have you enough patience for this? If you agree, a year hence you will probably no longer love me, but you will have become accustomed to working and there will be one more famous name for Italy. If you refuse, I can not cease loving you, but it will show you do not love me."

While Beatrice was talking she trembled. She feared to offend her lover, yet she had taken upon herself to speak unreservedly. This fear and the desire to please caused her eyes to sparkle. She no longer resembled Venus but a Muse.

Pippo did not answer immediately. He found her so beautiful that he left her some time in doubt. To tell the truth, he had paid less attention to her remonstrances than to the tone in which they had been pronounced; but this penetrating voice had charmed him. Beatrice had spoken with all her soul, in the purest Tuscan and with Venetian gentleness. When a lively *arietta* proceeds from a beautiful mouth, we do not take much notice of the words. It is sometimes even more agreeable not to hear them too distinctly, and to allow ourselves to be carried away by the music alone. This was just about what Pippo did. Without thinking of what was being demanded of him, he approached Beatrice, kissed her on the forehead, and said:

"Anything you wish, for you are as beautiful as an angel."

It was arranged that from that day Pippo would work regularly. Beatrice wished him to put it in writing. She produced her tablets and writing a few lines with loving pride, said:

"You know that we Loredanos, we keep strict accounts:[3] I put you down as my debtor for two hours of work every day for a year. Sign and pay me as you should, so that I may know you love me."

[3 When Foscari was tried, Jacques Loredanos, son of Pierre, thought, or believed he thought, it his duty to avenge the losses of his family. In his books (for he was in business, like almost all the patricians at this time) he had entered in his own writing the name of the Doge as a debtor—"for the death," so it read, "of my father and my uncle." On the other side of the register he had left a blank page whereon to inscribe the payment of this debt, and, in fact, after the loss of the Doge, he wrote *L'ha pagata*—"he has paid."—(*Darn. History of the Republic of Venice.*)]

Pippo willingly signed. "But it is well understood," said he, "that I shall begin by painting your portrait."

Beatrice kissed him and whispered in his ear, "And I also will make your portrait, a fine portrait, exactly like you, not inanimate, but alive." **CHAPTER VII**

THE love of Pippo and Beatrice could at first be compared to a spring escaping from the ground. It now resembled a stream trickling away, little by little, and cutting out a bed for itself in the sand.

Had Pippo been of noble birth, he would certainly have married Beatrice. For the better, they became acquainted, the more they loved each other. But, although the Vecelli were a good family from Cador, in Frioul, such a union was not possible. Not only would Beatrice's nearest relatives have opposed it, but all in Venice who bore patrician names would have been indignant. Those who most willingly tolerated intrigues of love, and who found nothing to blame in the fact that a noble lady was the mistress of a painter, would never have forgiven that same woman, had she married her lover. Such were the ideas of this epoch, which perhaps were less objectionable than our own.

The small house was furnished. Pippo kept his word and went there every day. To say that he worked would be too much, but he made pretense of so doing, or rather he thought he was working. Beatrice, on her side, went farther than her promise, for she always arrived first. The portrait was sketched; it progressed slowly, but was on the easel, and although it was hardly touched most of the time, at least it acted as a witness, to encourage love or

maybe to excuse idleness.

Every morning Beatrice sent her negress to her lover with a bouquet, so that he should become accustomed to rising early. "A painter should be awake at dawn," said she; "the light of the sun is his life and the true element of his art, since he can do nothing without it."

This admonition appeared just, in Pippo's eyes, but to follow it was difficult. He would place the bouquet in the glass of sweetened water which he had on his table and fall asleep again. When, on his way to the little house, he passed under the windows of the Comtesse Orsini, it seemed to him as if his money was uneasy in his pocket. One day, when out for a walk, he met Ser Vespasiano, who asked why they no longer saw him.

"I have taken an oath never to hold a dice-box again," he answered, "and never to touch a card. But, since you are here, let us play heads or tails with what money we have with us."

Ser Vespasiano, who, although an old man, and a lawyer, was none the less passionately fond of play, and took good care not to refuse this proposal. He threw a piastre in the air, lost thirty sequins, and went away little satisfied. "What a pity," thought Pippo, "not to play just now! I am sure that Beatrice's purse would continue to bring me luck, and that in eight days I should regain what I have lost during the last two years."

But it was with great pleasure that he obeyed his mistress. His little studio appeared alike most gay and most peaceful. It was as if he was in a new world, of which, nevertheless, he had a faint remembrance, for his canvas and his easel recalled the days of his infancy. Things that were once familiar soon become so again, and this facility, added to the remembrance, endear them to us without our knowing why. When Pippo took his palette one fine morning and squeezed out his paints on it; when he saw them arranged in order and ready to mix under the guidance of his hand, he seemed to hear behind him the hoarse voice of his father crying, as of old, "Now then, lazybones, what are you dreaming of? Get bravely to work!" At this thought, he turned his head, but instead of the severe countenance of Titian, he saw Beatrice, her arms and bosom bare, her forehead crowned with pearls, preparing to pose for him, and laughingly remarking, "When you are pleased to be ready, my lord."

You must not think he was indifferent to the advice she gave him, and of this she was not sparing. Sometimes she would speak to him of the Venetian masters and of the glorious place they held in the schools of Italy. Sometimes, after having reminded him to what a height art had risen, she would point out its decadence. She was only too correct on this subject, for Venice was then doing what Florence had done before. She was losing not only her glory, but the respect for glory. Michelangelo and Titian had both lived almost a century. After having taught their country art, they had struggled against disorder as long as was possible for human force; but these two old columns had, at length, crumbled. In instructing obscure amateurs in the crude, the masters, hardly buried, were forgotten.

Brescia and Cremona opened new schools, and proclaimed them superior to the old ones. Even in Venice, the son of one of Titian's pupils, usurping the nickname given to Pippo, like him, had himself styled Tizianello, and was filling the patriarchal church with works of the worst taste.

Although Pippo did not trouble about his country's shame, he could not help being annoyed at this scandal. When an inferior painting was praised before him, or when he found a poor picture in some church in the midst of his father's masterpieces, he felt the same displeasure that a patrician might have experienced on seeing the name of a bastard inscribed in the book of gold. Beatrice understood this dislike, and women have all, in a more or less degree, the instinct of Delilah. They know when to fathom the secret of Samson's hair. While respecting sacred names, Beatrice took care, from time to time, to praise the work of some mediocre artist. It was not easy for her to contradict herself in this way, but she very cleverly gave this false praise an appearance of truth. In this way, she often aroused Pippo's bad temper, and she noticed that on these occasions he set to work with extraordinary vivacity. He would have the boldness of a master and impatience inspired him. But his frivolous character soon resumed its sway and he would suddenly throw his paint brush down.

"Let us drink a glass of Cyprian wine," he would say, "and speak no more of this nonsense."

Such an inconstant spirit might, perhaps, have discouraged any one else but Beatrice. But, since we find in history stories of the most lasting hate, we must not be astonished if love can inspire perseverance. Beatrice was persuaded that the saying, "Habit can do anything," was true, and this is whence she obtained this conviction. She had seen her father, a man extremely wealthy, and in poor health, undertake the most arduous tasks and the driest calculations in his old age, in order to add a few sequins to his immense fortune. She had often begged him to spare himself, but he had always given her the same answer, that it was a habit of his since his childhood, which

had become necessary to him and which he would keep as long as he lived. Taught by this example, Beatrice did not wish to forejudge anything so long as Pippo did not bind himself to regular work, and she told herself that the love of glory is a noble ambition which should be as strong as avarice.

In thinking thus, she was not mistaken. But the difficulty consisted in this, that to get Pippo into a good habit it was necessary to remove a bad one. Now there are noxious weeds which can be torn up with little effort, but gambling is not like one of these. Perhaps, even, it may be the only passion that can resist love, for you may see men of ambition, libertines, and even men of religion, yield to a woman's wish, but rarely is this the case with gamblers, and the reason of this is easy to explain. As coined metal represents almost all pleasures, so does play carry with it almost all emotions. Each card, each throw of the dice, brings the loss or gain of a certain number of pieces of gold or silver, and each of these coins is the representative of an, as yet, unknown pleasure. So he who wins, feels a multitude of desires, and not only freely gives himself up to them, but tries to create new ones, having the certainty of being able to satisfy them. From this is derived the despair of he who loses, and suddenly finds himself incapable of playing, after having handled enormous sums. Such trials, often repeated, at the same time wound and exalt the spirit, throwing it into a kind of stupor. Ordinary sensations are too weak, they present themselves too slowly and too much in succession for the player, accustomed to concentrate his passions, to take the smallest interest in them.

Happily for Pippo, his father had left him too rich for loss or gain to be able to exercise such a baleful influence over him. Idleness, rather than vice, had tempted him. Besides, he was too young for the harm to be irremediable: the very inconsistency of his tastes proved this. So it was not impossible for him to correct himself, so long as one knew how to carefully guide him. This necessity had not escaped the notice of Beatrice, and without thinking of her own reputation, she spent almost every day with her lover. On the other hand, so that habit should not engender satiety, she brought in play all the resources of feminine coquetry. Her hair, her dress, even her language, incessantly varied, and for fear that Pippo might become disgusted with her, she changed her gown every day. Pippo noticed these little stratagems, but he was not so foolish as to resent them; on the contrary, he did the same himself; he altered his humor and his moods as often as he changed his collar. But he had no need to study for this; nature looked after it and he sometimes laughingly remarked, "A gudgeon is a little fish, and a whim is a small passion."

Living in this way and both fond of pleasure, our lovers understood each other perfectly. One thing alone troubled Beatrice. Every time she spoke to Pippo of the plans she was making for the future, he was satisfied to reply, "Let us begin with your portrait."

"I ask nothing better," she would answer, "and this has been settled a long time. But what do you think of doing after that? This portrait can not be publicly exhibited and, as soon as it is finished, we must think of something that will make you better known. Have you some subject in your mind? Will it be an historical or a church scene?"

When she asked him these questions, he always found means of having some distraction that stopped him from hearing, as for example, picking up his handkerchief, arranging a button on his coat, or any other detail of a similar kind. She had begun by thinking that it might be an artist's mystery, and that he did not wish to divulge his plans. But no one was less secretive than he, nor more confiding, at least with his mistress, for there can be no love without trust. "Is it possible he will deceive me," Beatrice asked herself; "is this willingness but play, and has he no intention of keeping his word?"

When this doubt came to her mind, she assumed a grave and almost haughty look. "I have your promise," she would say, "you bound yourself for a year, and we shall see whether you are honorable." But before she could finish this sentence, Pippo would tenderly embrace her. "Let us begin by painting your portrait," he would repeat. After which he knew how to set to work to make her speak on other subjects.

One may imagine she was anxious to see this portrait finished. At the end of six weeks, it was done. When she posed for the last sitting, Beatrice was so happy that she could not remain in position. She went to and fro from the painting to her armchair and she cried out both with admiration and with pleasure. Pippo worked slowly and, from time to time, shook his head. Suddenly he frowned, and brusquely passed over the picture the rag that served him to wipe his brushes on. At once, Beatrice ran over to him and saw that he had effaced the mouth and the eyes. She was in such consternation at this that she was unable to restrain her tears. But Pippo quietly replaced the colors in his box. "A look and a smile are two difficult things to reproduce," said he; "one must be inspired to dare

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to paint them. I do not feel my hand sure enough and do not even know if it ever will be."

So the portrait remained disfigured in this way and, every time Beatrice looked at this head without mouth and without eyes, she felt her anxiety redouble.

CHAPTER VIII

THE reader may have noticed that Pippo was fond of Greek wines. Now, although the wines of the East do not tend to animate after a good dinner, he chattered willingly during dessert. Beatrice never missed bringing the conversation round to painting, but as soon as this was mentioned, one of two things would happen. Either Pippo remained silent, and in this case he had a certain smile on his lips that Beatrice did not like, or he spoke of the arts with strange indifference and disdain. Odd thoughts, especially, occurred to him the greater part of the time during this conversation.

"There is a fine picture to be painted," said he. "It represents the Campo-Vaccino at Rome, at the setting of the sun. The horizon is vast, the square deserted. In the foreground are children playing in some ruins; in the background you see a young man passing enveloped in his mantle. His face is pale, his delicate features are wasted by suffering. On seeing him, you must be able to guess that he is about to die. In one hand he holds a palette and some paint-brushes, with the other he leans on a young and robust woman, who turns her head laughing. To explain this scene, the day on which this happened must be added at the bottom—Good Friday in the year 1520."

Beatrice easily understood the meaning of this enigma. It was on Good Friday in 1520 that Raphael died in Rome, and, although it had been attempted to deny the rumors that had been circulated, it was certain that this great man had expired in the arms of his mistress. So the picture that Pippo had in view would have represented Raphael but a few moments before his end, and, in fact, such a scene, treated simply by a true artist, might have been beautiful. But Beatrice knew what to think of this imaginary project and read in her lover's eyes that which he meant her to understand.

While every one in Italy agreed in lamenting this death, Pippo, on the contrary, was accustomed to praise it, and he often remarked, that in spite of all Raphael's genius, his death was more beautiful than his life. This thought was revolting to Beatrice, although she could not help smiling at it. It was to say that love is worth more than glory, and if such an idea can be censured by a woman, at least it can not offend her. If Pippo had chosen some other example, Beatrice might perhaps have been of his opinion.

"But why," she said, "oppose to each other two things which sympathize so well together? Love and glory are brother and sister. Why do you wish to tear them apart?"

"One can never do two things well at the same time," added Pippo. "You would not advise a business man to write poetry at the same time as his bills; nor a poet to measure cloth while he was thinking of a rhyme. Why then do you wish to make me paint when I am in love?"

Beatrice did not well know what to answer, for she dare not say that love was no occupation.

"Do you, then, wish to die like Raphael?" she demanded. "And, if you wish it, why not begin to act as he did?"

"On the contrary," answered Pippo, "it is from fear of dying like him that I do not wish to act as he did. Either Raphael, being a painter, was wrong in falling in love, or being in love was wrong to start to paint. That is why he died when thirty-seven years old, in a glorious way it is true, but there is no good way of dying. If he had produced only fifty masterpieces less, it would have been a blow for the Pope, who would have been obliged to have his chapels decorated by another. But La Fornarine would have received fifty more kisses, and Raphael would have escaped the smell of oil colors which is so injurious to the health."

"Would you then make of me a Fornarine?" cried Beatrice at this. "If you care neither for glory nor your life, do you wish me to bury you?"

"In truth, no," answered Pippo, carrying his glass to his lips: "if I could change you, I would make of you a Staphyle." [4]

[4 A nymph with whom Bacchus was in love. He changed her into a bunch of grapes.]

Despite the careless tone he affected, Pippo, in thus expressing himself, was not jesting as much as one may

think. Beneath his jests, he even hid a reasonable opinion, and here is what was at the bottom of his thoughts.

In the history of art, mention has often been made of the ease with which great painters have executed their works, and some have been cited who knew how to mingle with their work disorder and even idleness. But there is no greater mistake than that. It is not impossible that a practised painter, sure of his hand and reputation, may succeed in producing a beautiful sketch in the midst of distractions and pleasures. Vinci sometimes painted, it is said, holding his lyre in one hand and his brush in the other, but the celebrated portrait of La Joconde remained on his easel for four years. In spite of rare feats of strength, which in the result are always too highly praised, it is certain that that which is veritably beautiful is the work of time and meditation and that there is no true genius without patience.

Pippo was convinced of this rule and his father's example had confirmed him in his opinion. In fact, there never lived a painter so bold as Titian, unless it be his pupil Rubens; but if Titian's hand was quick, his mind was patient. During the ninety-nine years of his life, he was constantly occupied with his art. At the beginning, he had commenced by painting with a minute timidity and a sharpness which made his works resemble those Gothic pictures of Albert Durer. It was only after much work that he dared obey his genius and allow his brush to run away with him. Even then, he sometimes was sorry for it, and Michelangelo once said, on seeing one of Titian's canvases, that it was a pity the principles of drawing were neglected in Venice.

Now at the moment when what I am telling you was happening, a deplorable ease, which is always the first sign of the decay of art, was reigning in Venice. Pippo, upheld by the name he bore, with a little boldness and the studies he had made, could easily and quickly have made himself illustrious, but that was precisely what he did not wish. He would have looked upon it as shameful to profit by the ignorance of the vulgar. He told himself, with reason, that the son of an architect should not demolish that which his father had built, and that, if the son of Titian became a painter, it was his duty to oppose himself to the decay of painting.

But to undertake such a task, it was, without doubt, necessary for him to devote his entire life to it. Would he succeed? It was uncertain. A single man has little strength when a whole century is fighting against him. He is carried away by the multitude like a swimmer by a whirlpool. What then would happen? Pippo did not disguise anything from himself: he knew that courage would fail him sooner or later and that his old pleasures would once more carry him away, so that he ran the chance of making a useless sacrifice, whether this sacrifice be complete or only partial. And what would it benefit him? He was young, rich, healthy and he had a beautiful mistress. To live happily without any one reproaching him, it was necessary but to allow the sun to rise and set. Should he give up so much for a doubtful glory, which would probably escape him?

It was after having carefully thought it over that Pippo had decided to assume an indifference, which, little by little, became natural. "If I study for another twenty years," he would say, "and attempt to imitate my father, I shall be singing to the deaf. If strength fails me, I shall dishonor my name."

And, with his usual good spirits, he concluded by crying out, "To the Devil with painting! Life is too short."

While he was disputing with Beatrice, the portrait still remained unfinished. Pippo, by chance, entered the Convent of the Servites one day. On a scaffolding erected in a chapel, he perceived the son of Marco Vecellio, even he, who I have already informed you, had himself nicknamed Tizianello. This young man had no reasonable excuse for using this name, unless he was a distant relative of Titian and that his Christian name was Tito, which he had altered to Titian, and from Titian to Tizianello. On this account, the idlers of Venice believed he had inherited the genius of the great painter and were in ecstasies before his pictures. Pippo had never disturbed himself about this ridiculous imposition, but at this moment, perhaps because he was annoyed at finding himself before this person, or perhaps because he was thinking of his amour propre more seriously than was usual, he approached the scaffolding which was held in place by small beams badly stayed. He kicked one of these beams and caused it to fall. Luckily the scaffolding did not give way at the same time, but it swayed so much that the so-called Tizianello at first staggered, as though drunk, and finished by losing his balance and falling among his colors which streaked him all over in the most curious manner.

You may imagine his anger on getting up. He immediately descended from his scaffold and advanced toward Pippo, threatening him. A priest threw himself between them to separate them at the moment when they were about to draw their swords in the sacred place. The frightened worshippers fled, making the sign of the cross, while the curious hurried to the scene. Tito cried out loudly that a man had attempted to assassinate him and that he demanded justice for the crime. The beam, still out of place, was witness to it. The assistants began to murmur,

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and one of them, bolder than the rest, tried to seize Pippo by the collar. Pippo, who had acted only out of thoughtlessness and who looked on laughing, seeing himself on the point of being carried to prison and hearing himself called an assassin, in his turn, became angry. After having roughly pushed aside him who wished to arrest him, he rushed at Tito.

"It is you," he cried, seizing him, "it is you who should be seized by the collar and taken to Saint Mark's Square, there to be hung as a robber. Do you know to whom you are speaking, you thief of names? I am Pomponio Vecellio, son of Titian. Just now, I kicked your worm-eaten scaffolding: but, if my father had been in my place, you may be sure that, to teach you to call yourself Tizianello, he would have shaken you so well in your tree that you would have fallen like a rotten apple. But he would not have stopped at that. To treat you as you deserve, he would have taken you by the ear, insolent schoolboy, and brought you back to the studio from which you escaped before knowing how to draw a head. By what right do you defile the walls of this convent and sign your miserable frescos in my name? Go and learn anatomy and copy the nude for ten years, as I did with my father, and we will then see who you are and if you have a signature. But, till then, be careful not to use that which belongs to me, or I will throw you in the canal, to baptize you once for all!"

With these words, Pippo left the church. As soon as the crowd heard his name it immediately calmed down. The people made way for him to pass and followed him with curiosity. He rushed off to the little house, where he found Beatrice waiting for him. Without wasting time to tell what had happened, he seized his palette, and, still moved with anger, he started working at the portrait.

In less than an hour, he finished it. At the same time, he made great alterations. First, he removed several details which he found too minute; he spread out the drapery with more liberality, retouched the background and accessories, which form a very important part of Venetian pictures; he then came to the mouth and the eyes, and succeeded, with a few strokes of his brush, in giving them a perfect expression. Her glance was sweet and proud; the lips, above which appeared a light down, were half open; the teeth shone like pearls and words seemed about to come forth.

"You shall not be named the Crowned Venus," said he when all was finished, "but Venus in Love."

One may guess the joy of Beatrice. While Pippo was working, she had hardly dared to breathe. She kissed him and thanked him a hundred times and told him that in future she no longer wished to call him Tizianello, but Titian. During the remainder of the day, she spoke of nothing but the innumerable points of beauty she discovered every moment in her portrait. Not only did she regret that it could not be exhibited, but she was ready to ask for it to be. They passed the evening at the Quintaville and never had the two lovers been so gay and so happy. Pippo himself was childishly happy. It was only as late in the evening as possible, after a thousand protestations of love, that Beatrice decided to leave him for a few hours.

She did not sleep that night. The most laughable ideas and the sweetest hopes agitated her. She already saw her dreams realized, her lover praised and envied by all Italy and Venice owing him a new glory. The next day, as usual, she was first at the rendezvous and she began, while waiting for Pippo, by looking at her beloved portrait. The background of this portrait was a country scene, and in the foreground was a rock. On this rock, Beatrice noticed some lines traced with cinnabar. She anxiously bent over to read them. In very fine Gothic letters the following sonnet was written:

In these poor lines behold the richest Queen
Since Beauty made her so: the rose upon
Her cheek is redder than an April dawn
And sweeter than e'er flamed in bushes green
Or lit the path of Love. No Sweet—sixteen
Is half so bravely timid. World, pass on!
She will remain, these youthful nations gone
The hallowed Vision of this ravished scene.

Know this, O world of careless lovers, know
That I, awake or sleeping, had e'er dreamed
Of reputation and of babbling fame;

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Yet for my Model's kiss could but forego
Ambition's goal, a prize that heaven seemed,
And so to win a heart did lose a name!

Whatever effort Beatrice made after this, she never persuaded her lover to work again. He was inflexible to all her prayers, and, when she pressed him too hotly, he recited his sonnet. Thus he remained till his death, faithful to his idleness: and Beatrice, it is said, was so to his love. They lived long as man and wife, and it is to be regretted that the pride of the Loredanos, wounded by this public liaison, destroyed the portrait of Beatrice, just as chance had destroyed Tizianello's first picture.[5]

[5 It is due to the researches of a celebrated amateur, M. Doglioni, that we know that this painting existed.]
