ANTONIO DI CARARA

A PADUAN TALE

The languor of Italy in limate, manners, and pursuits, melts away all individual character in the central southern division of the land. But the north boasts of manlier propensities. The wind blows vigor of mind and body from the Alps. Beyond those hills lie Switzerland, the country of penury and freedom; Germany, the country of toil, mental and bodily. Even the rough mountaineer of the Tyrol gives his share to the general activity of the region; and even the Veronese, though glancing on the luxuriant landscape that spreads like the waves of a summer sea to the south, feels the spirit of the hills and forests in him, at every breath from those noble bulwarks of the land. The character of the Italian is thus mingled of contending elements, and, as chance directs, it is propelled to lavish indulgences of the Neapolitan, or to the hardy habits of the region that every morning glitters with its ten thousand pyramids of marble, and its ten times ten thousand pinnacles of eternal snow above his head, in the north. The Counti Antonio di Carara was a Paduan noble, descended from the famous Cararas, Princes of Padua. Antonio was a true Italian, steeped to the lips in the spirit of the south, elegant, luxurious, and languid. But the vicinage of the north had its share in his composition. His life was a dream. His paternal opulence flowed away on singers, dancers, and dilettanti. He wrote sonnets—he composed cavatinas—he even invented a new fashion of wearing the hat and plume—and was the first authority consulted on every new arrival of a first-rate maestro of the violin, the sword, dancing dogs, anything.

But the spirit of the Alps was not altogether extinguishable. Antonio began to grow weary of lingering for ever in the midst of the squabbles of bullying priests and effeminate dragoons, the abbesses of rival convents, and opera singers, all perfection, and all ready to poniard or poison each other. The Austrian grasp, too, was heavy on the politics of his calm and venerable city. Yet it had charms still, whose spell defied even the tooth of time, and the insolence of the Austrian corporals.

Padua, as all the world knows, is the paradise of the far niente, the original Castle of Indolence, the Palace of Slumber; the soft, silent, somnolent downbed of Italy. The air itself slumbers; the grape-gatherers nod on the vines; the mules tread as if they were shod with felt; and though Padua produces no longer the silk and velvet that once made her name memorable to the ends of the earth, the genius of them both is in everything. All is silky, smooth, and gravely superb. A drowsy population yawns through life in a drowsy city, taught the art of doing nothing by a drowsy university. The old glories of Paduan science are gone to sleep; her thousand doctors, once shedding wisdom into her myriads of students, have sunk down into shedders of poppies— a few innocent old lingerers among the shelves of her mighty libraries, dry as their dust, silent as their authors, and not half so active as the moths that revel in their sultry sunshine. Life creeps away in eating grapes, and drinking the worst wine in the world; in having the Malaria fever in summer, and the pleurisy in winter; in sitting under the shade of sunburnt trees that mock the eye with the look of verdure, and fall into dust at a touch; and in blackening the visage over wood fires that make man the rival, in odour, colour, and countenance, of the boar's ham that hangs in his chimney.

Antonio loved this velvet way of gliding through the world, and in this taste fulfilled all the duties that the world expects from a citizen of Padua. But in Padua even this graceful lover of his ease was not to be altogether tranquil. One day when he was indulging in the memory of cool air—for the reality of it was not to be found in even his marble palace, the month being August, and the heavens burning over the national head like the roof of an immense furnace — the Count of Carara, was roused from lying at his full length on a sofa in a veranda that overlooked his ample gardens by the announcement of a stranger with letters of introduction. The stranger was admitted—the letters were from a cousin of the Count, a general in the Austrian service, recommending the Herr Maximilian Balto to his good offices, as a Hungarian of family addicted to science, and who was attracted to Italy by his desire to see the wonders and beauties of the most famous and lovely land of the world.

The stranger was a man of mature age, with a form bowed by either years or study, and a pale but highly intelligent countenance. The Count's picturesque eye immediately set him down as an admirable study for a painter, and his place in the Titian gallery of the palazzo was fixed on before he uttered a word. But Antonio was equally susceptible of the charms of conversation; and the stranger's conversation was adapted to captivate a man of his skill in the graceful parts of life. The Herr Maximilian had travelled much—had seen everything that was remarkable in the principal regions of the globe, and had known or seen the principal personages of the time. His conversation was admirable—easy, fluent, and various; its animation never flagged; its variety never degenerated into trifling, nor its description into caricature. The Count, a man of higher capacities than any that would be required by the indolence of his life, felt his intellectual consciousness revived. He was, as all men are, delighted with the discovery; entered at once into the full enjoyment of his awakened understanding, and began to wonder what he had been thinking of during the last thirty years.

To suffer the friend who had done him this service to take his departure as suddenly as he came, was out of the question. He pressed him to make the palazzo his residence for a week; the week passed, the request was lengthened to a month; the month passed away only to convince the Count, that, without the society of he the accomplished Hungarian, Padua would become dull to an intensity beyond all human suffering. The request was extended to a year. His guest smiled, but told him that matters of importance compelled him to think of returning homeward; and that though he was determined to revisit Italy and the Count, some years must elapse before his return.

Carara felt as an Italian feels on every occasion that thwarts his propensities, be they what they will; he was in despair. There was but one alternative, to leave Italy and travel with this man of accomplishment round the world, consume life thus gyrating, and die after a prolonged conversation of fifty years. The Hungarian argued strenuously against this genuine Italian romance; sat up half a night suffering himself to be convinced, gradually gave way to all the Count's arguments, and even pointed out the means of making this peregrination a much more delightful adventure than it had seemed to the glimpse of dawn glided from his chamfancy of the Count; and at the first ber, with his valise on his shoulder, into the suburbs. As Padua would have been asleep all day, it could scarcely have eyes for the simple and lonely fugitive, who threaded its dozing streets at an hour when no Paduan on record had ever known whether it was the full blaze of sunshine, or the darkness of Erebus. He made his way accordingly; passed through streets of palaces and walks of state as invisible as a spirit; walked through magnificent gates where no sentinel challenged, and no Swiss kept the key, straight forward through Sousovino's bronze horseman, and Barbarini's; and, unbayed at by a solitary dog, reached the Cemetario grande; the true emblem of the city, weedy, calm, soundless, and decaying—a bed of but more steady slumber—a Padua under ground.

A year passed away, but not like the years before. The Hungarian was a philosopher, and the word had many meanings at the time. He had seen many nations, and the view had not raised his conception of human nature; he had lived under various governments, and his conception of the wisdom of kings and the happiness of their subjects did not prevent him an occasional sarcasm on both; he was a man of imagination, and one of its employments was the construction of an Utopia. He was a man of science and the sudden discoveries of the French and German chemists in the last century had kindled him into the reveries of the century before, and made him a searcher after the philosopher's stone. What must have been the power and impulse of so much curious speculation, inventive skill, bold theory, and actual knowledge, pouring suddenly upon the sensitive spirit of an Italian aroused for the first time to a feeling of his own sensitiveness! It was the sudden opening of his curtains at midnight, to show him the blaze of a conflagration; the sudden perception that there was round him, not the monotonous luxury of an Italian palace, but the vividness, activity, and intellectual vigour of a world —a world all alive, vigorous, stirring, fierce, enthusiastic, brilliant—a world in which ambition might fly abroad, until it wearied its wildest wing; in which vanity might play its most fantastic game; in which philosophy might build its noblest conceptions, till they reached to the very gates of heaven; in which science might explore the depth of things until it reached the centre; a world of grandeur, beauty, strength, weakness, life, immortality; a world of wonders.

The luxurious Italian became the philosopher; he rose with the sun, he studied until midnight, he plunged into the mysteries of science, he grew recluse, pale and severe. But the delight of discovery repaid all the labours of the pursuit. The transmutation of metals, that most dazzling dream of science, which will dazzle to the end of time, let him onward with an enthusiast's disregard of all things but his crucible. In the meanwhile he himself had become an object of attention; and the Count Carara had already marked the day and hour when he was to become master of the grand secret of this world's wealth, when a knock at his study door disturbed him in the midst of the operation, and a corporal of grenadiers handed a paper to him, containing an order for his arrest on the ground of freemasonry.

The Count was indignant at the interruption; the fire of the Italian character blazed out in wrath at the insolence of disturbing a noble in his own sanctuary; but the corporal had no ears for reason, the bayonets at his back were better arguers; and in the midst of a plantoon of whiskered giants, the philosopher was marched first into the presence of the governor—who informed him that his estate was confiscated to the use of better subjects, of whom the governor himself was to be presumed the most deserving—and next to the well-known Torre di Eccelino. This famous remnant of the ages of blood,—which every living Italian records as the ages of glory, when every little town of Italy had its battlements, its territories, its slaves, its army, its despot as fierce as the Grand Turk, and its enemy within half a league, as inveterate as the Kalmuc Tartar; its war once a month, bloody, as if the weal of the world depended on the sword; and its siege, storm, and sack once a year,—had been just converted into a state prison. Yet it was the very spot which, if Carara, had been free to choose, he would have chosen. From its summit, Eccelino, the most sanguinary of the sanguinary, the most subtle, daring, and ambitious of an age of civil and martial ferocity, watched the movements of the vast turbulent city below, then filled with partisans of all the desperate feuds of the day. From its summit he too had watched the stars, that as they rose or set, twinkled above, or flashed in constellation, wrote in characters of fire the fates of heroes and empires. Within its recesses, too, the man of power and blood had plunged in those forbidden studies, which shook sovereigns from their thrones, disturbed popes and conclaves with new terrors, filled nations with sudden tumults, and laid waste the happiness of human nature. But here he was declared, by the tongue of all Italy, to have laid the foundations of his incomparable success; to have discovered the means of overthrowing all resistance in the field, and baffling all resolve in the council; to have found wealth inexhaustibe knowledge that surpassed the reach of the human mind, sagacity that nothing could perplex, and strength that nothing could overwhelm, and to have paid, for all, the fearful price of his own soul. Such was the legend; and when Carara entered the cell where this extraordinary being had so often trod that his spirit seemed to haunt the place, he shuddered as he saw, transcribed upon the wall above his head, the lines of Ariosto—

"Eccelino!—Immanissimo tirrano
Che fia creduto figlio del demonio."

But there is nothing which decays more rapidly than the imagination in prison. The first day's solitude, the second day's solitude, and the third day's solitude drove every phantom from his presence. The age of poetry was no more; the clank of the sentinel's pike, and the rattle of the jailer's keys, reclaimed him from the dominion of magic, and he began to descend in thought to that world, to which he was never likely to descend in reality, but on his way to the scaffold.

A prison strips off the embroidery of life prodigiously; and in the course of this operation Carara discovered that he had a wife and child.

That wife he had purchased at the cost of the only struggle which had marked his silken existence. Julia di Monteleone had been the most celebrated beauty of the Court of Milan, had been sought in sonnets and serenades, in love, and even in marriage, by a hundred cavaliers of the highest grades, had laughed at all, scorned many, repelled some with open contempt, and finally taken refuge from the universal storm of sighs in the Palazzo di Carara, to which she brought a large dower, a noble alliance, the handsomest face in Italy, and one of the highest hearts that ever spoke in coral lips and diamond eyes. The choice was made, like all the choices of women, by the eye. Carara was the finest figure, the best dancer, and the most brilliant in his equipages of any of the myriad who paid their homage at the shrine of the lady's loveliness. The point was then decided. The prize, however, was not to be won in a nation of swordsmen and dagger-bearers without its hazard. It cost him three duels with the indignant suitors, and had nearly cost him his life, by a sturdy blow of a dagger in his side, as he was in the act of handing his bride elect into her chariot at the door of the Grand Opera. He fell covered with blood, languished for a month on the verge of death, was cheered by the beautiful lady's redoubled protestations of living or dying with him, and recovered only to be the most envied husband from the Alps to the Apennines.

But this was but a thunderbolt plunged into a lake; it flashed, blazed, and shook the waters from shore; it was extinguished, and the waters were as smooth as glass again, no breath disturbing their blue complacency, the quiet mirror of the quietest of all skies, Carara had brought his noble bride to his palazzo, showed her to the homage of his hundred domestics, in new costumes of scarlet and gold, walked with her through his spacious apartments, marble floored, and glowing with the frescoes of Giorgione and Spagnolet; had pointed out to her vivid glance the Titians, the Raphaels, and the Tintorets; had unfolded the purple curtains which concealed the virgin loveliness of the Madonna of Correggio from the profaner eye; had given a concert to her on her arrival, and a ball to the podestat, and every soul that called itself noble for ten leagues round Padua; and then—returned quietly to his tranquil career, subsided out of the world's hearing, lapsed into Elysian slumber; listened to the murmurs of his fountains, and the cooing of his doves, till they both sent him to sleep; and, wrapping his soul in more than all the silks and velvets of the land, he prepared himself to dream through the world.

The heart, stifled by the trappings of prosperity, often learns to bear only when the trappings are plucked away. Carara, the prisoner in his cell, was a different being from Carara, the elegant but weary voluptuary in his palace. The vision of his wife and child came before him, and made him often forget the massive beams and iron stanchels that stood between him and those whom he loved. He revolved the hours which he had flung away with them; resolved, if his fortunes should turn again, to disdain the silver stream of life, and think of the surge; to show himself fit for something better than the master of French valets, and the companion of Spanish lap-dogs; to take the goods that rank, wealth, and nature gave, and be a noble, a husband, and a father, and worthy of the names.

But his prison-bars were still as strong as ever, the cell as high from the ground, the jailer as sullen, and the day as solitary. To bribe the vigilance of the turnkeys was hopeless; for the first act of justice had been to plunder him of every ducat. To address the governor's reason was equally hopeless; for the strict order of that governor was, that the prisoner should have no means of making any appeal. To summon the public to the decision of his rights and wrongs, must be deferred until there was a public; or until he could find any Italian in existence who cared an inch of macaroni for the rights and wrongs of anything on earth. The feeling of solitude grew painful, bitter, agonising, intolerable. The far niente life never had such a trial, and never was more torturing. Carara would have exchanged his being with that of any lazzarone that begged and burned in the noon of any city of hovels in the realm. Books, the pencil, music, all the resources of a life of idleness, of gracefulness, or of industry, were alike forbidden to him. He felt himself day by day more mercilessly cut off from mankind, receding hourly from existence, turning into a wild beast, degenerating into the uselessness of a stock or a stone, and regretting only that with their uselessness he had not their insensibility.

The sting of all this wretchedness was envenomed by its uncertainty. If his enemies, or their instrument the governor, had declared to him that his imprisonment was to last for a year, or fifty years, or to lay him in the grave, he might have prepared himself for the duration; he might have braced up his mind for a calamity of which he knew the extent; he might have said to himself, "Joy and hope are shut out for ever. I shall seek and struggle for them no more. My dungeon must be looked on as my final home. I must sternly conform myself to ruin. I must look upon my imprisonment only as a slower death, and be contented as I may." But from the tower of Padua he might be released at a moment, or never. He might return that night to his own roof, or never lie down under its shelter. While he was speaking, the order might be at his prison-doors for restoring him to the arms of his wife and child, or the merciless spirit that had torn them asunder might be darkly decreeing an eternal separation to them all. But it was the doubt, the near possibility of the enjoyment, that made him still nurture his agony. He could not heroically harden himself to endure. He must tremble, for he must hope.

To Be Continued.

COLD AND WARM YEARS.

The Meteorologische Zeitschrift, a German scientific publication, contains a treatise by Dr. F. Maurer on the regular periodical repetition of cold and warm years. During certain intervals of time, extending as a rule to about fifteen years, there is a recognized change of warm and cold periods. The warm periods, he says, do not simply include a series of summers of extraordinary warmth, but also a series of mild winters. Similarly, during the cycle of a cold period, not only are the winters more than ordinarily severe, but the summers are far below the average heat. Dr. Maurer affirms that we can predict with tolerable accuracy the time when the next cycle of warm periods will occur. It is due, he calculates, somewhere about the turning point between the two centuries; and he thinks it probable, from the data obtainable, that the early years of the next century will be distinguished by a series of hot, or rather extremely hot, summers and a series of exceptionally mild winters.

EXPLAINED.

The imagination of some small boys is worth having. The other night, when Mr. Wallypug was lying asleep on his library sofa, and snoring away for dear life, Mrs. Wallypug remarked that she wished he would not snore so.

Pa ain't snorin', said Tommy Wallypug. He's dreamin' about a dorg, and that's the dorg growling.

Dobson—Did you know your wife's first husband? Hobson (with a sigh)—Yes, but he never put me on to his domestic affairs, confound him.

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IN A BELEAGUERED CITY.

LIFE IN HAVANA GOES ON SMOOTHLY DESPITE THE BLOCKADE.

Food Prices Are Rising, But Military Enthusiasm Grows and Many Volunteer for the Defence—An English Nurs Banished Because She Bid Food for the Sick and Starving Poor.

Havana and the rest of the Island of Cuba, so far as heard from, is officially pronounced to be entirely quiet, says a Havana letter. Preparations for defence are being pushed night and day and work is going on without ceasing on the fortifications all over the island. The Spanish officials here claim that if 50,000 men were needed to attack Havana by land and sea when the war broke out, at least 100,000 men will be required now, in view of the new and strengthened fortifications, and also because the so-called "cultivation zone" has been extended to Rincon, Calabara and Bejucal, which are inside of the line of defences now. This will, it is asserted, support the inhabitants with food for a long time to come.

ANXIOUS AND ANGRY.

In spite of this outwardly cheerful aspect of affairs, bitterly anxious feelings exist. People go so far as to charge Senor Moret, the former Minister of the Colonies of Spain, of being a traitor and of having "sold Cuba to the United States." This causes discontent to prevail, and, if the Spanish fleet does not arrive here before food becomes really scarce, rioting may be reported.

There are hardly any business transactions and the city looks very lonesome, there are so few people on the streets. The families remain at home, excepting when the sound of a gun from one of the forts causes the people to rush to the windows or into the streets to see if the American fleet is approaching.

CRITICIZE THE AMERICANS.

The Spaniards comment continually upon the tactics of the American fleet and, naturally, they are very severe in their criticisms, for they do not understand the method of warfare adopted. Many of them go so far as to say the United States is not prepared for war, that no plans have been decided upon and that the authorities at Washington are not serious in the steps taken. Indeed, the Spanish military and naval authorities are beginning to nurse themselves with the belief that the naval and military power of the United States has been exaggerated by the newspapers, and they are applauding themselves with the idea that Spain is showing herself able to fight the United States.

FOOD GETTING SCARCE.

Advices from Caibarien and other towns show that a scarcity of provisions exists. Were it not that the city is blockaded, people would hardly be aware that war was in progress, at least so far as the western provinces of Cuba are concerned. The inactivity of the insurgents, in view of the concentration of the Spanish troops in the coast towns cannot be accounted for by the Spanish commanders. The main point of interest here at present is as to when and where the American troops will effect a landing in Cuba, though the Spaniards pronounce themselves confident of being able to repel any invasion. Eggs, cornmeal and flour are becoming more scarce in Havana, and the prices of all articles of food are doubling, though very many families have left Havana and a large number of homes are to let. Now you find fifteen or twenty persons living in a single room. Nearly all those about the bay and along the seashore, from La Punta to San Lazaro and the suburbs of Vedada and Carmelo are unoccupied, their former occupants being in fear of bombardment.

At Esperanza a rich coal mine has been discovered. It is to be immediately worked for navy purposes.

There is still considerable coal in Havana. The gas company is using very little coal at present and only absolutely necessary lights are used. All the stores and business houses are without the gas light and the state of semi-darkness into which the streets are thrown gives Havana quite a weird appearance at night.

THE NUMBER OF UNEMPLOYED

increases every day. Thousands of laborers of all classes are without work. The commercial houses have been compelled to reduce wages 50 per cent. as a rule, and many are not paying wages at all, but are giving clean clothes and food to their employes as the price of labor, which has led to many abuses.

The volunteers are doing duty day and night. Thousands of additional volunteers have been enrolled in different parts of the island, and the Spaniards say they could get as many more if they had arms to distribute to them.

The former insurgent leader, Masso, is busily engaged in completing the formation of the Fourth Battalion of his brigade of volunteers. They are nearly all natives. Two battalions of negroes are also being enlisted.

A CRUEL BANISHMENT.

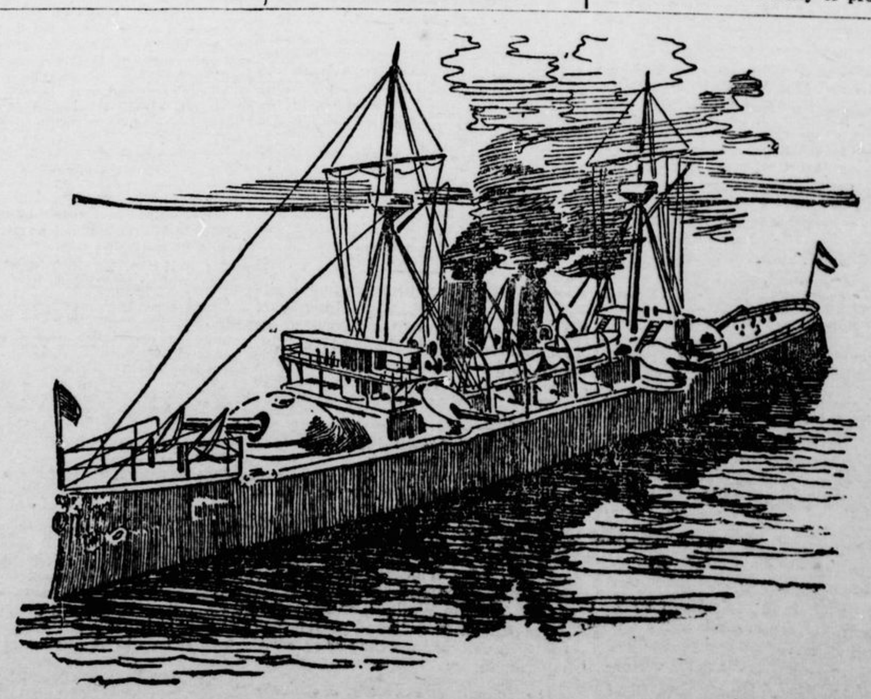
The Spanish officials have discovered in the house of the English nurse, Sister Mary, who attended the sick and wounded survivors of the United States battleship Maine in the hospitals, a considerable quantity of American relief provisions. Because she did not notify the authorities of the existence of these provisions, Sister Mary has been ordered by the military governor to leave Havana for England at the first opportunity.

City official news has been received here from the Provinces of Santiago de Cuba and Puerto Principe, but it is known that all the efforts of the colonial Government to prevail upon the insurgents to come to terms have failed, as everybody expected.

The military governor will issue another edict referring to the prices of provisions and reducing the size of the loaf of bread. It is also reported that the military governor will issue an order prohibiting selling provisions outside of the city of Havana, in which case Havana will have provisions for a long time to come.

The autonomists are daily giving more proof of their utter inability to govern the island. Captain General Blanco is compelled to do most of that work for them. Autonomy, therefore, is nothing more than a mockery, and the Captain General has the reins of Government entirely in his own hands.

The rainy season has not yet commenced, and the health of the Spanish soldiers, it is said, has greatly improved.



SPANISH CRUISER VISCAYA,

Which was damaged by a shell from the United States cruiser Brookyln during the bombardment of Santiago.

EASY WAY TO MAKE BUTTER.

Simple Methods That May Be Employed in an Emergency.

A method of making delicious fresh butter extemporaneously, one might say, or in an emergency, is as primitive as Egyptian farming, still the most ancient in method. Take a clean citrate of magnesia bottle and nearly fill it with cream and shake it up and down and laterally for about twenty minutes. If it is preferred salted a little rolled salt may be added.

A family butter not for commerce is made by a southern gentleman using wing powder. He puts cream in an air-tight jar two-thirds full and fixes it in line of the axis of a windmill swung low to the ground. The jar is placed in a box, and in hot weather ice is packed, wrapped in woolen, around the bottle. As the windmill revolves the jar turns with its axis and is agitated until the churning is finished. He puts the jar in place at night and takes out the butter in the morning, when a fine, firm roll is obtained.

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