The English in the Marche

Novels and Romantic Landscapes from a new-discovered region

G. Gretton M. Collier J. Lussu V. Lee

il lavoro editoriale

The English in the Marche

Caratteri

Published with a grant of
Regione Marche
Tourism Department
www.turismo.marche.it

Translations from Italian by

Claudia Capancioni
(Note to *Our Home by the Adriatic; English Ladies in Italy*
by J. Lussu)

Vittoria Zompanti
(*Foreword*, Note to *Amour dure*
by G. Mangani)

Cover
drawing by Gherado Cibo, sec. XVI
courtesy of Civic Library, Jesi

© Copyright 2005
il lavoro editoriale
(Progetti Editoriali srl)

P.O. Box 297 Ancona
www.illavoroeditoriale.com

ISBN 88 7663 388 X

G. Gretton M. Collier J. Lussu V. Lee

The English in the Marche

Edited by Giorgio Mangani

il lavoro editoriale

The English in the Marche
Foreword

by Giorgio Mangani

Italy's and the Italians' perception in the British world between 17th and 19th century was mainly conditioned by two ideologies: the Machiavellism of the leading classes and the backwardness of the lower classes, often viewed as a consequence of religious superstition, as Roman Catholicism was often regarded by the Protestant milieu of Northern Europe.

The Marche, a region of Central Italy, subject to Papal domination until 1860 and with an agricultural economy and a social and political organization that had remained basically feudal till the arrival of Napoleon's troops, in the early 19th century was still regarded as the patent demonstration of the pernicious effects of papal misgovernment, exclusively entrusted to the clergy, and of "papist" religion.

The beliefs in magic diffused in the country and the habitual use of *malocchio* (the evil eye) in social relationships appeared to Protestant eyes as the popular correlation of the official cult of saints and faith healings practised in sanctuaries such as Loreto, which, as early as the 17th century had already become the main centre of the Counter-Reformation in Europe.

Moreover, the commerce of rosaries, the splendour of the Treasury of the Holy House and the wealth of the donations of churchgoers and pilgrims strengthened the feeling, on the part of English travellers, of being witnesses to a great show of falsehood, the great imposture Papists performed in order to acquire political and economic profits.

For Fynes Morrison (1566-1614), an English writer and traveller who collected the memories of his journeys in his work *Itinerary con-*

taining his ten years' travel (London, 1617), Loreto pilgrims recovered from their illnesses thanks to the atmosphere of the sanctuary, the mysterious and obscure language (*Latinorum*) of the priests, the half-light of the small Holy House, a building so poor in its walls but shining with jewels and gems in the dim candle light. Similar feelings and opinions were expressed by other travellers such as Joseph Addison (1672-1719), Ann Riggs Miller (1741-1781), Lady Sydney Morgan (1783-1821) and several more.[1]

To an Anglican English person the region appeared (and partly it actually was) a sort of sinister backstage of the great baroque show made up by the rituals and subtleties of the Roman Curia.

This situation fell at its lowest pitch in the years after the Puritan age, especially when, from 1717, Rome played host to the court of the Old Pretender to the English throne, James Stuart, a Catholic, whom Pope Clemens XI Albani (from Urbino) never deprived of his prerogatives as the legitimate king of England.

The fact that in 1718 the legitimate English Court had chosen as its residence Palazzo Muti in Piazza Santi Apostoli in Rome (all names that were significant) and that it had officially been given hospitality right in Urbino, the Pope's birthplace, (where, however, the quietness of Montefeltro had proved to be too boring for the Court) was not too slight a nuisance for the English Government.

The existence of a double authority often gave rise to complicated problems of documents, permits, authorizations, safe-conducts granted with complaisance by the exiled king to Legitimists, and confirmed the alliance between Rome and James who, on the other hand, looked more and more isolated on the international stage.

The situation forced the College of Cardinals to walk on a political and diplomatic tightrope with the English Government to which, on the other hand, they were generous with reserved information on the life and the diplomatic activities of James's Court in Rome and Urbino thanks to the cooperation of an "illustrious" spy: Cardinal Alessandro Albani, one of the Pope's nephews, which confirmed the general opinion on the deceitfulness of the Roman Court.[2]

In 16th century the Marche Region consisted of Marca Anconetana (which included the territories of Ancona, the towns of Jesi, Fabriano, Fermo and Macerata and the surrounding areas (in particular Macerata was the seat of the main Judiciary Court and the official residence of the Governor of the Marca), Ascoli and its territories, down to the border with the Kingdom of Naples along the river

Tronto and the ancient Dukedom of Urbino inherited by the Pope in 1631 on the death of the last Duke della Rovere who had no legitimate heirs, still called "State of Urbino" though it had become an integrant part of the Roman States. Rather than being one single organism, it actually was a constellation of several territories subject to Papal rule in force of different bilateral treaties that left more or less autonomy to local dominating oligarchies, while tax collection and the administration of justice were held firmly in the hands of the Papal Government that appointed Governors and other officers mainly among the clergy, while entrusting laymen exclusively with civil local duties.

The rural landscape that travellers admired so much, the surrounding hills, dense with walled towns, with well tended fields protected by tenants' houses (a landscape which brought to mind the frescoes of the *Buon Governo* in Siena or the landscape backgrounds of the two famous portraits of Duke Federico da Montefeltro and his wife Battista Varano painted in the XV century by Piero della Francesca and now kept in the Uffizi in Florence), was the logical consequence of this system of political and social organization, with the government in the hands of the clergy, civic powers contracted out to small oligarchies confined within the town walls, while agricultural production weighed on the peasants' shoulders.

However, the region was still perceived as a large garden, as it had already been pointed out by Montaigne during his journey through Italy in 16th century.

Though filtered through the consciousness of papal misgovernment, to which the cultural (and spiritual) backwardness of the people of the Marche was attributed, the Marche landscape, its gentle hills, the walled villages, the varied colours of cultivations, which were so near the English 18th century taste for the picturesque, were still characterized by a feeling of admiration and magic.

In the 18th century, the region appeared as a sort of Arcadia and not by chance the homonymous literary academy was founded in Rome in 1690 by a group mainly composed of landlords of Marche origin, who elected as their "Guardian" Giovanni Francesco Crescimbeni, from Macerata.

Thanks to Arcadia, pastoral tales became the main occasion of amusement for Marche noblemen who often took part in plays as shepherds. The theatre was, in fact, the great passion of local upper classes.

It was on this love for the countryside (and for the common, dif-

fused ideological appreciation of Arcadia on the part of English aristocracy) that during the Romantic age, in the years of the celebration of ethnic roots, of *Volk*, of the cult of popular traditions (the Folklore) and of wild nature, that the English based their attempts to modify what up to then had simply been the acknowledgment of a deplorable condition of backwardness.

In her journey to Italy, described in *Corinne, ou l'Italie* (1807), Madame De Stael started to modify the traditional, negative attitude towards popular superstitions.

What had hitherto been considered an intolerable form of backwardness due to the Church greed for power, became a state of grace, the revelation of the "persistence" of traditional values and sensibility that were genuine and intense, suggestive of a more intimate closeness to wild nature.

What had hitherto been considered a fault was thus changed into a value and even the superstitions of Loreto were attributed to the sincere and widespread religious feeling of the lower classes.

The reinforcement of this kind of feeling in a period – the first half of 19th century – when Tuscany had not yet become the favourite Italian region among the English, was due to the growing fame in England of a poet from the Marche: Giacomo Leopardi (1798-1837).

Leopardi, a rational and sensationalist philosopher, destroyed the illusion of Nature's goodness, but he was also the romantic and lyric poet of the Marche countryside, of its villages, of its peasants' "illusions", so delusive but at the same time so necessary because comforting.

It was Leopardi who spoke about the character of Marche people in his *Zibaldone di pensieri* (38917, 3891-93) applying to them the ancient theory of the climate, according to which a people's character depends on its geographical environment. Leopardi maintained that people from the Marche present the most favourable mix, thanks to their position in the centre of Italy, which makes them "the most cunning by habit and the most generous by nature among all Italians" (*i più furbi per abito e i più generosi per natura di tutti gli italiani*).

The first English critics who introduced Leopardi into England were G. H. Lewes in 1848 and W. E. Gladstone in 1850. From then on there was a continuous flow of translations, notes, reviews, up to the entry devoted to him by Lorenzo Fresco in the 1857 edition of

Encyclopaedia Britannica, later re-written in the 1882 edition by the Italianist Richard Garnett who praised Leopardi, despite his pessimism and sensationism, as a better interpreter than Tennyson of the romantic spirit that pervaded Northern Europe.

Leopardi's fame in England as a philosopher and a poet, greatly contributed to the diffusion of a new feeling towards the Marche among the accomplished and the intellectual.

The very biography of the poet, transformed into a sort of "fabula", his forced stay in rustic Recanati, his emotional instability, his scarce attractiveness, consolidated, especially in veristic 19th century, the idea that the pale poet of these rustic places was – just as Edgar Allan Poe was considered a crazy genious – a sort of hypersensitive "genius loci", a guardian spirit of the place, who was able to emotionally perceive the traces of a world of traditions and illusions that was disappearing under the goad of modernity and the cruel discovery of reality ("l'apparir del vero"), as the Poet wrote in a line of *A Silvia*, one of his best known poems.

Thus, while Burkhardt was tracing in his *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (Basel, 1860) the celebration of the Renaissance man as an epiphany of individualism and freedom from the ties of morality and religion, and found his champions in the Florentine culture, a Scottish nobleman: James Dennistoun of Dennistoun (1803-1885), a collector of miniatures and antiques, tramped the Marche in search of Primitives, discovered the beauty of then little known Piero della Francesca and made Urbino between 15th and 17th century a centre of neogothic revival.

James Dennistoun devoted to the history of the Duchy of Urbino a monumental work in three tomes *Memoirs of the Dukes of Urbino, illustrating the arms, arts and literature of Italy, from 1440 to 1630* (London, Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1851) later reprinted by Peter Hutton, one of the main inspirators of the interest in Italian art and culture in 20th century England.

For one apparent paradox, Renaissance in Urbino came to the limelight thanks to the interest of a romantic and neogothic scholar, a refined collector of miniatures, who lived in Italy and Germany for twelve years, from 1836, who deeply loved the works by Piero della Francesca, nowadays considered one of the fathers of Italian Renaissance but whom he viewed as the last of Primitives.

Urbino and Florence, despite their cultural and even dynastic links later evidenced by historical studies, were considered in those times

as emblems of different, almost opposed, kinds of sensibility in which the economic and social backwardness of the Marche and Umbria still played the role of an ideological filter. It conditioned the perception of places which acquired interest thanks to their "gothic" backwardness.

It is no surprise, therefore, that in 1850 the oppressed populations of the Roman States had become for the English people a population to be saved and protected in order to free them from a sad destiny: something similar to what modern Greeks had been for Byron.

The women writers presented in this anthology represent some of the most interesting examples of this interest of English culture in the Marche between 19th and 20th century, an interest that seems to proceed along a common path of tradition, in some cases of family tradition, as in the case of the link between Margaret Collier and Joyce Lussu.

Mrs Gretton wrote her journal, some chapters of which are published in our collection (*The Englishwoman in Italy. Impressions of life in the Roman States and Sardinia during ten years'residence*, London, Hurst and Blackett, 1860, two volumes) in the years when English culture and policy supported the attempts of the Kingdom of Sardinia towards Italy's unification.

Mrs Gretton was in Ancona in the years after the revolutionary uprising of 1848 that was put down by the Papal Army with the help of Austrian troops which were still occupying the town when the book was written.

The author describes the social and cultural life of Ancona with peculiar freedom of opinion; she is serene, but she criticizes the priggishness of social and family relationships, the indolence and the ignorance of the aristocracy without any hesitation, and she points out, with Victorian sensibility but also with indulgence the excess of intimacy with servants and the poor level of hygiene.

Mrs Gretton is outraged by the oppressive Austrian regime in the Marche and by the opportunism of the clergy and aristocracy and, like any thorough subject of the British Empire, she advocates for her hosts a political model of British type, that is monarchic and liberal.

As Charley Henry Fathergill wrote in 1860 in the prestigious English review "Atheneum" enthusiastically commenting on the book, Mrs Gretton "has described the way of life of those places in detail, pointing out a certain slackness of habits probably due to the fact that this population is less used than the English to resist the

harshness of a cruder climate" (once again the ancient theory of climate, but with very different conclusions from Leopardi's).

Despite the mild climate, English civilization had reached the Marche and unquestionable evidence was the vogue of tea drinking, the first sign of English globalization.

As William Mackpeace Thackeray (the author of *Barry Lyndon*, 1844, and *The Book of Snobs*, 1846) had ironically said – Fothergill quoted: "Tea parties are pretty much the same all the world over; save that in England we put the most tea in the pot"...[4]

A definitely more romantic attitude was showed by Lady Margaret Collier, an aristocratic young lady of an outstanding family, who went beyond a simple political sympathy for the Marche. Margaret fell in love with a handsome Roman Garibaldian, Count Arturo Galletti, married him and moved to a small estate in the Fermo area, in southern Marche, that they bought from the Italian State after the requisition of ecclesiastic possessions.

After moving from the world hub of the time to the arcadic Cappellania of Torre San Patrizio, in Ascoli Piceno province, Margaret Collier writes her memories (*Our home by the Adriatic*, London, Richard Bentley and Son, 1886, a volume made up by a selection of letters and notes which ran in two editions) and describes her experience in the Marche in a graceful though merciless way, with words and expressions that remind the reader of an ethnologist's "participant observation" among some unknown Bororo tribe in Mato Grosso.

She pays great attention to differences, but she passionately participates in this full immersion in wild nature (landscape, country people, superstitions, amoral familism). Mrs Collier spent her prime in the Marche, even if, as her granddaughter Joyce Lussu explains in the foreword to the chapters published in the present collection, Margaret's marriage ended in a failure.

The peculiar aspects of this Anglo-Italian marriage led Joyce Lussu (1912-1998, writer, poet and translator, an activist of Italian Resistance and wife to Emilio Lussu, a writer and anti-fascist who was a minister of the Parri Cabinet in the after-war years), Margaret's granddaughter, to write the history of the two branches of her family, a real Anglo-French-Marche saga *(Le Inglesi in Italia.Una saga anglo-franco-marchigiana*, 1st edition Lerici, 1970).

The family saga is however just a pretext to describe the characters

of her ancestors: restless, adventurous people, who concluded their lives, as in the case of Margaret Collier, in the Marche, a confirmation of this region vocation as Arcadia, a place of blissful peace after the storm, a refuge, as it is still perceived nowadays even in its touristic image; so much so that some, modifying the title of a famous English masterpiece, have defined it “Paradise found”.

It was fatal that this land, celebrated by the neogothic revival, should arouse the interest of one of the post-romantic writers most actively engaged in the English anti-Victorian reaction, namely Vernon Lee (1856-1935, pseudonym of Violet Paget), a theorist of the evocative and fantastic strength of “genius loci”, the guardian spirit of the place.

Her short story *Amour dure* (published in *Hauntings*, a collection of short stories, London, 1890, the last story in the collection) is the fantastic story of the love of the Polish historian Spiridion Trepka for the ghost of the beautiful Medea da Carpi. The story takes place in Urbania, a real town of Montefeltro, the summer residence of the Dukes of Urbino, but which, in the story, corresponds to Urbino.

In the half-light of sombre hotel rooms, churches and streets lit by candles and paraffin-lamps, Vernon Lee draws an apparently nonsensical plot (even if the story has some autobiographical implications) with deep symbolic meanings, central to the author’s aesthetic thought.

The small Italian town, immersed in its quiet life and conformism, hides a secret that the main character of the story wants to know even at the cost of his life. By keeping and handing down that secret, the people of Urbania demonstrate the ability to live with images and stories that can come back to life, a privilege given only to those who have kept the ability to evoke and call back to life the mystery of the past.

For Vernon Lee, the blue stocking and feminist writer, history is deep “alterity” rather than rationalization and erudition, it is the power to vitalize fantastic images and make rusty chords vibrate again, history is something that can lead us to a state of grace.[5]

As Walter Pater – Vernon Lee’s literary mentor – had written: “a historian’s aim is not the fruit of experience, but experience itself”, that is the ability to bring the emotions of a lost world back to life.

For Vernon Lee, in Urbania, in the Marche at the end of 1800, this was still possible.

(Translation by Vittoria Zompanti)

Notes

[1] See A. Brilli*, Loreto e l'Europa. La "Città felice" negli itinerari dei viaggiatori stranieri*, Milan, Amilcare Pizzi, 1996.
[2] L. Lewis, *Connoisseurs and Secret Agents in Eighteenth Century Rome,* London, Chatto & Windus, 1961.
[4] "Athaeneum", n. 1694, 14 April 1860, pp. 503-504.
[3] See G. Singh*, I Canti di Giacomo Leopardi nelle traduzioni inglesi*, Ancona, Transeuropa, 1990.
[5] See C. Zorn, *Vernon Lee. Aesthetics, History, and the Victorian Female Intellectual,* Athens, Ohio University Press, 2003.

The Englishwoman in Italy

Impressions of life in the Roman States
and Sardinia during ten year's residence
(London, Husrt and Blackett, 1860)

by G. Gretton

Portrait of Amelia Luisa Vaux Le Mesurier, wife of George Mussell Gretton

Note
by Danilo Mori

The actual name of 'Mrs. G. Gretton', the esteemed but mysterious author *of The English woman in Italy*, London, 1860) formally attributed to 'Mr. G. Gretton', was Amelia Louisa Vaux Le Mesurier, wife of George Mussell Gretton and mother of George Le Mesurier Gretton. This popular book, published by Hurst and Blackett in two volumes in 1860, the year before the new Italian kingdom was born, provided its Victorian readers with a primer on the tumultuous politics and customs of this exotic land.

Amelia was born in Genoa on the 28th of December 1823. Owing to the lack of schools for Protestant children in Italy she had no thorough or systematic education, for though she was sent to such schools as were available the teaching was of the flimsiest, and was constantly interrupted by the nomad habits of her parents, who seem to have found it impossible to settle down permanently in any one place. Also for this reason she had the chance to visit and live in different places. During one winter in Rome and two in Florence she studied art, and though she possessed little originality, she developed a great turn as a copyist of old masters. As quite a young girl, while devotedly nursing her invalid mother, she composed two semi-religious novels, one of which ran into two editions. After the death of her mother she became the friend, confidante and prop of her father, and the 'mother' of her young sisters and brother (Augusta, Adelaide, Algernon). Her father, Lieutenant Edward Le Mesurier R.N. had settled in Italy at the end of the great (Napoleonic) War with France when, from motives of economy the Navy and the Army were cut down almost to vanishing point and an enormous number of officers were placed on half-pay. He married Elizabeth Wright, a sister of the wife of Amelia's father-in-law William Walter Gretton, and thus established the connection between the Gretton and Le Mesurier families. When Edward Le Mesurier married he was very comfortably off, but unhappily he became obsessed by the idea that he had been sent out to become a banker, and after a few years in Genoa and Rome, he migrated to Florence where he was tricked by a clever scoundrel into paying many thousands of pounds on a forged letter of credit. He never recovered from this

loss, and after living in various parts of Italy, he drifted back to Genoa where he lived with his children until his death. Amelia Louisa Vaux Le Mesurier married George Mussell Gretton in Leghorn (Livorno), on the 19th of November 1849 and they immediately moved to Australia where they owned a property. On April 12th 1850 during their voyage out George Mussell Gretton fell ill and died at Adelaide, South Australia. They had a long engagement and short married life: four years engaged and four months married.

Amelia was a dynamic widow: though her great and absorbing interest in life was her child, his welfare and his training as a thorough Englishman, she also made time to paint and to sell copies of pictures – a very welcome addiction to her exiguous budget – and to write articles on Italian history, which for several years she could not get accepted by English publishers. In 1859 they had been re-written and appeared in book form as *The vicissitudes of Italy*; the book was noticed favourably by the Times as the work of *Mr.* Gretton – in that mid-Victorian age the publishers considered that, if her sex were revealed on the title page, the reviewers would sneer at it as the work of a mere woman.

Amelia's husband-to-be had left the Austrian service bearing in his hand a quaint document entitled "Congè honourable", which recorded that he had left the Austrian Army of his own free will and with a spotless character. He returned to Bonn, without any profession and without any prospects. For two or three years he knocked about the Continent. His father had no idea of finding him anything to do beyond obtaining letters of introduction for him to merchants in out-of-the-way parts of Europe, to which he travelled only to find that no one wanted to employ an ex-cavalry officer without any knowledge of business. Finally he was sent off to Italy and drifted to Ancona (Le Marche), where some of Amelia's family where living. Without the loss of a moment Amelia and George fell desperately in love and became engaged, on nothing a year and no prospects. Not unnaturally Amelia's kin opposed the engagement, and George Gretton went off to join the Piedmontese army as a volunteer in the war against Austria in 1848. By 1847 Amelia was living with her father in Ancona, in the Papal State, in the darkest days of priestly mis-government, and witnessed not only the rising of the people against ecclesiastical tyranny, but also the excesses of the revolutionary leaders, who after seizing all power, allowed violent associations to take place, daily and unpunished. The Austrian Empire, to restore order in Ancona and preserve it for the Pope, had begun to bombard the town when the "Frolic", a tiny British corvette, arrived to protect the English residents. Amelia was escorted by a guard of Bluejackets, along with the handful of other English residents to the safety of the "Frolic", where they remained until the town capitulated after a fortnight's siege. Amelia witnessed various incidents of imperial bluster and swagger during her confinement on the vessel and recorded them in her usual perspicacious manner.

The curiously cosmopolitan society frequented by Amelia and her family in Genoa found its centre in the salons of Madame de la Rue, an old friend of the Le Mesurier family. Monsieur De La Rue was a prosperous banker, by birth Swiss: his wife was the daughter of Mr. Granet, one of the French "emigrès" who after the Revolution of 1779

fled to England, and became a naturalized British subject. He served in the English army, married an Englishwoman and settled in Italy after 1815. Mr. Granet left a son, William, who after leaving Rugby, became a partner of De La Rue bank, and married Amelia's sister Adelaide. The De La Rues inhabited the top storey of the Palazzo Rosso or Red Palace, the property of the Brignole family, whose ancestors had built it three or four centuries before, when the Genoese nobles were investing the fortunes accumulated in trade in the erection of palaces, still famous throughout Italy for their splendour. The Grettons also took rooms in the Red Palace. The De La Rues were very hospitable: not only did they give many dinner parties and stately receptions, when the whole suite of drawing rooms was thrown open, but every night in the year they were at home from eight to twelve, and anyone who was properly introduced could drop in, sure of finding a welcome, a sumptuous tea, and brilliant conversation among the cosmopolitan habitués of the Red Palace, where English, French, Italian and Genoese (the patois peculiar to Genoa) were spoken with equal fluency. Though Genoa had not yet risen to its present importance, it was already one of the chief trading places of the Mediterranean: it had a very large garrison and was greatly frequented by travellers from England and France, who used to break their journey there, before going to Central and Southern Italy. At the Red Palace one met diplomats on their way to the capitals to which they were accredited; the senior officers of the garrison; the big foreign merchants; the members of the British colony, many of them wives of officers in the Piedmontese army and navy; Genoese grandees; English travellers and a few Spaniards.

During her stay in Ancona Amelia shared her time with the local aristocracy but also was very attracted to local humble people. Very often in her book *The English woman in Italy,* she describes the lives, traditions and costumes of these poor people and the places, mentality, moods and ferments of the last decade of life of the Papal State. She was a very articulate chronicler of that period. Amelia returned to England in 1860 in order to give her son George a British education even though she knew practically nothing of England and English ways. As a child she had spent a few months in England; on their way to Australia she and her husband were three weeks in London, buying things for the voyage: that was all she knew of English life. Amelia died on March 30th 1894 at the age of seventy and is buried at Fulham Old Cemetery (plot 9A-1-115).

Settling down in Ancona

Description of the Palazzo - An English family, though Italian born - Complimentary visits of the Anconitan nobility - How they pass their time - Dislike to country walks - Moderrn *Cavaliere Servente*.

Our arrival apparently had been expected, for two or three half naked, black bearded porters or *facchini*, who had acted as our running footmen from the gate, now shouted, as soon as they came within hearing, that the Nipote del Signor Carlo was come; and instantly there was a rush made by some boys who were lounging before the inn in the direction opposite. Meanwhile, a bevy of waiters flung open the door, and with many bows assisted us to alight, saying that Signor Carlo had apprized them we were coming, and that rooms were ready for the lady and her daughters. By this, I began to comprehend that Signor Carlo must mean my uncle, Mr. Charles D, whom I was not prepared to hear so unceremoniously designated; hut before I had time to speculate further on this peculiarity, the person in question made his appearance, attended by a complete staff of small boys and porters, who at once broke out in furious altercation with those they found already enrolled in our service. My uncle seemed perfectly at his ease amidst this uproar, tucked my arm under his, saw my boxes transferred to the shoulders of three or four sturdy, strong-limbed *facchini*, stamped and raved at some of the most refractory, and then observing we should be late for dinner, and that my cousins were impatient to see me, hurried me up an almost perpendicular ascent, an alley of steps, in fact, strewed with mouldy orange-peel and broken earthenware, which led to a street of scarcely wider dimensions, with lofty dingy houses on each side, that seemed

nodding towards each other, and produced an unpleasant sense of suffocation.

My uncle told me, with a smile, that this was quite the West-end of Ancona, where some of the first families resided. The Palazzo, of which he rented a large portion, was amongst the best; and the entrance, a large court with arcades, and a broad stone staircase, carried me back again to visions of Italian splendour. My cousins came running down to receive me, followed by the servants, who all, male as well as female, pressed forward to kiss my hand, and called me *Eccellenza*.

It was all very novel and amusing, and I was quite delighted with the appearance of the house, through the centre of which ran a spacious and lofty hall, upwards of fifty feet long; the walls were painted in fresco by Pellegrino Tibaldi, and the ceiling was richly gilt and emblazoned with the arms of the Farnese family, by one of whom the palace had been built nearly three centuries ago. Opening from this, and in strange contrast with its stately appearance, was a large drawing-room, fitted up in the English style with books, pictures, and other indications of female occupancy and accomplishments. It was like a fireside scene of home transplanted to this distant land, and as much a marvel to me as the thoroughly English accent, appearance, and manners of the family amongst whom I found myself for the first time.

My cousins had been born abroad, and, nursed by Italian women, waited on by Italian servants, had blossomed into girlhood without ever visiting England, or knowing it but as the land of their pride, their aspirations, their religion, and their love. It was curious to witness, in this out-of-the-way old place, such genuine feeling and enthusiasm; and, stranger still, to understand by what spell so strong a veneration for the unseen fatherland had been infused into their very being, as to prevent their taking-root or binding themselves by strong bonds of affection to the country in which their lot seemed cast. And yet they were not kept from intercourse with the natives; on the contrary, I found them here moving in an exclusively Italian circle, looked upon with sincere respect and esteem by all of whom it was composed, and treated with an unvarying kindness it is pleasant to recall.

On the next and following days, several ladies, acquaintances of the family, came to call upon me, and in the evenings most of the gentlemen came to pay their respects in form to the newcomer; so that, aided by a few hints from my cousins, I was soon quite *au fait* as to the leading tastes and characteristics of my present associates. What struck me most at first, was their excessive ceremoniousness and formality. I never had

before seen such courtesies and bows exchanged, or could have deemed it possible that rational beings could endure to hear themselves addressed, or address each other so unceasingly by their titles, as did the *principi, marchesi*, and *conti* by whom I was surrounded. Then the observance of certain rules of etiquette was laughable in the extreme – it seemed to be an understood thing that the mistress of the house, on the departure of any lady visitor, should offer to accompany her to the door. This politeness was to be refused, then insisted on still remonstrated against; and so on, till the contested point being reached, the visitor should retreat with a gentle pressure of the hand, and a profound reverence. Amongst the ladies, I perceived I was surveyed with a good deal of interest on account of some fashionable novelties in my wardrobe. One lady took up my dress, and after looking attentively at its texture, asked me what it had cost, and whether I thought she could send for one like it from Florence. I found out afterwards this was meant to be a great compliment to my taste, and that the loan of a new pattern for a dress or mantle was looked upon as an inestimable benefit.

The conversation did not seem very brilliant, and yet, after all, what is ladies' morning visit prattle at the best? I think it was as good as some it has been my lot to hear in a more brilliant sphere. They talked of the weather and the opera there would be after Christmas – we were still in October! – And of their children. Yes, let us do them justice there. I do not think more maternal love and anxiety and tenderness can anywhere be found than in the hearts of Italian women. To say truth, however, this affection so extended itself to the minutest particulars, that I grew rather tired of hearing how such a baby was suffering with his first teeth, or of the apprehensions entertained for another with the measles, or the difficulty of providing a wet nurse for a third, and his mamma's grief at being debarred from undertaking that office herself, particularly when I found these little incidents to be as much discussed by the gentlemen in their evening visits, as any other topic; in fact, the accuracy with which they spoke on such matters, and their extended medical details, were sufficiently singular and amusing.

The plan of society seemed thus constituted: during the day, the men lounged at the cafe, played a game at billiards, or read such newspapers as the severity of the police allowed them at the casino, and generally concluded by strolling a little way beyond the gate I have described on my entrance into Ancona. The ladies did not, in general, go out every day; but when they did so, it was to pay visits, or dawdle about the street where the principal shops were to be found. In some families of the *very*

old *régime*, however, or in some of the strict ones of the middle class, it would not have been thought decorous for the female members to be often seen abroad, and an hour's airing at an open window towards the Ave Maria, or dusk, was considered as a substitute for daily outdoor exercise. I do not know what an English sanitary commission would have said to tills custom, could they but have tested the pestilential atmosphere which the Anconitan belles smilingly inhaled, as, leaning on some old damask drapery, consecrated from time immemorial to this purpose, their glossy hair wreathed in rich plaits around their classically shaped heads, their dark eyes beaming with excitement, they watched every passer-by, and often from one glance or gesture laid the foundation of more passion and romance than it were fitting in these sober pages to record.

On Sundays and festas there was of course the mass in the morning, which furnished to the women a great opportunity for dress and display, particularly at one of the churches, where the Lest music was to he heard, and the fashionables usually congregated. But there was nothing comfortable in their way of going to church, if I may use the expression. You never saw husbands and wives, and their children, all walking in pleasantly together. The men would have been laughed at for such a conjugal display; and hence those who went at all, went by themselves; and of these, how many had any serious purpose in their heart, save keeping well in the jealous eyes of the government and priests, or fulfilling some appointment, or whiling away half an hour by listening to the best airs of *Ernani* or the Lombard! adapted to the organ, I should be unwilling to hazard a conjecture. In the afternoon, the promenade outside the gates was crowded, and four or five very antiquated looking equipages drove slowly up and down the dusty road, forming what an old count very complacently designated to us, *il Corso delle Carrozze*.

Our acquaintances could not comprehend our taste for long country walks, and used to wonder what inducement we could find every day for rambling over the hills and cliffs that rendered the neighbourhood really beautiful.

"Heavens!" said one little *contessa*, "I should die of the spleen" – this was a very favourite newly introduced term with them – "if I saw nothing when I went out but the sky, and sea, and trees. What can you find to amuse you?... It is so melancholy! And then that Jews' burying-ground you are so fond of!" ...

This was a most singular spot, remote, undefended, spreading over the summit of a cliff that rose abruptly to a great height above the sea;

but so grand in its situation, in the desolate sublimity which reigned around, in the reverential murmur of the waves that washed its base, that it was one of our favourite resorts.

It was in vain to explain to her our admiration; she shook her head, and went on: “That burying ground – to be amongst so many dead Jews!”.

“But we must all die like them” – urged one of my cousins – “and it is good for one to be reminded of these things sometimes”.

“Pardon me” – interrupted the lady, with a slight shudder – “but that is such an English idea! Oh, that terrible death! why talk or think about it?”.

“How strange this terror is that so many people feel” – rejoined I – “it must come upon all of us sooner or later. Nay, if the prognostications of many thinking men in this age are to be relied upon, we are not far from the end of the world”.

The poor lady absolutely turned pale, as she cried out: “Oh, pray do not talk so. You make me miserable! Besides” – she said, recovering herself a little – “I have been told that in the Bible it is expressly said that for seven years before that dreadful day no children are to be born; and that gives me comfort; for, at every fresh birth I hear of, I say to myself: well, the seven years at least have not begun yet!”

So the ladies of Ancona, with not more than one or two exceptions, being all participators in this wholesome dread of retired walks, and the reflections likely to be induced thereby, idled away their time in the manner I have described, with the aid of a little crochet or fancy work; or, amongst the most studious – they always call reading *study* – the translation of a French novel, until the evening, which brought with it its usual conversazione. Every lady received at her own house some half dozen gentlemen or so, who were unvarying in waiting upon her, whether she held her levee at her own house, or in her box at the theatre; nay, so unfailing was their attendance, that if indisposition confined her to her bed, you were sure to find them assembled round it, making the *società* as pleasantly, and in as matter-a-fact a way as possible. As they all dined early, the evening commenced betimes, soon after six in winter, and went on till midnight, all dropping in at different hours, some early, some late, according to the number of their habitual engagements. In general, every one had at least two or three families where he was expected to show himself every evening; and, from a long course of habit, each house had its own hour assigned to it. Many of these intimacies had subsisted for twenty, nay, even thirty years, without any perceptible variation

in the usual tenor of intercourse; they always kept up the same ceremony, the same old-fashioned, laborious politeness; assembled in the same half-lighted, comfortless saloon, and sat and talked; lamented the good old times, and grew grey together.

It was an odd, disjointed sort of life for white-headed men to lead, particularly when they had houses and families of their own where they could have passed their evenings, instead of toiling up two or three sets of stairs, and making their bow to two or three sets of people, before they could think of returning to their oval roofs to supper and to rest. "When I write of Italians and their dwellings, I avoid using the word home, for it would be strangely misapplied. They do not know of the existence of such a blessing as that most beautiful term of ours implies; neither, to say truth, would they appreciate it in their present imperfect views of domestic life.

It may be asked whether, in these coteries, there was not usually one more distinguished by the lady's preference than the rest; and in many instances this was no doubt the case, although by no means so invariably as in former generations. Where such a partiality did exist, it was not apparently noticed or commented upon by the others, but accepted as a matter of course – as a proceeding whose harmony it would have been invidious to disturb. The cavaliere, in general, paid a visit every day – not, however, to chocolate and the toilet, as old-fashioned novels have it, but about one o'clock, to communicate the fashionable intelligence, offer his opinion on some new dress or piece of millinery, give *bon-bons* to the children, and perhaps accompany the husband to the stable, to discuss the merits of a new horse or set of harness.

I was told of one old lady who had entered herthreescore-years-and-ten, still served with the same homage by her veteran cavaliere as she had imperiously exacted some forty winters before. All her contemporaries had died but himself, and he was the last that remained of her *società*, which had no attractions for younger visitors. And so they used to sit in the evening opposite each other, a lamp with a dark shade diffusing an uncertain light upon the timeworn room and faded hangings; both half blind, deaf, and helpless, nodding drowsily at each other, holding little earthen baskets filled with fire, called *scaldini*, in their trembling hands; yet still, from force of habit, keeping up this semblance of conversation till eleven struck, when the old man's servant came to fetch him, and wrapping him in a large cloak, led him carefully to his own house.

Happily, we did not have regular conversazioni at my uncle's; as he was a widower, and my cousins unmarried, it would not have been

thought correct. We used only to have occasional visitors in the evening, or else invited the good people regularly to tea – which, though never appearing at their own houses, they yet fully appreciated at ours; and played whist, and had a little music, and did our best to amuse them, our exertions being fully repaid by the good humour and sprightliness of our guests.

Picturesque environs of Ancona - Dwellings of the peasantry - Their simplicity and trust - Manner of life and amusements - A wedding feast.

By way of an agreeable contrast; to the patrician associations which surrounded us, we used in our walks to take great interest in noticing the peasantry or *contadini* of the environs; and circumstances having protracted my stay beyond what was originally intended, I was enabled, when the lovely month of April invited us to longer excursions, to see a good deal of their primitive mode of life. The town being small with scarcely any suburbs beyond the gates, a very few minutes were sufficient to transport one from the dark, narrow streets to the open country, rich in its cultivation and fertility, and beautiful in its undulating hills, its towering cliffs, and broad expanse of sea. Never have I known spring more lovely than; amid these scenes: the glad blue sky, the fair blossoms and budding foliage, the fields of young corn gently waving in the breeze, the sweet scent of the violets with which the roadside banks were thickly strewn; the sense of beauty, the voiceless music, beneath whose spell each tiny leaf and blade of grass seemed sparkling and harmonious; and, above all, the sea, the silvery sea, so still, so majestic, so sublime. The whole rises to my memory in all its fascination of sunshine, and colouring, and perfume.

No stranger approaching by the high road from Florence, which follows the curve of the bay, with the promontory on which Ancona is built stretching forth like a gigantic arm to impede his onward course, and forming the boundary of the prospect, can have an idea of the nature of the scenery which lies behind this barrier, and is perhaps unique in its combination of all the softest features of a pastoral region, with the lofty cliffs and sea-views of a grander landscape.

From the very gates, the land was laid out in small allotments or *possessioni*, each of barely a few acres in extent, planted with long rows of vines, intersected with patches of wheat, maize, and vegetables, that

were studded with apple, peach, almond, and other fruit-trees. No barrier more formidable than a luxuriant hedge, a perfect wilderness of May-flowers, honeysuckles, and dogroses, divided the *possessione* from the road; the entrance was by a gate of very simple construction, surmounted by an arch with an image of the Virgin. Like Little Red Riding-hood, all one had to do was to pull up the latch and walk forward – not into the jaws of a perfidious wolf, but up a pretty avenue of mulberry-trees, with vines trained in festoons along their branches. A rude well – so picturesque in its shape that it never failed to bring to my mind the representations of Jacob's, meeting with Rachel – always stood in the foreground, while a little in the rear appeared the cottage of the occupants of the farm; these dwellings of stone, blackened by time, were comfortless and primitive in the extreme, the windows unglazed, and the upper story accessible only by an uncovered staircase outside.

Two or three ragged little children were always at hand to carry news of a stranger's presence to their mother, who was perhaps tilling the ground at some little distance: the good woman soon made her appearance, barefooted, and carrying, admirably poised upon her head, a large pitcher of water, with another of equal size supported on her hip; in her other hand she bore the coarse broad brimmed straw hat which was in general her protection from the sun. Her costume consisted of a petticoat of scarlet and blue-striped cotton, with a bodice or stay of a different colour, from beneath which appeared the white sleeves of the shift, reaching to the elbow, where they were fastened in and terminated with a frill, much as is seen in engravings of Raphael's Fornarina; around the throat and shoulders was a handkerchief, so scrupulously adjusted as barely to disclose the coral necklace, without which even the poorest contadina would think her everyday attire incomplete. There was often much beauty in the face set off by this picturesque equipment, for, however worn and sunburnt it might be, it could usually boast of jet-black tresses, dark vivacious eyes, well-cut features, and the whitest possible teeth. The welcome, too, was pleasing – no constraint, no bashfulness, but a straightforward, hospitable simplicity that won its way immediately to the heart. We were perfectly at liberty to come in and look about us, ask questions, and rest ourselves, and were secure of giving unbounded delight if, on coming away, we purchased fruit or eggs to the value of a few *baiocchi*.

After one or two visits of this nature, we were quite on a footing of intimacy, and the mother and children would seat themselves round us, to indulge in a little conversation. If we chanced to come on a *festa*, or

when the daily toil was over, the circle would be increased by the father and his grown-up sons, who, in their rough but not unmusical peasant dialect, plied me with inquiries about the country I came from, and its peculiarities, such as whether we had a moon there, and what the people ate. In a fashion they had all heard of England, as a wonderfully rich and large *city*; but its inhabitants being heathens, was what had principally impressed itself upon their minds, and awakened their regrets. In all that regarded themselves, they were very communicative; and in one possessione especially, where the bond of union was cemented by their having supplied my uncle's household with milk for several years, they used to tell us of all their domestic concerns, from the courtship of Celestino, the eldest son, who was *promesso* to a neighbouring contadina, to the pearl earrings and necklace which Orsolina, a pretty laughing damsel, the only daughter of the family, had just received as a trothplight from her affianced swain. I remember, as an instance of their perfect trust in us, that, after having displayed these valuables with a great deal of pride, the girl put the little pasteboard box containing them into my cousin Lucy's hand, and proposed she should take them home to show her sister, *l'altra signorina*, whom a trifling indisposition had confined to the house.

The frugality with which these peasants live is surprising, particularly when one sees what a fine, hard working race they really are. Their food consists in great measure of bread, made of equal proportions of ground beans and the flour of Indian corn, of which, every morning, all the members of the family are furnished with a supply before setting out on their different avocations. At noon, they assemble for dinner, which is of *polenta* – Indian corn-meal stirred into boiling water till it becomes about the consistency of thick oatmeal porridge; it is then poured out on wooden platters, and eaten with no other condiment than salt. Bread, and a moderate draught of wine, or, in summer, occasionally vinegar and water, complete the repast. In the evening, they sup on bread and salad, or an onion, or fennel root, or raw beans. Meat they never taste, except on Sundays or the great *feste*; and then it is in so small a quantity, and so boiled down by having been made into soup, that it cannot convey much nourishment. Singularly enough, they have a prejudice against milk; and when a cow is kept for the purpose of supplying the consumption of the town, they make no use of it themselves: in those cases where any is left upon their hands, it is always given to the pig.

In summer, when the labours of the day are at an end, they assemble on the threshing-floor adjacent to the house, and dance to the music of

a tambourine, which is played successively by the different members of the family; even children of six or seven years old often take their turn, and beat the rural instrument with great spirit and precision. Their national dance, called the *saltarello*, does not exhibit much variety of figure: the two performers stand facing each other, the woman holding her dress spread out, her partner with his hands in an easy attitude on his hips: thus prepared, they set off, advancing and retreating, doubling and pursuing, circling round and round each other, in a quick hopping sort of step, always keeping admirable time, and accompanying the music by a sort of hissing sound, which appears to have an exhilarating influence. As soon as one couple pause to take breath, another is ready to step forward; while the interest of the spectators and the animation of the dancers never seem to flag: sometimes the old people, the elders of the group, become so excited, that they start up, push aside the younger ones, and foot it away with a nimbleness and dexterity which call down general applause.

Their households are generally large, for, as the sons grow up, they invariably marry, always in succession, according to their birthright, and bring their wives home to the paternal roof, unless one has a religious vocation and becomes a priest, or a lay brother in some order of friars. As soon, however, as they become, too numerous, the *padrone*, the owner of the land, steps in to say he will not have so many useless mouths upon his property; so then one at least of the junior branches is obliged to look out for another possessione to cultivate.

The terms on which they hold these farms, and the system pursued between landlord and tenant, are very different from English usages. No rent is paid, but the produce is equally shared; the proprietor receives his half of everything in kind – so many measures of corn, so many jars of oil, and barrels of wine; nay, even to the vegetables and poultry daily brought into the market for sale, there is understood to be an exact division. It is looking after these petty details of their property, and regulating their multifarious accounts, which forms the occupation of the industrious nobles. Among the wealthiest of these proprietors, some own as many as 50, 60, or even 100 possession!, varying in size and value from £30 or upwards yearly income to the possessor, down to those that do not yield him more than £13 or £14 clear profit; which last, however incredible it may seem, give support to a family of five or six in number on the premises. Of course, it cannot be supposed that the shares are very equitably divided; indeed, it is always considered that the fruit and vegetables daily consumed by the peasants are exclusive of this arrange-

ment; but then, to counterbalance this, the padrone also has his perquisites, in a stipulated number of fat capons at Christmas, eggs and a lamb at Easter, and the choicest of the grapes, apples, pears, pomegranates, quinces, &c., to be stored for winter use.

On the whole, a great deal of harmony between the two classes seems to prevail; the landlord is always consulted as to the marriage of any of the contadino's family, and is expected to grace their wedding and christening festivities with his presence, and to stand godfather to the first child. In the times when it was customary even amongst persons of the highest rank to send their children out into the country to be nursed, a peasant woman from one of the possession was selected for the office of *baglia*, and the infant *marchese* or *principe*, as the case might be, duly swaddled and sparingly washed, passed the first year or two of his existence in perfect equality with his foster-parents and their children. Even now, when this practice among the nobility is obsolete, except in the case of some stony-hearted and prejudiced old *suocera*, similar to the one I have already given an account of, the wet-nurse is always chosen from among the family's rustic dependents; and, if careful and devoted to her charge, is so kindly and liberally treated during her stay at the *palazzo*, that a mutual feeling of affection and gratitude is invariably the result, manifesting itself throughout life by protection and assistance on the one hand, and little freewill-offerings upon the other.

The observances of the peasants in regard to their weddings and courtships are very curious, and date from time immemorial; indeed, neither in their mode of dress nor form of speech do they appear to be sensibly affected by the fashions of the day; and I have been told by good authorities, that in many respects they are as their fore-fathers were 300 years ago. After a young man has signified to a girl's parents his wish to marry her, and has satisfied them as to his circumstances, present or prospective, he is allowed to visit at the *possessione* on Sundays and holidays, though under considerable restrictions. The young people are not allowed to go together to fairs or merry-makings, or even to talk alone, except when separated by a hedge or paling; and here even their attitudes are prescribed by rigid custom. The *promesso* is not to look too earnest or taken up; while the girl is enjoined to keep her eyes cast down, and to busy herself in plaiting the strings of her apron into numberless small folds, of which they of courts retain the impression; and to be able to display these evidences of having an admirer, whenever the rustic belles meet at church, is quite a point of rivalry amongst them.

In conformity with the system prevailing through all classes in Italy,

the peasant-bride is expected to be furnished with a *trousseau*, and even in this humble sphere it is surprising what an amount of linen and clothes is considered indispensable. She would be thought poor indeed who could not number every useful article of wearing apparel by a dozen of each kind, besides providing a chest of drawers, sheets, mattresses, and pillows. The dresses are fewer in number – not exceeding perhaps the wedding-gown, which amongst the more affluent peasantry is of silk, and a couple of cotton ones, reserved for *feste* – the usual costume being the corset, with a coloured petticoat. To accumulate this stock is the object of a *contadina*'s life, almost from the time she can first speak or run alone, and every nerve has been strained towards its attainment; either in working in the *possessione* and carrying the produce to market, or as a washerwoman, or rustic sempstress, or in weaving cloth, the most patient self-denial and unintermitting industry are displayed, and kept up for a long series of years. Comparatively with the population of the towns, the peasantry marry late, the *sposa* being often four or five and twenty before the *corredo* is completed on her side, or the bridegroom has saved enough to furnish the earrings and necklace of real, though of course small and irregular pearls, he is expected to present.

The day before the wedding, all the bride's friends and companions assemble, and carry her property with great pomp to the dwelling of her future husband's parents, with whom the young people are to take up their abode. The more things displayed, the greater the envy and congratulation. To enhance the effect, they form a sort of procession, every one bearing on her head some portion of the paraphernalia; each drawer is carried separate from the chest, the contents having been carefully arranged, and submitted to public inspection; then comes a damsel with the pillows; then another with a small looking-glass, and so forth; all talking and shrieking with delight, while a donkey laden with the mattress soberly brings up the rear.

The next morning they all repair in their best clothes at an early hour to the *sposa*'s house, and assist at the important business of her toilet. Her costume consists of the long-coveted silk dress, which is sometimes the gift of the *padrone*, the favourite colour being lilac. It has been made in town, and is very tight in the waist, evidently uncomfortable to the bride, who is furthermore inconvenienced by the unwonted restraints of shoes, open-worked stockings, and white cotton gloves. The headgear is a white kerchief, or square veil, lightly placed upon the elaborately plaited tresses, and the ends falling loosely upon the shoulders, which are, as usual, so studiously covered as to afford but a glimpse of the comely

rounded throat, whose dark, clear skin sets off the rows of pearls by which it is encircled. At the church they are met by the bridegroom, with his friends and relatives; and after the religious ceremony and nuptial benediction, the whole party adjourn to the bride's new residence, where the wedding-feast is held. In some districts, however, where their quaint old usages are still strictly adhered to, they separate at the conclusion of the service, which is performed on a Thursday; and the *sposa* returns to the house of her parents, doffs her gay apparel, and resumes her wonted occupations. For the two following days, nothing is seen of the bridegroom; but on the Sunday morning the same joyous preparations as for the marriage ceremony are renewed, and the same glad trains set forth, and meet at the village church, whence, after hearing mass, they all repair, arm in arm, the *sposo* leading the way to the *possessione* of his parents, where a great dinner celebrates the event.

The bill of fare on these occasions is more substantial than elegant; as if to indemnify themselves for so seldom partaking of animal food, their wedding-tables are furnished with little else. The repast begins with macaroni, dressed with coarse cheese, gravy, and spices; after which there come quantities of meat, boiled, stewed, and roasted; pigeons and fowls, all with most incongruous sauces of eggs and garlic, vinegar and sugar; upon the composition of which two or three cooks, friends of the family, who have condescendingly volunteered their services for the occasion, have been displaying their abilities. Sweet dishes they do not seem to care for excepting sometimes *Zuppa Inglese* – sponge-cake, soaked in rum, and covered with custard, so named in compliment to our national taste for ardent spirits, supposed indispensable to a Briton's daily refection. The *padrone* is seated at the right hand of the *sposa*, and enters very unaffectedly into the jokes and hilarity of the company; sometimes, under the influence of excitement, one of the party breaks forth, into an *improvvisazione,* and chants a rude epithalamium in honour of the newly-wedded pair. The native wine circulates freely, and healths are drunk, and showers of sugar-plums discharged at the bride, amidst roars of laughter. These *confetti*, which are villainous compounds of almonds and plaster of Paris, hold the same place at weddings in Southern Italy that bridecake does in England; and are distributed as presents amongst the friends and relations of the families.

Volunnia's inquisitiveness - Her strictures on English propriety - The *Marchesa* Silvia's dread of heretics - The dinner - The *Marchesa* Gentilina knits stockings and talks politics.

I was very much diverted, during the investigation of my wardrobe, at noticing how keenly Volunnia eyed the make and quality of my garments, as if furnishing some clue to my position in society; still further to elucidate which, she proceeded to a diligent cross-examination respecting my birth, parentage, and the reasons which had brought me so far from my own country.

Strange as it may seem, there was nothing I felt disposed to take offence at in these interrogatories. They showed so much ignorance of the world beyond the narrow limits in which she lived; so much curiosity to learn something of a country that, despite her school-learning, was almost as much an Ultima Thule to her as to her Roman ancestors; and displayed besides so amusingly the impression left upon foreigners by some of our everyday customs, that I should have been foolishly sensitive, as well as have deprived myself of a good deal of entertainment, had I resented Volunnia's inquiries, or her comments upon my answers. But I was evidently an enigma to her, which it would have required a second Edipus to unravel.

"*Ma, ma,"* she said at length, as if musing upon the subject – "when you return to England, will it not hinder your ever marrying to have it said that you have been abroad, away from your nearest relations? And who, after all, will be able to certify where? *We*, in these parts, know and respect your uncle and his family, and can answer for their manner of life; but supposing a *partito* in your own country is found for you, might not injurious inferences be drawn from your long absence? Who will vouch for your having been really under the care of your uncle, or furnish proofs of his excellence and fitness for the charge?"

I had not weighed all these important considerations, I told her gravely – nevertheless had no fear, in the event of their being mooted, that any unpleasant remarks could be applied to my stay with my relations in Ancona.

"I suppose you know best, carina; but a person who contemplates marriage has certainly a right to be particular as to the previous proceedings of the young lady who may be proposed to him as a wife; and who can satisfy the doubts of a man in such a case? With us, believe me, the injury to a woman's prospects would be incalculable".

I rejoined meekly, that in England it was not usual, and, above all, not

deemed advisable, for persons to enter into matrimony without such knowledge of each other's characters, and mutual trust and confidence, as rendered it impossible that suspicions like those she hinted at could ever be entertained.

"You are a singular people, you English!" she exclaimed; "such licence allowed women when single; such severity shown towards them when married. I saw a little of your manners several years ago, when I spent a winter with my parents in Rome. Alas! we were drawn thither by that ill-fated *processo*, and became acquainted with a family of your compatriots. I was astonished! Young men were allowed to come constantly in the evening to the house, and would stand by the piano while the young ladies played, and turn over the leaves of their music books, or assist them in the duties of the tea table, laughing and talking without the least restraint; nay, more, hold *tête-à-tête* conversations over an embroidery-frame or a chess-board, while the mother sat at the other end of the room, perfectly indifferent as to what they might be saying".

"Because she, doubtless, had confidence that neither the young Englishmen she permitted to visit at her house would dream of uttering, nor her daughters so far forget themselves as to listen to a single word incompatible with the strictest propriety".

"Precisely: that is what this lady said when my poor mother, *buon'anima*, ventured some remark on these proceedings, so singular to our eyes. Then, what astonished us exceedingly was the great familiarity with their brothers, by whom I have frequently seen them kissed, without any motive – such as saying farewell before a long absence, or a return from a journey – to authorize it; while they were permitted to walk or ride out without any other escort – one or two of the sons' most intimate friends sometimes even joining them; the mother calmly acquiescing, nay, encouraging them, by saying her sons were the natural guardians of their sisters, and would admit no one to their society unworthy of that distinction! But the crowning stroke of all was when a marriage was combined with some *milor* for one of the young ladies, or rather when she had combined it for herself – for he spoke to her before declaring himself to the parents – she was allowed to take his arm on the Pincian Hill or the Villa Borghese, with only a sister or a young brother of nineteen or twenty as a chaperon; and I myself have seen them, under their mother's very eyes, stand for half-an-hour in the evening on a balcony, under pretence of looking at the moonlight, and unconsciously turning my head in that direction, I could not help witnessing… Ahem!" Volunnia blushed and hesitated.

"A little of the same proceeding you had objected to in the brothers?"

"You are right! At the moment I was so amazed I hardly dared tell my mother what I had beheld; she would have been too much scandalized!"

"And yet you did not count it worthy of remark, among your own Roman friends, to see a young woman, but two or three years married, surrounded by a bevy of admirers; carrying the arts of coquetry to their utmost height, and taking pride in inspiring attachments and receiving declarations which would be esteemed an insult to a modest English wife. And you did not feel shocked, when the first novelty of her gay life was over – when the society from which she had been shut out in her girlhood had lost its intoxicating influence – to hear of her exchanging the homage of the many for the exclusive devotion of a recognized *cavaliere*, replacing, by his daily assiduities, the presence of a husband who has found similar occupations for himself elsewhere! *Scusi*, *Signora* Volunnia: you are at liberty to call us a strange people, but permit me to say our system, even taken from your own point of view, is a thousand times preferable to yours."

"*Via, via*," she replied; " you exaggerate a little. What you say might be applicable fifty years ago, when it used to be stipulated in the marriage contract that the wife should have but one *cavaliere servente*, and the husband often selected a friend whom he thought trustworthy for that office. But things have changed now: it is no longer looked upon as indispensable; and I could tell you of several ladies of my acquaintance who have never had a *cavaliere*, nor the shadow of one. My own mother, dear soul! I can cite as an instance – a remarkable one, I admit, for the period. when she was young – but then she had a singular affection for my father, who on his side was always ready to accompany her to the theatre or the casino; or else, as I myself remember, whenever she was indisposed, for two or three hours together would sit in her room, talking most agree-ably: altogether, he showed extreme amiability in paying her those little attentions which others, less fortunate in their marriage, are glad to receive from their *cavalieri*. Then take Silvia for another example: I do not think she has ever had an idea upon the subject; in fact, she has no taste for amusements, and never cares for anything except her children and her religious duties, in which last, indeed, she is exemplary."

The conversation was here interrupted by a servant coming to inquire whether the *marchesina* intended to drive or walk before dinner, which reminded her of the lateness of the hour, and the necessity of retiring to dress. About one o'clock, the ladies of the family went out – not together, nor indeed frequently, except Silvia, who daily repaired with her pale

children and two nurses to an avenue of trees outside the gates of the town, where they descended from the carriage, and crawled up and down for an hour or so, and then drove home again.

The *marchesa* seldom cared to leave the house; she always had visitors at that hour, and preferred talking to any other exercise. Volunnia was the only one who found any pleasure in a walk – a taste in which she had no sympathy from the other members of the family, as even her brothers never dreamed of going further than the *caffè*, or, at the utmost, a few steps upon the public promenade. She was, therefore, glad to enlist me as a companion, and, followed by one of the liveried attendants, who was especially dedicated to Volunnia's service – being her nurse in sickness as well as bodyguard in health – we took several walks in the environs of Macerata. Sometimes, too, I went with the *marchesa* to pay visits; and once or twice, to propitiate Silvia, I accepted her invitation to drive with her and the children; but we never became cordial. I was too much at variance with all her preconceived ideas of propriety ever to find favour in her eyes; besides, my Toeing a Protestant was an insurmountable disqualification. I accidentally discovered she firmly believed that the transmigration of human souls into the bodies of animals was a dogma of the Church of England – a conclusion founded upon the circumstance, that some years before, an English family holding this theory had resided in Macerata, where they excited much notice by purchasing and fondly cherishing sundry diseased horses, half-starved sheep, and other suffering quadrupeds, in whom, they declared, dwelt the spirits of their departed relations. Silvia could never quite believe that I did not hold this tenet. She did not, indeed, like conversations on such subjects; and once, when I said something laughingly in allusion to myself, thus retorted, "Well, what does it signify, after all? You do not pray to the Madonna, so the rest matters little." And on my offering to lend her an Italian translation of the English Prayer-book, she shrunk back, colouring deeply, and abruptly declined.

But stay, it is three o'clock, and Rococo stands with a napkin under his arm, knocking at each door: "*Eccellenza in tavola*." And their excellencies being very hungry, no time is lost in assembling in the room downstairs, where the parrot, on a lofty perch, is sounding the note of preparation with right good will. "*Presto! Presto! La Zuppa. Ho fame – Ho fame*!", he exclaims in shrill accents, flapping his wings, while the family, hastily crossing themselves, are taking their places, and addressing each other in voices almost as piercing to the ear; for the high key in which Italians carry on their familiar discourse is one of the peculiarities

to which an English person finds it the most difficult to become reconciled.

The large table is very simply laid; the dinner service is of the plainest white-ware, and the glass is equally ordinary. Between every two places there is a bottle of wine – the growth of their own vineyards – and a decanter of water; and beneath every napkin a small loaf of bread. In the centre, a number of small dishes are disposed in a circle called the *ghirlanda* these contain anchovies, caviale, olives, Bologna sausage cut into thin slices, butter, pickles, and raw ham, and are partaken of after the soup; broth thickened with semolina, has been served out from a sideboard by the *maestro di casa*, and handed by the other servants, of whom there are three in attendance. Then are brought round, successively, boiled fowls stuffed with chestnuts; fried fish; roarifc lamb; a pie of coxcombs and brains, with a sweet crust; *polenta* – Indian-corn meal – in a form enshrining stewed birds, and seasoned with Parmesan cheese; onions dressed *all'agrodolce* with vinegar and sugar; and, lastly, chocolate cream – each dish being carved, where carving is necessary, by Rococo.

When these comestibles have been fully done justice to, the cloth is swept, the *ghirlanda*, is removed, and the dessert, in the same sort of white dishes, put upon table: apples and pears piled together, oranges opposite; cheese and celery; all taken indiscriminately on the same plate.

The repast occupies a long time, for tongues, as well as knives and forks, are busy, and as great an amount of talking as of eating is got through. Being the first general gathering of the day, here is all the outdoor gossip, as well as domestic intelligence, reciprocally to be imparted. In the conversation, the servants even occasionally join, volunteering an opinion as to whether it will rain the next quarter of the moon, or announcing that the *Signora Marchesa* "So-and-so" is laid up with a toothache, or that Monsignor the Bishop has the gout; and as for Rococo, he is continually appealed to, being evidently recognized as an authority by the whole house.

In conclusion, finger-glasses, with slices of lemon floating in the water, are presented to us, and we adjourn to the *marchesa's* drawing-room, where coffee is served; and after a few minutes, the majority disperse – Silvia to her babes, the priest to his breviary, Volunnia to her bower. Papa calls for his cloak and stick, and departs for the casino, leaning on the arm of Oliverotto, who, having dutifully accompanied his father thither, adjourns to the cane, and will probably not reappear in the bosom of his family until supper.

I remain with the *marchesa* and Alessandro, who always passes the early hours of the evening at home, only going out to pay some accustomed visit or look in at the casino, from eight to ten, at which early hour, to their great discomfort, they sup on account of papa. It soon grows dark, and a large *lucerna* is brought in, before which the servant adjusts a green shade, effectually precluding the possibility of reading or working by its light, except, indeed, that marvellous knitting which the *marchesa* carries on mechanically, never looking at her needles, and yet producing all sorts of complicated patterns for her stockings, the fabrication of which is her sole manual employment.

It is unusually cold for the middle of February, and there is a contention about the fire, which they insist upon lighting out of compliment to me; but this I stoutly refuse, knowing that every indisposition of the family or their visitants for the next fortnight at least would be attributed to it. So I wrap myself in a large shawl, have a *cassetta* filled with live embers for my feet, and feel quite comfortable. But I must learn to knit too, for then I shall be able to keep my attention from wandering while the *marchesa* talks, and really she is worth listening to, though Alessandro yawns so audibly. She is holding forth warmly against the English Government for having deluded the Italians, and especially the Sicilians, by encouraging them to revolt in 1848, and abandoning them to their fate when defeated in 1849. It is indeed a sorry tale, and there is little to be said in extenuation, though naturally one tries to make the best of it. Not with me, not with the English people, is she angry, the *marchesa* over and over again repeats; it is with that cold selfishness which is here considered the blot upon English policy in all its relations with foreign nations.

There is a ring at the bell! Alessandro rouses himself. It is past six. The friends who form the conversazione begin to arrive, each person staying from one to two hours, according to the number of other houses at which he also habitually visits. Though they come every evening, they never shake hands, at least not those of the old *régime*, and they have always something new to say.

Our Home by the Adriatic

(London, Richard Bentley and Sons, Publishers in Ordinary
to Her Majesty the Queen, 1986, Second edition)

by the Hon. Margaret Collier Galletti de Cadillac

Margaret Collier and her husband Arturo Galletti

Note
by Joyce Lussu

In the five-year period from 1868 to 1873, Victorian England was at the height of its wealth and power. The British Empire still exercised a monopoly over many important raw materials and had the most advanced manufacturing industries in the world. The British bureaucracy and the British Army had influence in five continents. The uprisings of people oppressed by colonialism were put down without great difficulty and the English working-class had not yet formed either a party or a trade union, but only a league of representatives. The Liberal Party and the Conservative Party, led by two prestigious leaders, Gladstone and Disraeli, were taking turns in government. Gladstone coloured the British supremacy with ideals such as freedom, *pax Britannica*, constitutional guarantees, as they could be understood in a society of contractors, and diatribes against either the Turkish or the Bourbon despotism. Disraeli did not believe in rhetorical emotions and did not hesitate to use the armed forces to conquer lands which were rich in raw materials, or to buy shares in the Suez Canal. He transformed an ordinary Queen into a symbol of imperial power. The British ruling class was hard-working, satisfied and at its most confident in representing a model of civilisation, indeed the model for the whole world. This model ruled public as well as private life with apparent smoothness and humour which, in truth, masked a polished ceremonial language and deeply authoritative behaviour.

The memories collected in *Our Home by the Adriatic* belong to a typical representative of the English upper-class who moved her home from a comfortable household in London to a ruined country house in an obscure corner in the southern area of the Marche, an Italian region still strongly influenced by pontifical authority. Margaret was twenty-seven years old and the bride of a dashing Italian officer, Arturo, (six feet two, with brown hair). He had previously served as an officer in Garibaldi's army of volunteers and fought at Custoza and Mentana.[1] Arturo had been awarded medals which he wore on his black Piedmont uniform of the Kingdom of Italy cut by the best tailor in Rome.

Miss Margaret was the daughter of Sir Robert Collier, a judge of the Judicial

Committee of the Privy Council, who later became Lord Monkswell. As a young solicitor, Robert distinguished himself by saving some Brazilian pirates from being hanged (it is well-known the English monarchy had a weakness for pirates). After being appointed counsel to the Admiralty and Judge-Advocate of the fleet, Robert then played an important role in the famous Arbitration of the "Alabama", a British pirate ship that caused considerable trouble for the Federals during the American Civil War in the 1860s. He was also a good painter and scholar: he translated Demosthenes and wrote poems in English and Latin. He had a hard, difficult character but he dearly loved his wife, Isabel Rose, a beautiful and well-educated lady. She graciously welcomed personalities of the time, wrote children's books, painted her china plates and designed her own jewellery. They had a spacious house on the Thames on the Chelsea Embankment. It had a large oak staircase, stained-glass windows, and its walls were in many shades of green. Now it is a museum. A butler named Hill ran the house with the diplomacy and efficiency of a Prime Minister. He was in charge of eighteen servants: this was the least a family needed for basic living, excluding holding sumptuous receptions.

There was also the old family villa, Grimstone, in the Monkswell Valley, about nine miles from Plymouth. This country house had all the comforts of a town house and a large surrounding park. Before entering the House of Lords, Robert had been a Member of Parliament for Plymouth from 1852 to 1871, as his father had been previously. In the constituency of Plymouth, the majority traditionally voted for the Liberal Party, which the Colliers also supported. In the General Election of 1868, Disraeli attempted to win the votes of craftsmen and small tradesmen in Plymouth in order to increase his parliamentary majority of forty-five. However, the city residents voted for Gladstone and returned him to government.

The Colliers participated in the liberal cultural environment formed by Darwinians and Whigs who supported the Italian *Risorgimento* movements with enthusiasm. When Garibaldi visited London in 1864, they organised the most sensational popular display of enthusiasm that England had ever seen.

Margaret's mother received progressive intellectuals and politicians in her salon and some of them became members of her family, such as the famous scientist Thomas Huxley and the Scottish laird, Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff, who had a long diplomatic and political career in the service of Her Majesty. Huxley's two daughters, Ethel and Marion, married Margaret's brother, John, in succession. He was a well-known painter (his self-portrait is in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence). Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff's daughter, Lily (she was a genuine Celt with green eyes and red hair and was a passionate feminist), married the younger son of Margaret's older brother, Robert, the second Baron of Monkswell. Sir Grant Duff was a Victorian interested in the world and people. He knew everybody and wrote many books about his activities and his journeys. In a volume I consulted at random, from page 103 onwards, he describes a stimulating conversation he had with Karl Marx on militarism and industrial countries. He invited Marx to his club, the "Devonshire", in London on 31 January 1879.

In such an active family, Margaret grew up with a solid education, various interests

and a firm belief in belonging to a dominant class that was very capable of ruling. She was surrounded by refined but modest luxury. In this environment there was an immense abyss between the gentry and someone of another class, and each knew his own place. Physically Margaret was very graceful. She was small and slight, and had an oval face, green eyes, and brown hair. She was one of three children and the only daughter. She was submissive but determined, insecure but so harsh that she disheartened her suitors. In the end she also disheartened Hubert, a poet with blue eyes to whom she was engaged. She was deeply in love with him and made herself literally ill over the ending of their engagement.

In order to take her mind off it, Margaret's parents had the idea of travelling to the newly united Italy whose fights against despotism had been so romanticised by Gladstone and Russell. Her mother accompanied her to Rome on the first puffing railways of the Kingdom of Italy.

At the time, Rome was an incredible site of property speculation. Next to the ruins of the ancient empire and to the foul-smelling medieval alleys and carts of innkeepers, craftsmen and shady dealers, buildings were constructed feverishly to locate ministerial offices, houses for Piedmont's bureaucrats, and new hotels provided with water closets. (A chamber-pot was still the only sanitary facility even in the sumptuous palaces of the Roman aristocracy. It was kept in a bedside table saturated with the century-old stink of urine and, presumably, emptied into buckets by devoted servants and used to fertilise vegetables and gardens). The two English ladies arrived at one of these new hotels and were soon welcomed by the fashionable British set and the Italian Liberals of high society. It was at that time that in Margaret's imagination the figure of Arturo, the handsome Italian official, replaced the dim image of the British Hubert. Undoubtedly they fell in love at first sight. Furthermore, Margaret saw in the Garibaldian fighter the symbol of a romantic epic, full of heroic courage and sacrifice (as she had read in books), and Arturo found a dignity and culture in the discreet and restrained young English lady that made her much more interesting than the repressed virgins, or the clinging adulteresses of Roman high society, including his mother.

Lady Isabel noticed her daughter's burning passion and soon understood that nothing would have dissuaded Margaret from marrying her man. At the same age, Lady Isabel herself ran away to join her Robert in secret. However, the rest of Margaret's English family was slightly puzzled. They knew that Arturo's father, Bartolomeo Galletti, had been one of the most eminent heroes of the Roman Republic in 1849 and appointed General by Garibaldi on the battlefield. They knew his mother, Anna de Cadilhac, was a member of an old French aristocratic family who migrated to Rome during the Revolution. In 1849, Mazzini defined her as 'the angel of the hospitals' and awarded her a medal for patriotic service, which few women received. Nevertheless, there were strange rumours about her. For example, her son Arturo had to duel more than once to protect her honour, which was not easily protected. The financial situation of the Gallettis did not seem good. At a young age, Bartolomeo had been very wealthy (his father was a rich trader from the countryside). He paid for four hundred fully equipped horsemen who were at Garibaldi's disposal in order to defend the

Roman Republic, but his wealth had not been restored and Anna de Cadilhac used money like water. How could Arturo guarantee his wife's comfort and serenity?

Margaret met all the objections. Anna de Cadilhac's honour was not her concern. Certainly, it was difficult to deny Anna slept with the vulgar and lewd King Victor Emmanuel, known as the Gallant King, since the result of their liaison was an unhappy girl named Aurora whom the King acknowledged. Aurora died of consumption at a very young age, soon after she had married a Neapolitan nobleman. However, is it not the case that, since the beginning of the monarchy, stories about royal bastards have ever seriously scandalised the British aristocracy? This was only Italy's first king. Besides, Arturo was the legitimate son of the Garibaldian General since Arturo was born in 1846, and Anna met her royal seducer only after 1860. Although Arturo had duelled to protect his mother from deserved slander, there were also rumours about how he gave the Savoy family a taste of their own medicine by courting the blond crown princess, Margherita, with some success. Did it matter? If Arturo could not have a military career, he would buy an estate and involve himself in agriculture as there were many properties previously owned by the Church which were then being sold at a low price. His uncle, Paolo de Cadilhac, who married an heiress in a village of the Marche called Monte San Pietrangeli, told him that it was a very picturesque locality and suggested a chaplaincy with two hundred hectares which was nearby and could be bought very cheaply. As Arturo had no capital, Lord Monkswell could give them the sum of money that was necessary to buy it (the exchange rate was very favourable) and to secure his daughter's happiness and income.

Certainly Margaret spoke to her family with the allusive and restrained language of her Victorian education but these were the essential points of the situation. They were not fully convinced but respected her decision. A few weeks afterwards, on 19 April 1873, Margaret married Arturo in a discreet ceremony as she was protestant and he was a freethinker. The couple glowed with harmony and happiness. Margaret's brothers were at the ceremony, dressed in the shabby elegance that was the fashion for men in high society across the whole of Europe, and her father gave them the money to buy the chaplaincy as their wedding present. General Bartolomeo attended the ceremony too. In 1859, he joined the Sardinian army as a major and was promoted to the rank of Major General in the Italian Army in 1868. His tall, upright figure still reflected his Garibaldian legend: a red shirt seemed to gleam through his austere dress-coat. Bartolomeo bowed to kiss the hand of his daughter-in-law and whispered: "*Vous êtes un ange …*".[2] He probably thought it was very good that his over-emotional son was settling down. Bartolomeo had separated from Anna a long time before without hard feelings: "Poor little Anna, what a silly girl!" After all she had continued to be the capricious and irresponsible adolescent he married when she was sixteen and very charming. After many years, her persistent childishness had become unbearable. A short time after his son's wedding, the General accompanied the great actress Adelaide Ristori, who was a very wise and discerning woman in her splendid maturity, around the world.

Margaret's account of her experiences in the Marche begins at this point. This was

not her first book: she had already published short stories set in Italy in literary magazines such as the *New Quarterly Magazine* and the *Victorian Magazine* and a collection of works entitled *The Camorristi and Other Tales*, published by Remington in London in 1882. In 1887, after *Our Home by the Adriatic*, she wrote a two-volume novel entitled *Babel*, which was published by William Blackwood in London and Edinburgh. In 1891, she published a story entitled *The School of Art* under the pseudonym of Isabel Snow. Some of her unpublished manuscripts are kept by her descendants. Her novels and stories present very complex plots, dramatic turns of events and emotions according to the custom of the time, but her smooth language and her omnipresent ironic touch preserve their style. Her works received recognition and attracted readers.

The encounter between the metropolitan culture of the most industrial country in the world and the rural culture of Torre San Patrizio in the province of Ascoli Piceno was adventurous and full of unforeseen events. The chaplaincy was called San Venanzo. It was at the top of a small hill with an extraordinary view, stretching from the Sibylline Mountains to the Adriatic Sea, from the headland of the Conero Mountain to the Gran Sasso Mountain in the Abruzzi. Margaret arrived at San Venanzo on a farm cart that was decorated with beautifully bright coloured drawings and pulled by a pair of pure white oxen. She sat on a straw chair which was fastened inside the cart. At the time, carriages could not travel along those rural roads. Her handsome Italian husband, who was then affectionate and tender, had put the ruined priest's house a little in order by bearing in mind his young bride's predilection for white. The saddle horses from Herzegovina were white, the large longhaired Sibylline sheep-dogs that guarded the property were white, the Angora cat was also white as well as the turkeys, geese, rabbits and the Leghorn-hens. All the flowers were white: the wall-climbing jasmine, the hyacinths, the narcissi and the gillyflowers in the flower beds, the yuccas with tall stalks, and the acanthus in the thicket and under the hedges. Although in love, Margaret was still implacably English and worked hard to transform her chaplaincy into a residence that resembled a British country house. She succeeded only in part but the result was unique and enchanting. The simple brick building was embellished with two small square turrets, a portico looked onto by the arched shutters, and a large panoramic open space that became a very tidy garden with a beautiful surrounding orchard. The management of the house proved to be a very difficult issue and Margaret had to learn to do it herself. In Italy it was impossible to find someone who could match the perfect butler, Hill, who would run the services and determine behaviour within the house. The servants did not tolerate the foreign lady because of her demands for scrupulous cleanliness and strict punctuality (which were already quite tiresome) but mainly because of her refusal to have any form of familiarity with them. The ideal of the impersonal, anonymous, silent Victorian servant who slipped in and out of the rooms of the employers like a ghost could not be reproduced among the hired workers of Torre San Patrizio. They had little experience of freedom but they had never refrained from expressing at least their feelings and freely telling their stories in a shrill voice. Poor Arturo! On such occasions he was constantly asked to interpret because the local population

spoke their dialect and Margaret only knew literary Italian, which she spoke with difficulty and a strong Oxford accent.

Margaret's criticism of the society in the Marche is quite merciless but she is not uncritical of her native British society. In her novel *Babel*, set in Monte San Pietrangeli, a village near Torre San Patrizio, she describes the impressions of a young girl of the Marche who visits London for the first time:

> But what struck Giannetta most painfully were the violent contrasts of luxury and misery perpetually forced upon her notice. The very rich and the very poor were constantly in juxtaposition: she wondered how either could bear it. At her home among the Apennines all enjoyed the goodly fruits of the earth; no one had ever died of hunger to her knowledge; the destitute had but to stretch out his hand to eat of his neighbour's produce, and the neighbour would not grudge it him. All alike they lived simply, and the rich exercised a free-handed hospitality. It therefore filled Giannetta's soul with indignation to see fine ladies sweep into their carriages without a glance at the outstretched hand of the wretched starved beggar. She had never seen such wretchedness, such pinched haggard faces, such dirt, such rags; and how could those who lived in the midst of such luxury and refinement as she had not known either, endure the sight?[3]

After the initial enthusiasm and courageous attempts at adjustment, economic problems began in San Venanzo.

Only many years afterwards did Arturo confess that he had lost his wallet with the amount of money given him by his father-in-law to buy the property a few days after the wedding (more probably he used it to settle his debts). He rented San Venanzo instead, and could barely balance the budget because of getting deeply into debt again.

In *Our Home by the Adriatic*, Margaret moves from her account of domestic events to the depiction of the whole society in which she lives. From an external and always mercilessly ironical point of view, she describes farm-workers and landlords, housewives and working women, officers and politicians. She criticises most fiercely those who are supposedly her equal in the class-system, the landowners. They are described as uneducated, mean and idle. She was especially critical of their wives and daughters because they were particularly ignorant and lazy. Margaret refuses to visit or exchange conversation with them as she discovers it is more interesting to talk to the countrywomen because they are busy in developing their intellect and skills in an unlimited number of activities. They know how to sing *stornelli* and dance the *saltarello*, for example.

There was only one family she visited with pleasure, the Salvadoris, an Anglo-Italian clan of the Marche who had settled in the harbour of Fermo about one hundred and fifty years before. She would converse at length with Adele Salvadori about England. Although Adele had never been there, she longed to see her mother's country because her English mother talked about it so much. Adele had rarely left Fermo, except twice to visit Rome, but she shared with Margaret her dreams of a great journey with the

explorer Stanley to central Africa. She was his great admirer and they had corresponded for a few years. With kindness and firmness Stanley dissuaded the Anglo-Italian lady of the Marche (who was already in her forties and had five children) from that great adventure. One of Adele's sons married Margaret's daughter; they became my parents.

At times Margaret's English relatives visited. Her brother Robert and her sister-in-law Mary stayed in San Venanzo in 1881 and in 1883. Mary describes their visits in her memoirs entitled *A Victorian Diarist*, published by Murray in London in 1944. Mary is more British but less educated than Margaret and perceives the Marche as a colony of people who are backward and she thanks Providence for being British. Nevertheless Mary is fascinated by her handsome Italian brother-in-law. These English ladies were never in doubt about the charm of Italian men. In one of her novels Margaret sighs: "To love as only Italians can!"

Margaret urged her husband to study agricultural affairs and administer the farm directly by introducing more advanced technologies. Arturo partly achieved the desired improvement by getting rid of the bailiffs' curse and by dealing directly with sharecrop farmers whom he regularly summoned. At first, the sharecroppers regretted the loss of the feudal system they were used to, but then they accepted the new contracting terms. Arturo was elected mayor of Torre San Patrizio and later Member of Parliament for the constituency for five terms. In his election posters he used to define himself as a "progressive dynastic politician", and a "pro-governmental politician" at Giolitti's time.

Naturally their marriage was a failure. After four years of burning passion, which had helped them to overcome all problems, their incompatibility rose to the surface more and more seriously. By that time, Margaret, then renamed Rita, had accepted she could not turn her husband into an English gentleman. Although she was dedicated to educating their children and managing the house well, she locked herself into an internal detachment by longing for the world in which she was born, and became more and more disconnected from reality. Arturo felt more and more uneasy with his very restrained and vaguely ironic wife in her impeccable correctness. He searched for consolation in the arms of maidservants he found within his reach. In this way, he deluded himself as to his emotional nature. Like a good Italian husband, Arturo did not think he offended the lady of the house too much: "But Rita, why do you take it amiss? You are my wife, the woman I love and honour!"

Nevertheless, Margaret took offence, even if she believed quarrels were a form of rudeness to avoid. Her brothers and her children, who were then adults and had begun unpleasant legal disagreements with their father, incited her so much that, one day, she left her husband and the hill of San Venanzo for good and went back to England. However, it was too late to start again. After a long time, she met her relatives and friends, and realised that, in vain, she had believed in being English and loving her country more than anything else. By then England was grey and so was her brothers' hair. In her family the young had undertaken a cultural and political development from which she had been cut out. They were Fabians like Sidney Webb and Bernard Shaw, pacifists like Bertrand Russell, and feminists like Virginia Woolf. In the Huxley family,

the young generation wrote science fiction, and the younger among them prepared to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics. The Collier family was sympathetic to the October Revolution, so much so that several members of her family of both sexes joined the English Communist Party. Among them, the heir to the title went to fight Spanish fascism in the international brigades together with Virginia Woolf's nephew.

Margaret had missed too much to be at ease in a world that had so much novelty. Her mind went back to her brick house, the wreaths of vines on the hills, and the chattering of the women working in the fields of the Marche.

Where were the white oxen, the white tops of the Sibylline Mountains, and the bright white Adriatic in the sun? Where was the hug of an old local farmer who smelled of manure? In the mist of Plymouth she was a woman from the Marche and her name was not Margaret but Rita from San Venanzo, in the municipality of Torre San Patrizio, in the province of Ascoli Piceno.

(Translation by Claudia Capancioni)

Notes

[1] Although the first attempts to unify Italy were as early as the 1820s and 1830s, it was in 1859 that a war instigated by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Sardinia, Cavour, and Napoleon III of France began the process of the unification of Italy, completed only after the First World War with the annexation of the regions of *Friuli Venezia Giulia* and *Trentino*. In 1860 Giuseppe Garibaldi left the united North of Italy with a thousand volunteers known as the *Mille* and landed in Sicily. There he started the fight to liberate the south of Italy. In 1861 Victor Emmanuel II assumed the title of King of Italy. Custoza and Mentana represented two difficult moments in the *Risorgimento*. In 1866, despite their victory against the Austro-Hungarians at Bezzecca, Garibaldi's volunteers were forced to retreat because of the Italian army's defeat at Custoza. At Mentana Garibaldi's forces were defeated by the Papal army supported by French troops in 1867. Rome fell in 1870 and became the capital of the Kingdom of Italy in 1871.

[2] "You are an angel …".

[3] M. Collier, *Babel*, vol. II, Edinburgh and London, William Blackwood and Sons, 1887, pp. 108-109.

Installation in my new home

Between the Adriatic and the Sibylline range of the Apennines lies a fertile undulating country, rich in corn, wine, and oil. Patches of wheat, of maize, of red clover, of flax, of beans, cover the valleys and the hill-sides.

Maples and poplars, garlanded with vines, rise from amidst the corn. Olives and mulberries abound. Acacias border the roads, and occasional groups of fine oaks and elms make the traveller regret that more have not been spared in what was once a beautifully wooded country. Peasants, men and women (these last most picturesquely attired), are to be seen busily engaged in cultivation.

Enormous white oxen draw the plough and convey waggons along the road. Quaint villages are perched on the summit of each hill. The snow-capped Apennines close the horizon to the west, and distance lends enchantment to the view of the sea, dotted with the gaily-painted sails of the fishing-boats, which is caught by glimpses between the hills. All would speak of peace and contentment, were it not for the attitude of defence exhibited by each tiny town, with its massive surrounding wall. This wall the church whose spire shows above, and the arch through which you enter the principal street, unevenly paved and sloping upwards, speak of the Middle Ages; but many of these villages owe their origin to a far more remote time. The name, the characteristics, the very site of the village, have been changed; yet it is the legitimate descendant of a village or perhaps a town, situated once in the valley beneath, and rebuilt on the hill, where the frightened inhabitants took refuge from the invasion of northern barbarians.

I read in certain ancient chronicles that these tiny towns were once in

a state of constant assault and warfare, being bandied about between one faction and another during the distracted Middle Ages. If, attracted by the mediaevalism of its outward aspect, the traveller should have the curiosity to pass through the archway, and see how life goes on inside the little town, the illusion that he has been suddenly carried back to a past age will not be dispelled. It is very likely to be *festa*, and the folks are flocking in and out of the open church door. The congregation consists mostly of *contadini* in their white chemises and outside stays, their heads and necks adorned with gay kerchiefs. Some of them are very smart in velvet and silk, with coral necklaces, and their fingers and ears laden with rings; smarter than. The poor signora in her brown stuff gown, with her black lace veil and her fan.

Further up the straggling street, a russet bough denotes the tavern, or *osteria*; and outside sits the host, enjoying himself *al fresco* with a few friends – the *curato*, perhaps, whose broad straw hat contrasts amusingly with his clerical habiliments, and various loungers, the hilts of whose knives peep from among the folds of the broad red sashes which encircle their waists. A mendicant friar, with bare feet, and a rosary hanging from his one brown garment, passes from door to door, asking alms; women, with skirts turned up and looped behind over their short white petticoats, ply their distaffs as they walk; others, with pitchers on their heads, are on their way to and from the well.

In yonder palazzo, with the grated windows and the stone steps leading up to the door, dwells the great man of the village. He is rich, and lives in a certain rude state; he keeps open house, and his hospitality extends to all travellers of whatever sort or degree whom business or pleasure may take to the village. Should our tourist ascend those stone steps, and enter that door, he will find himself a welcome guest in the stone-paved dining-room, where at one long table will possibly be assembled a most heterogeneous collection of people: on his right may be a prince, a general, or an archbishop; on his left, a pedlar. The fare will be plentiful, but if lie be an Englishman, not much to his taste. One plate, one knife, and one fork must do duty for many dishes. Dogs, cats, and pigeons wander about the floor, and scramble for what they can get. Should the traveller elect to stay the night, his host, with many elaborate speeches and courtesy as much out of date as everything else around him, will show the way up the wide stone staircase through many lofty saloons, carpetless and bare of furniture, to the guest-chamber, where lie will deposit the oil-lamp of antique form, with its snuffers and extinguisher hanging from a chain, and, bidding the guest *Buon riposo*, will

leave him to the contemplation of an enormous bed, adorned with faded silk hangings, its sheets and pillowcases trimmed with rare lace and embroidered with the family arms. The rest of the furniture will consist chiefly of a wax *Bambino* in a gilt cradle, surrounded by worsted-work flowers, and presided over by a shepherdess with a crook, all under a glass case.

There is something about this primitive state of society refreshing to one weary of our artificial existence. Here the oxen tread out the corn; women spin and weave their clothes from flax they have grown themselves, and dye it with herbs. Money is little used as a medium of exchange; so much wool bartered against so much oil; so much wine against so much flax; and so on. It is all wrong of course, and the waste of time and energy makes the utilitarian shudder; but for those not addicted to the study of political economy, and who prefer receiving impressions to making calculations, the picture, whilst it is but a picture, possesses a certain charm. The picturesque and romantic view of this arcadian life, however, is only for the outsider, and not apparent to one whose lot is cast in the midst of it, as mine was. I had to grapple with its difficulties, and the poetry melted away very completely as I came into close contact with its prosaic and ugly details. Now, as I look back upon it through the softening haze which distance, lends, the whole comes into proportion and harmony; only the salient points stand out from the misty background, and details, which assumed at the moment such undue proportions, sink into their proper insignificance; while the freshness and pleasantness of the first impressions revive, and cast a glamour over my reminiscences.

My first experience of that "other side Italy", where we had made up our mind to settle that land of mysterious interest to me, since I had been told that Cook and his tourists had not found their way thither, and that there I should see Italian ways in all their unsullied primitiveness was at a little bathing place, some thirty miles south of Ancona. In tins part of the country, hotels are not, and I was deposited at the most primitive inn with which I had yet made acquaintance, although I have since learnt to look upon it as comparatively luxurious and civilized. The floor of the dining-room was paved with brick, and furniture beyond the wooden table and the straw chairs there was none; but to make up, the walls were palatial with endless vistas of painted colonnades and marble steps innumerable. A large white goat had taken up her quarters in the room, and, when I asked for milk, immediately and with the greatest good humour provided it. That and the dish of fried *triglie*, or red mullet, just taken

out of the sea, made a palatable meal enough. But the aspect of the little town was depressing so squalid, so dreary, so unpleasantly odoriferous, without any picturesqueness to enliven it, and no view of the mountains amidst which my future home lay.

Still, there was the Adriatic, blue and calm, and the first outline of the Dalmatian shore to be seen opposite; and there were fish era coming in with their nets full of shining spoil, in boats with curiously painted sails, yellow and red, with black stripes across, variegated with portraits of star fish and mermaids and sea serpents, *ad libitum*. There were bathing machines, too, chiefly used by a few Roman families, who made their *villeggiatura* there, from mingled motives of health and economy. These strangers, however grand and distinguished, adopt the primitive ways of the place without a murmur. Life in the country, according to Italian views, always means roughing it in the strictest sense of the word. Italian families are seldom overburdened with money, and what they have goes in keeping up appearances in Rome. At these unknown little watering places the bathing is very good and the prices very low: fish and very good fish can be had for fifty centimes the pound; eggs are a sou each at the highest; a pair of chickens can be had for a franc, and a turkey for three francs. But the Englishman who requires roast beef or mutton, butter and cream, and is not satisfied with the ewe's milk cheese of the country who, in a word, would not bring himself to conform to the tastes and habits of those amongst whom he sojourns, would find life both difficult and expensive. The Romans know better than to bring any luxurious habits out of town with them. *villeggiatura* is the time for the study of economy and the practice of fortitude; for as Italians, and especially Italian ladies, have no country tastes, their outing is an unmitigated penance. Mine was not much otherwise in this dreary little place, where my only acquaintance was an Irishwoman of literary tastes, who lent me books, but who was so addicted to smoking, and so eccentric in many ways, that I did not take unmixed delight in her society. I have since encountered other solitary and eccentric countrywomen of my own, who establish themselves in these out-of-the-way places, either from motives of economy or in search of new subjects on which to write; for they are always literary, always superior to some of the vulgar prejudices, and much straitened in circumstances. The company of these clever and cultivated women would have been a great delight to me, were it not for the said vulgar prejudices, from which my more commonplace mind has not freed itself not that I wish to speak ill of neighbours who showed every disposition to be friendly, and of whom I know nothing worse than their opinions.

Altogether I was glad enough when the time came for migration to our future home. Tins was originally a *capellania*, or priest's house, with the church and a peasant's house attached. All this together formed one building, situated on a table land a thousand feet above the level of the sea, and nearly two miles from the, nearest village. It was a lonely but lovely spot, with a panoramic view, bounded eastward by the sea and west, ward by the highest Apennines, amongst which the Gran Sasso d'Italia was plainly visible. A score of quaint little towns, all fortified, were perched on the neighbouring hill-tops; the valleys were fertile with vines, and olives, and flax, and corn, and some of this we could look on with the pride and pleasure of possession. The site was evidently that of a battle, and various significant objects, such as fragments of warlike implements, were unearthed from time to time. There were also rudimentary remains of some building. We have found bits of columns, once the head of a small statue; and I must confess to having entertained hopes of making our fortune at one stroke by the discovery of some valuable relic of the past, instead of by the hard work actually in store for us. The house itself was not a possession to feel, at this time, very proud of. It was in a hopelessly dilapidated condition, and, although the masons had been weeks at work, it was still well-nigh uninhabitable.

It would have been better to have mended it with a new one, but we were in haste to get in; so it was repaired *alla meglio*, to use the native expression, and we established ourselves in the old low rooms on the upper floor, whilst a new outer wall find many new rooms were being added. Our *coloni*, or peasants, were in possession of the lower part of the house, and, with them, their children, their pigs, and their poultry, we were condemned for a time to live and have all things in common; for our land was held on the system called *colonica* or *mezzadria*, by which the peasants take half the profits. My welcome by these peasants was of a warmth which rather overwhelmed me. The women new at me, and embraced me in their stalwart arms, kissing me on both cheeks; one old man also kissed me, that being, as 1 was informed, his mode of saluting the mother superior of a convent, whose tenant he had been. Then offerings, in the shape of eggs, were poured into my lap, and live fowls tied together by the legs were deposited at my feet. Various compliments, of winch I did not fully understand the import, were shouted into my ears, it being evidently supposed that the dialect, if spoken loud enough, must be intelligible even to a foreigner. I was then regaled with a plentiful supply of boiled eggs, and with *quagliata*, which is precisely our Devonshire junket, made with ewe's instead of cow's milk, and *ciambelli*, as cakes in

the form of a circle are called, made of flour, sugar, oil, and wine before it has fermented.

I did my best to respond to all this amiability; but, in spite of the cordial beginning of our intercourse, my relations with these fellow-lodgers did not continue altogether amicable. The family consisted of two brothers, with their wives and children, and the old grandfather, who, in consideration of his savings, was housed and fed. He was, in our eyes, the flower of the flock. He worked as hard as his failing strength would allow, and one day my husband, struck with compassion at his famished appearance, desired the servants to ask him to breakfast. *Nonno*, quite overwhelmed by the honour, got himself into a clean smock and a pair of boots, and, seated at our kitchen-table, relieved his overburdened heart. His Grandchildren, lie said, treated him in an unfeeling manner; not only was lie made to work hard; and not given enough to cat, but when he alluded to his savings, lie was reminded that they would come in handy for his funeral expenses. It was a sad revelation; but no sadder, I believe, than that which many an English peasant might make, if questioned concerning his domestic trials; nor so terrible as that story of the old French peasant in *Le Berger* who had become a burden to his family, and so was hung out of the window by his son-in-law.

Our relations with this interesting family ended by mutual consent, and never do I remember experiencing a greater feeling of relief than on their departure, for we were necessarily brought into the closest contact with them, and their manners and customs did not agree with mine. The ragged and dirty children amused themselves with tormenting the animals, plucking the fowls alive, throwing stones at the sheep, etc. The women would sit on the door steps, combing their hair and that of their offspring. This performance only took place on Sunday, and it was more elaborate in operation than agreeable as a spectacle. I inquired whether they could not make it convenient to keep their heads a little cleaner. To this the *vergara* replied with dignity that she did not know what would be thought of her were she to be so fastidious; she was a respectable woman, not given to frequent dressing of the hair, and suchlike coquettishness.

The killing of the pig was considered such a pleasing and enlivening spectacle, that it took place, I suppose out of compliment to me, opposite the front door.

Two famished dogs continually found the means of emptying my larder, which there was always a difficulty in replenishing, as no eatable food could be found within ten miles. None of the inhabitants of the vil-

lages round indulged in meat, unless some ox or sheep had come to an untimely end; *à propos* of which custom we passed one very exciting night. A bull of ours having died suddenly, my husband resolved, in the public interest, to prevent its body from falling a prey to the purveyors of diseased food; therefore, on the night following its demise, and before it could be skinned and properly buried, great preparations were made for a night-watch a guard was placed round the carcase, scouts were sent forth, and an alarm bell was to be rung on the approach of danger. The alarm was given several times, and on each occasion, A rushed out, armed with the loaded revolver he always kept under his pillow, and nobly resolved to defend the carcase of his bull with his own life, if necessary; but at the first sound of the bell, the marauding parties prudently retreated, and the victory was won without a skirmish. These troubles and annoyances, however, were but a trifling part of those which fell to our share.

That there should be any difficulty about servants had never occurred to us. There would be servants, of course, in the towns and villages around, who, for a trifling addition to their wages, would be delighted to come to us customary wages varied from three to five francs the month; indeed, I heard of one maid-of-all-work who was given one franc a month, and out of that was expected to pay her breakages. Then, there were plenty of peasants to do the rough work, who in time would learn to be good servants. What could be simpler? So we reasoned in the innocence of our hearts. We began with a *cameriera*, who announced herself a first rate hairdresser, dressmaker, cook, housemaid, etc., and a bright, good-looking peasant of seventeen, whom we set to work to educate. Shortly a wet-nurse for the baby also became necessary, whose husband, assured us that lie parted with this treasure solely from an unselfish desire for our infants welfare. The *cameriera* not only displayed absolute ignorance on all the subjects in which she had declared herself a proficient, but turned out to be one of the most disreputable characters in the town. The lady who had recommended her, on being remonstrated with, merely said, "What would you have? They are all bad characters." Having dismissed Maria, we concentrated our attention on the young peasant. She was intelligent, and could learn everything except civilization; but her barbarous instincts were too strong. In vain we gave her slices and stockings; she never would keep them on for five minutes together. In vain did we endeavour to teach her to modify her language, or to treat us with any sort of respect. One day she flatly refused to do any more big work, so had to be dismissed, and departed barefoot, but

rejoicing, to the wretched, home which she shared with sixteen "brothers and sisters, and where she never, by any chance, had enough to eat. And here I may mention that I have never found a peasant in whom the savage element could be conquered. Many have had the ambition to rise above their own station in life, have learned to be clean, dexterous, even refined and courteous in their speech and manners; and I have always found them much less innately coarse and dirty than the *cittadini*, from amongst whom the upper servants are generally chosen. Many have stayed with me for years; they have learnt to emulate their superiors with great success, and also have learnt to despise their own relations, who look upon the *cameriera* daughter or sister with pride, as one who has risen in life; but instinct is too strong for them in the end, fight against it as they will. A melancholy seizes on them, they grow thin and sad, are found frequently in tears, and end in returning, without warning, as in a sudden frenzy, to their old life among the formerly, despised relations.

The wet-nurse performed her one duty in the most exemplary manner, except on the occasions when her fond husband came to see her. His caresses seemed to take a rough form, for lie always left her in tears, and occasionally with a black eye. As these interviews considerably interfered with her well-being, and that of the baby, we forbade the husband the house. After this he peremptorily demanded his wife back, and, as she was necessary for our child, we were obliged to carry her off in the dead of night, and keep her in concealment until her lord and master returned to a reasonable frame of mind.

It had been agreed that she was to accompany us to England in the following spring but this the husband now swore, with many terrific threats directed against us all, should not be done. Again we escaped at dead of night, carrying our prize with us. But as we passed the very house where this terrible man lived, I quaked with fear, more than half expecting him to rush out upon us with a pistol or a dagger. However, lie gave no sign, being probably fast asleep, and we arrived at our destination in safety. There our alarms were at an end for the time, though the *balia*'s were not. She was afraid to venture out in that barbarous country, for having seen certain tiger and bear skin rugs about the floors, she naturally imagined these animals to be indigenous. Neither could she reconcile herself to our disgusting habit of using butter instead of oil in the cookery; and as for the wine, it was not to her taste. However, she flourished more than could be expected in a country where there were neither vines nor olives, and where one could not venture out for fear of being eaten up by wild beasts; and she returned safe and sound, rather

to the amazement of her friends, amongst whom a report had spread that she had succumbed to the hardships of foreign travel, and whom she astonished still further, with startling revelations of the pains and perils encountered in *Inghilterra*.

Her husband gave her another black eye by way of a welcome, which she appeared to think a trifle in comparison with English hardships, and which did not much disturb her joy at finding herself at home again. We can bear the ills we know, and the long sojourn in England became to her as a vaguely remembered nightmare; for when I asked her years afterwards if she recollected *Inghilterra*, she replied, "*Poco*."

But I am anticipating. Many more trials awaited me before that flight to England; our servant troubles, indeed, were only beginning. We tried a *protegée* of the nuns; the best pupil in a convent instituted for the benefit of foundlings was confided to our care. Concetta had never been outside convent walls; all she had learnt of a practical nature was the art of embroidery, in which certainly she excelled. But we did not want embroidery, and we did want the beds made and the rooms swept; it was again a case of raw material to be worked upon. We hoped to be more successful this time. The girl was remarkably clever and not intractable. She soon learnt to be useful, and, after sundry gentle hints, discovered, besides, that it was not the correct thing to come into the sitting-room of an evening and join in the conversation, squatting on the floor; also, that however amiable might be the impulse to take me round the waist and embrace me, it should be restrained.

My husband thought it only right to let her know that the Pope does not sleep on straw, and is not in a state of actual starvation. "*Dunque come Vittorio!*" was her astonished exclamation, when the beauty and luxuries of the Vatican were described to her; "and they persuaded me to send him all the money I earned by my embroidery! It was too bad!"

Concetta's sentiments towards the well-meaning nuns who had brought her up underwent a change, and the good ladies were destined to be cruelly disappointed in their best pupil. She left us just as we were beginning to rely on her services, to place herself in the town. Soon after we heard of her being dismissed in disgrace for having concealed a young man in a cupboard! Such was the result of the convent training.

It would be impossible for me to enumerate all our disastrous experiences in the matter of servants; the worst we were obliged to dismiss, and the better ones would not stay, even for triple the usual wages, in a place where they could get no amusement. They left us always at the most inconvenient time, and at a moment's notice; why they could not

simply give warning, and depart in the due course of a month or a fortnight, we never could discover; but for some inscrutable reason their departure was either the result of a, laborious intrigue, or of what appeared to be a violent panic. Marietta or Teresina would suddenly appear upon the scene with red eyes, dishevelled hair, and every symptom of distraction, in her hand an open letter. "*Signore! signora!*" she exclaims, sinking on her knees before us; "be hold this letter! What is to become of me?" The letter, all blotched and scrawled, as if written in haste and grief, implores Marietta in pathetic terms to hasten at once to her stricken mother or dying father. She must depart instantly. Of course, she will come back "again-oh-yes-to-morrow". She is so sorry to leave us even for a moment; she loves us so! And, kissing us on both cheeks (my husband is not excluded from this form of salute on solemn occasions), she goes off in the cart which has been waiting for her in the turn of the road, and by which her carefully packed trunk has been conveyed to the station the day before.

An impatient lover is another favourite device. A letter is produced from the ardent, young man, declaring that lie can wait no longer; his beloved Lucia or Chiara must fix the wedding day. Smiles and blushes are the stage business this time. She hopes she has given satisfaction; would not leave us for the world, but Giuseppe is so pressing, and they have been waiting seven years. She is quite prepared to state his age, profession, the name of his maternal grandfather, or supply any other piece of information that may be required concerning Giuseppe; but when we investigate the truth of these glib statements, we find that the person of whom we have heard so much, and whose letters we have read, does not exist. Nothing daunted, Lucia then declares that if he never existed, why, then, he must have cruelly deceived her, and she must immediately go in search of him; whereupon she departs.

Tins style of leave-taking may be irritating, but at least, there is a certain amount of warning. It is more embarrassing to wake up one morning and find you have not been called, because your housemaid has been taken with a capriccio, and has disappeared in the night; or to be in the midst of the fortnightly wash, and see your laundress running down the road with her bundle under her arm, leaving the linen in soak; or to be very hungry, and, on inquiring why dinner is not ready, to be informed that the cook has been missing some time, and it is supposed that she has run away. When the wet-nurse is taken with a capriccio, and leaves the baby crying for its food, the situation becomes something more than awkward; and all these experiences have been mine. Having made the

discovery that capriccios usually occurred immediately after the monthly wages had been paid, it struck us that it might be better to pay the servants quarterly. The result of this experiment was that for three mouths all went on smoothly, and without the usual casualties; but at the end of that time there was such a general night that we were obliged to take to the pony carriage and drive twenty miles to the nearest habitable hotel, where we remained some time before we could again muster an establishment. When we did, we met with no more success than formerly. Once all the farm labourers deserted in a body, and my husband, with the steward, who alone remained, rubbed down the horses, fed the cattle, etc., until workmen could be got from a distance. Our neighbours were not a bit surprised to hear of our troubles. They had similar experiences to recount. One of our acquaintances told how, as lie was driving his own carriage from one town to another, with a servant behind, he was dismayed when he arrived at his destination to find himself alone; the rogue had slipped down unperceived, and returned to his native village, which they passed on the way.

Yet all these birds of passage would pretend the most intense and unalterable affection for us, want of heart being, according to their ideas, the only unforgivable offence. Lying, stealing, treachery, all that is human nature; but to want a heart! That is, not to have a ready flow of tears at your command, and not to express an immense amount of sympathy with your neighbour's most trivial misfortunes (it is not so necessary to do anything for their relief) that is to be a monster indeed!

"I have so much heart, *Signora*," said one of my maids, "that when you were in bed with a cold, I cried all day." But enough of the servants; they are more or less a thorn in the path of all those in a position to keep them, of whatever country, and in whatever rank. If I had had sufficient physical strength, I would have dispensed with them altogether; and I found eventually that the only way to live with decency was to be my own housekeeper, and to look into every household detail myself with scrupulous attention, greatly to the astonishment of the neighbouring ladies, whose one idea of refinement is to ignore all household matters, and more especially to feign, if not to feel, an utter unconsciousness of the dirt with which they live surrounded.

My housekeeping was of a primitive nature. The accounts were not complicated. I had simply to take note of the number of eggs, fowls, turkeys, lambs, etc., brought by the peasants, whose duty it was to supply us with a certain number in the course of the year. We spent no money, except in dry groceries, which we usually obtained from Rome,

or Naples, or Milan in yearly supplies; even the! Brooms wherewith we swept the floors were made by the peasants, who supplied the wool with which the mattresses were stuffed, and the linen of which the servants' sheets were made. Our own pigs provided us with ham, sausages, and lard. In the spring there is a great consumption of very young lambs, and the ewes' milk is made into junket and cheese. From the month of March until the end of July, we were supplied daily with a fresh junket, or ricotta, made by the peasants and brought in a jar. The bread had all to be made at home, and the meat killed on the premises, and this was the only domestic arrangement to which I have never been able to conquer my repugnance. In the days of my childhood I would shut my eyes when I passed a butcher's shop; now I believe that I should be competent to keep one, so often have I descended, cookery book in hand, to direct the cutting up of the carcase of a calf or sheep. But I have not acquired a taste for the business, and can never divest myself of the feeling, and also in my inmost soul of the belief, that to take away the divine gift of life is more or less an act of sacrilege. I remember feeling real sorrow at the execution of a familiar turkey-cock, who always pecked at me, and was a constant terror to me when alive; but I felt a blank when he was gone.

The Italian peasants indulge more in wanton cruelty to animals than, I think, any other people. I have thought it my duty to superintend the killing of the chickens, in order to be sure that they are not plucked alive; and this has been, I think, my most unmitigated and almost unbearable trial.

Our excursion

The fine view of the sea which we enjoy from our hill-top is very alluring in the months of July and August, and the desire to take a few dips therein would come upon us with irresistible force on sultry days, with the thermometer at ninety-three in the shade. So we bethought ourselves of a little place we had by the seaside, a tiny *casinetto* pleasantly situated amidst shady trees, and near a convenient stretch of sand.

Down we went to encamp thereon in the usual primitive fashion, taking a horse and mule, a cow, and a provision of ham, wine, and oil. There were but two bedrooms, and no other accommodation for man or beast; so the men slept under the trees to which the animals were tethered. On rainy days, which happily were few, the cow, on which the children relied for their milk, and whose health had therefore to be considered, was accommodated in the kitchen, where, except for upsetting the washtub and showing a great desire to investigate the sitting-room opposite, she behaved beautifully.

There was a refreshing Bohemianism about our existence, which, on the whole, counter-balanced the drawbacks, and we got on very well, in spite of a few casualties. I remember an exciting chase after the old charger, who broke her cord and indulged in a solitary scamper on the highroad to the terror of the passers by; but at her mature age a frolicsome fit could not last long. She stopped to drink, and suffered herself to be led home like a lamb. There were difficulties, too, about the cooking and other domestic matters. But what were these drawbacks by comparison with the delight of bathing every morning in that calm sea? Of sitting under the vines and olives and acacias, or the shade of a boat on the sandy beach, whilst the children sought for shells and seaweed, and

dug holes, and made castles, and grubbed to their hearts' content? Then mounting for an evening walk to watch the sunset from the picturesque little village on the top of the hill, a village which, for a wonder, is not a miniature town, but a collection of cottages, straggling amidst vines and blackberry bushes. The *curato's* house, with its garden, containing an antique moss-grown stone font, always inspired me with a desire to take up my abode there at once and forever, though a description of it would not justify the enthusiasm. I do not at this distance of time remember any details about the village; I only remember my own impressions, that to dwell there must be the height of earthly bliss, though I admit it to be possible that a week's residence in it might have materially altered my views as to its delights.

There were drawbacks even to the bathing; for there is a fish with a poisonous horn on his back, which bathers are apt to step upon. This happened to my husband. He suffered dreadful agony, and, despite the incantations of an old fisherman, who muttered various charms over the injured foot, it swelled prodigiously, and could not be put to the ground for several days.

Our next summer at the seaside, several years after, was spent in a less rustic fashion. We were located in the neighbouring little seaport town, which, having progressed with the times, had built itself a *stabilimento*, providing every facility for bathing, boating, eating, drinking, and amusement. There was a piano; there were billiards; there were regattas in the daytime, and in the evening there were balls, concerts, and conjuring; but gambling was strictly forbidden. So stern and imperative was this prohibition that a guard of *carabinieri* were stationed at the building to enforce it, the natural consequence being that the young men of the neighbourhood played for stakes out of all proportion to their means every night. Having to conduct their proceedings in secrecy, and to give a watchword at the door of a little room supposed to be dedicated to writing letters, or some such innocent occupation, of course, lent an additional zest to the affair.

We enjoyed a blessed immunity from tourists. I literally never beheld one, English, American, or other, though scores must have passed in the express to Brindisi every week. But many Roman families passed the *villeggiatura* in our little town, whose costumes were caricatured by the natives, some of whom appeared in the most fearful and wonderful garments.

We inhabited the upper story of a large villa, the three lower floors of which were devoted each to a family comprising children, who played

together in the common garden. All these children had more or less of English blood in their veins, some had a mixture of French, so that such a confusion of tongues has not been heard, I should think, since the days of the Tower of Babel, sentences frequently being begun in one language, proceeding in a second, and ending in a third.

We were very gay that summer; for, besides the amusement afforded by the *stabilimento*, a theatrical company from Naples initiated us into the mysteries of the true and original *Pulcinella*, in his white robe and nightcap, whom the children voted a very superior personage to that degenerate little fellow in the showman's box whom they had seen during a visit to London. Amongst the elders, a great deal of flirting went on, and not a little scandal; but as these things are not peculiar to the locality, there is no need to descant upon them.

More tempting to me even than the sea were the snowy mountains that bounded the opposite horizon. The range called Sibillini, once the stronghold of *banditi*, stretches away westwards from the bold outline of Monte Vettore beyond that of the cone-shaped S. Vicino. Looking south, past Ascensione to the mountain which shelters Ascoli, called the Monte dei Fiori, from the lovely flowers which grow there, you see behind it an imposing mass of snow, from which rises Monte Corno, the highest peak of the Gran Sasso d'ltalia. Between tills group and that long chain to the west there seems a wide gap in the range, filled only by undulating hills; but now and then, on very clear days, I have been half startled to see the dim outline of another great mountain, shadowed forth in a vacant space. There is a vague suggestiveness and a fascination about distant mountains for which I do not know how to account. They seem to open up a vista to some new and bright world – a Paradise for which one longs.

The longing grew upon me until it became almost a mania; and therefore it was that one May morning we started, in the wagonette drawn by two gallant little Herzegovinian steeds, for the foot of these mountains. The weather was just right, not too hot, a pleasant breeze, and a soft haze. We went in procession. First, the said family vehicle, with luggage, and maids, and children; then another drawn by a gigantic chestnut, reared on the premises, in which were two young men, looking very much like business, with their alpenstocks, and the badge of the club in their hats, for they and my husband were alike members of the Italian Alpine Club, and it was in obedience to a summons from that body that we were about to make the ascent of Monte Vettore, nearly eight thousand feet high.

On we went, over hill and dale, by oaks and olives and vineyards, through many a quaint village, the ancient. Servigliano, now called Castel Clementino in honour of the last Pope Clemente, who rebuilt it in a square, giving it the appearance of one large house enclosing a courtyard; Santa Vittoria, founded by the Benedictines; Force, by the gipsies. From Servigliano we were pulled by oxen up to Santa Vittoria, where the great man of the place, who knew my husband well, pressed us closely to stay; but we were to be in Ascoli before dark, so pushed on to Force, in the vicinity of which we picnicked.

One of our young mountaineers had come with a double purpose. He was an aspirant to literary fame, and was to describe the excursion in one of the local newspapers. So lazy and indifferent are the inhabitants of the neighbour-hood, that expeditions among the mountains are extremely rare, and only on the actual spot can any accurate information respecting them be obtained. Our young friend was of low extraction, the son of a labourer in a neighbouring village, who, by dint of great sacrifices, had contrived to give him an education. He has a true gift for writing, and already, at the age of twenty-two, was on the staff of several provincial newspapers. We had much conversation. I was anxious for information concerning the mountains, and he eager to be told all about the English authors, Dickens and Tennyson, and his own countryman, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. He has such a bright face, all sparkling with intelligence, that I am tempted to prophesy for him a successful career.

We stayed two hours at Force, resting the horses and trying to discover gipsy peculiarities in the inhabitants, whose dialect is said to preserve many Romany words, and therefore to be scarcely intelligible to the surrounding neighbours.

After that, the journey was chiefly down-hill to the fertile valley of the Tronto, on which Ascoli is built. Ascensione, its summit crowned by a church, to which the devout repair on Ascension Day, lay to our left; and though we were drawing nearer to higher and more imposing mountains, the scenery had as yet not changed its character. There were the cornfields and the vine-garlanded trees; and trees with a stock of firewood stored amid their branches, looking like the nests of gigantic birds; wells, where the maidenhair grew unbidden; tumble down villages, where an occasional new house, painted bright pink or sky blue, enlivens the general dinginess with startling effect; till we came to a dense fir wood, at sight of which one of our maids, a Swiss girl, exclaimed with joy that she could now imagine herself in her native land. The mountains were all right in her opinion, and she did not know or perceive that they

were less lofty than the Alps; but vines and olives at their base were not in accordance with her ideas of what should be. Here at last was a river with water in it, the Tronto. It may be observed that rivers usually have water in them, but I can only reply that those of the Marche have not; the Tenna and the Aso, both of which we crossed on the way, are but riverbeds.

Ascoli, with its seventy-two churches, now came in sight; and its many spires caused one of my boys to exclaim, "What good people the *Ascolani* ought to be!" Here we rested the night, in the new hotel which has been six years in building, and which, at the present rate of proceeding, will require six years more to complete. Business here seems to be conducted on the assumption that life is endless, and time, therefore, a matter of no consequence. Ascoli is a singularly attractive town, though in what its attractiveness consists I do not exactly know, perhaps in its seventy-two churches, amongst which we wandered the next day. A tower rises before one at every turn, and one can scarcely choose but enter some of those sculptured portals. The cathedral is built on the site of a temple dedicated to Hercules, and tills substructure has been made into a second church, to which you descend from the principal one.

Our chief business, however, was a visit to the Alpine Club, in order to find out how many of these daring mountaineers from Rome were coming to join the party for the ascent. We were finally informed by telegram that one only would appear, as there were rumours of clouds upon Monte Vettore. There were clouds, it is true, and a little wind; but, in spite of these drawbacks, we started off to meet the adventurous Roman, who was to come from Norcia, on the other side of the mountain.

We had a pleasant drive, still in our own carriage, to Arquata, amidst scenery which began to present a mountainous character. The swift river leaped over boulders, some of which, as the children remarked, seemed to have tumbled out on to the cultivated land on either side. The snow clad mountains, towering close above us, looked imposing and perpendicular. Torrents sprang down from their heights, and caverns yawned at their base. The scenery was wild, but with a tempered wildness; grand, with a mild grandeur. To my mind it was the glory of the, Alps without their gloom; for, to me, the dark firs and the cold colouring of Switzerland do convey an impression of gloom. Here, corn and vines nourish around the scattered rocks in the meadows, and the bright Italian sun makes all gay and warm. The substitution of mediaeval villages for monster hotels is also an improvement on Alpine scenery,

though there are considerations which may reconcile one to those blots upon every Swiss landscape; and if at Arquata there had been a big hotel, with the latest improvements, instead of the dirty village inn to which we repaired, I think I could have borne it with philosophy.

We reached this village at midday, and, having lunched, it was suggested that we should go on a little way to meet Signor B, who, no doubt, was at this moment on his way from Norcia. We should thus while away the tedium of a day impossible to spend in that wretched inn, and see how best to manage the morrow's excursion. So we walked leisurely upwards towards Pietrara, where mules were to be found. On the road we were joined by two excursionists of the neighbourhood, a village schoolmaster and a friend. The children lingered behind to pick flowers, and presently appeared leading a heavily laden donkey by the halter.

The owner had been belabouring it unmercifully, and their sympathies, always strong for animals, were roused on behalf of the unfortunate donkey. My youngest son, aged five, had seized the stick and thrown it away. The elder children then took the donkey's halter and led it forward, to prove that they could make it go without beating. The owner followed, vociferating; but public opinion favoured the children, who were accompanied by an approving crowd from the village.

At Pietrara we found donkeys and mules ready saddled, and waiting our pleasure. Tins sight was irresistible. The children and I mounted, and the maids being given their choice, the Swiss girl preferred using her own lea's, whilst the Italian, a Sorrentina, after some hesitation, mounted a mule. She had never ridden, and was in much fear; but her repugnance to walking overcame even her fears. The men all walked, and the procession moved upwards. There was some truth in the rumour that had spread so much consternation amongst the Roman members of the Alpine Club. Clouds obscured the summit of Monte Vettore, but not that of the *Macerie delle Morte* opposite, nor the *Pizzo di Sivo*, from which the snow never melts, owing, not to its height, but to its exposition. There was no resisting an occasional halt in order to descend from our steeds and pick the flowers that grew in every cleft of the rock and in every tuft of grass, and so we walked a bit, then rode a bit, and walked a bit again, forgetting time, distance, and fatigue in our enjoyment. I asked my guide if tourists often came.

"Yes," he said; "they come from the Alps, the Swiss come."

"And English?"

"Sometimes even English; and they make a fuss with certain stones which they pick up. What funny people the English are!"

"I am English."

"*Tu*!"

The guide forgot his manners in his astonishment.

"But you don't speak between your teeth, *stretto, stretto*, as the English do; you speak, *aperta*, like us."

"I have been amongst you twelve years."

"But didn't you know she was English," said another guide, "by the way she sits her mule?"

It must be explained that the mule had a man's saddle, on which I sat sideways, which is not the fashion of Italian ladies here. It was just as we turned a sharp corner of the mountain that a blast, such as is common amongst these wind-swept Apennines, blew us nearly off our legs and our donkeys. Such as were mounted jumped down from their steeds, and there was a general rush for all the shawls, coats, and comforters we could lay hands on.

"It will be worse as you go on," said the guides.

However, we went on, still in search of *Signor B*, and, I believe, if we had found him, we would have struggled upwards for another two hours, and reached the highest peak of Vettore, from whence, as the guides said, "*Si vede tutto il mondo*".

But it was now four o'clock, the cold was Litter, and the expected excursionist nowhere to be seen; so as the children were chilled and hungry, the youngest being, as I have said, but five years old, we repaired to a *casotto*, where we were told we could be warmed and fed; whilst the young men set off for Castelluccio, a village on the slope of the Sibilla, in case *Signor B* should be awaiting us there. The *casotto* was a very miserable looking little house, whose mistress received us in a room which was apparently kitchen, parlour, and bedroom all in one. The furniture consisted of a bed and a table, a few chairs, and various cooking utensils hanging on nails above the fireplace. But the hostess was a cheery old body, and presently made up a blazing fire on the open hearth, round which we sat, to the great discomfiture of a cat, a rabbit, and two hens, which we found in possession. There was nothing, however, that we could eat, and nothing that we could drink, except water. But the guides seated themselves at the table, refreshing themselves with *lonza* (a sort of raw sausage) and wine, and discoursed very unrestrainedly, but in a dialect of which, luckily, not much was intelligible to me. Then the old lady showed me the rest of the house, which was more extensive than I had at first imagined. There was a good sized bedroom, where travellers had sometimes slept on their way up the mountains; and *Il nostro*

Padrone di Roma was wont to say that everything here was clean and orderly. This was true, or, at least, comparatively true. A hideous mask hung, with the olive branch and the crucifix, beside the bed.

"It is what my husband wears when he goes masquerading in carnival time," said the old woman. "It is he that plays the *buff'one*. You should see his dress; it is beautiful. But I have not got it here; it is down in the village."

The said husband was one of the *guardie di montagna*, kept by the proprietors of these mountain pastures, a fine looking old man in a picturesque dress, high crowned hat, knee breeches, and silver buttons.

We waited as long as was possible for the rest of the party, but the approach of night warned us that we must be winding our way downwards.

The moon rose as we reached Pietrara (where we left the mules), and by its light we caught glimpses of the villagers dancing in the little *piazza*, for it was *festa*. We had a delicious drink of goat's milk, and refused, as usual, pressing offers of hospitality from the village grandee, who accompanied us for a great part of the way back to Arquata. The scene was pretty in black and white. The moon shone on the waters of the rushing river, and the fortress of Arquata rose dark and bold against the sky. We were greeted on our return to the town with "*Ben tornati*," and found supper awaiting us, in the midst of which frugal and rather nasty meal the young men appeared, but without Signor B, of whom nothing had been seen or heard. They had made good haste, having stopped to warm themselves at the fire we had left for them at the *casotto*, and also to join in the dance at Pietrara. On the whole, the expedition was successful; and if we had not reached the top of the mountain, and seen the whole world beneath us, it was clearly the fault of that tiresome person who never came from Rome.

Another of our excursions was to Macerata, a favourite halting place in the days of coaching, but it lies out of the track of modern tourists. Baedeker, however, mentions it as a prettily situated town, possessing a university and a school of agriculture. There one can get books and other articles of luxury; and one feels oneself more within the pale of civilization than at Fermo, where, in spite of the forty-eight old *castelli*, and in spite, or possibly because, of every inhabitant with few exceptions being a count, not any book, except that containing the town chronicles, is to be seen. Still, even Macerata is not quite up to the age. After a pleasant drive of twenty miles over hills, and through dales, and beneath the walls of many a quaint village, we put up at the old inn, where in former

days travellers changed horses and frequently stayed the night.

I do not suppose that anything about it has much changed during the last eighty years, and at that time it would appear to have been as satisfactory a lodging as its contemporaries in other parts of Italy, to judge by various written testimonials to its excellence, which, framed and glazed, constituted the only ornament of its walls. It gave one a sort of insight into the hardships of foreign travel in those days to see how this German prince and that English duchess had not been so comfortable since they left home. Everything perfectly satisfactory. I could not say the same, and I am neither a prince nor a duchess; yet we were treated of the best, and charged accordingly. The *fritto* would have been excellent, if the oil in which it was fried had not been rancid; and though, we were given tea, and charged seven francs for it, not a drop of milk could be had for love or money; and as for the discomforts of the accommodation, I have never seen them equalled.

In strange contrast to our lodgings was the luxury of everything we saw at the villa of a rich old bachelor, a little outside the town. He kept English thoroughbreds, and milk cows from the north of Italy. He had imported trees, shrubs, and flowers from every quarter of the globe, carefully disposed, so as to allow for delightful peeps of the sea and the Apennines from amidst all the luxuriant foliage. There was a sheltered avenue for a windy day; a shady arbour for a sunny one; a tower from which to admire the view, the windows of which were so stained as to represent the effect of every season of the year and every time of day. The summer picture, the moonlight, and the landscape in snow were particularly successful.

A summer reading-room erected in the garden "bore an inscription outside, which I was requested to read. It ran thus: "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

The count had been to England to buy horses, and my native language was not quite unknown to him.

"That is the title of a celebrated romance, is it not? " he inquired.

"It is; but perhaps you were not aware that Uncle Tom was a negro, when you adopted his name."

"Was he? Well, as my name is Tommaso, it struck me as an appropriate title for my little den."

We were given delicious tea, one of the importations from England, and more delicious milk fresh from the cow, with bread and butter, and an endless variety of biscuits, served in a rockery full of the choicest flowers and ferns by a stately butler. It was almost too English, and I had

to look hard at the Gran Sasso and the intervening vines and olives to remember that I was not in some well cared for English domain. But the house, though perfect in its way, was very un-English. All its arrangements were made, naturally, with a view to protect from heat rather than from cold; indeed, it was intended only for a summer dwelling. There were billiard-room, card-room, smoking-room, reading-room, bathroom, all that a party of men could want. The furniture was new, pretty, and tasteful, and all was in perfect order. Yet there lacked that air of *liveableness* that an English house, even without a woman's presence, is pretty sure to have. Italians do appreciate order, precision, cleanliness, even when they are too lazy to enforce it themselves; but I never saw one who cared a bit about what the word "cosiness" best expresses. This was not a palace, it was more of the cottage *ornée* style, and it is impossible to say that material comfort had been neglected; but it wanted something to my English eyes. If the count had taken pains to make things pleasant to us, he had at least the gratification of perceiving that his efforts had not been thrown away; for the children danced about, exclaiming, "Oh, how pretty!" and laughed with pleasure at every fresh sight that was presented to them. Under these circumstances, it was no great wonder that they were pronounced charming; and we parted, all in good humour with ourselves and one another.

It must be pleasant to see accomplished the desire of one's life. The count is now an old man, and has just, only just, completed his villa, with its garden, the work of forty years. But the pleasure is not unalloyed. He cannot expect to enjoy it long. Another will reap the harvest he has brought to perfection, and he knows not who; for he has no near relations, and has not yet decided to whom he shall leave his little paradise.

At Pesaro, which is chiefly celebrated for being Rossini's birthplace, we have stayed more than once, on our way to or from England, as guests of the bishop, who entertained us most hospitably in his palace, and even went the length of providing meat for us at his own table on fast-days. All was in the same style as that of other great houses in the neighbourhood, homely enough, with more of mediaeval stateliness and rather more refinement in its arrangements than those in the villages. Long suites of barely furnished rooms opened out of one another, and only one room (that in which the bishop received visitors) was carpeted and well furnished. The establishment consisted of three menservants; no women, apparently, were allowed on the premises. *En revanche*, there were at least half a dozen priests always in attendance, and, as I could not make out in what their duties consisted, it occurred to me that per-

haps they lent a hand at housework now and then. One of the rooms given up to us was that in which Pius IX had slept when “a boy, an event commemorated by an inscription on the wall. This much rejoiced the heart of the wet-nurse, who felt convinced that, since her occupation of that room with the baby, her sins, past, present, and to come, were all condoned. Another peculiarity about the chamber was that its walls were riddled with bullets. This was the result of a skirmish between the Papal troops and those of Victor Emmanuel, in the year 1860, when the Piedmonteses possessed themselves of Umbria and the Marches.

“Where was *Monsignore* during that trying time ?” I inquired.

“In the cellar”, was the reply.

Monsignore was a most agreeable and amiable old gentleman, who had been *nunzio* in some of the chief cities of Europe. He endured patiently the ill-fortunes of the clerical party, and only once did I hear a bitter allusion to the conduct of the present Government pass his lips. Something being said about kleptomania, the bishop observed drily, “It is a malady from which the present Ministry suffers much.”

Having been shown the outside of Rossini’s house, notified by a gilt inscription over the door, we were taken to a villa, the garden of which abounded in waterworks. There were tritons blowing horns, birds which sang, and every sort of curious mechanical device which water can set going. Then suddenly we were startled by tiny jets of water rising from the ground on all sides of us, and making by then interlaced arches a palace fit for Undine, in the midst of which we stood dry, although a step would have brought us within reach of a ducking.

“We finished off the evening at the opera, not however with *Monsignore*, but with his charming niece, a cousin of her husband’s”. There was nothing very memorable about it, except a lady amongst the audience pointed out to me as a daughter of our Queen Caroline, who made, it seems, a long sojourn in Pesaro.

English Ladies in Italy
The Story of an Anglo-French-Italian family from the Marche

by Joyce Lussu

A member of Welby family in Nineteenth Century

Note
by Claudia Capancioni

When Benedetto Croce announced Joyce Lussu's (née Salvadori, Florence 1912 - Rome, 1998) poetic debut to the readers of his literary review, "La Critica", in 1939, by praising her understanding of human sorrow and her denial of desperation or prostration, Lussu was twenty-seven years old and the author of a short collection of poems edited by Croce himself entitled, *Liriche*.[1] After suspending her studies at the University of Leipzig because of the rise of the Nazi Party, she travelled in Africa from 1933 to 1938. Her poems recreate images and characters of this continent that, 'absorbed in her soul, recreate her intimate moods'.[2] The Second World War interrupted her literary career but poetry maintained a significant role as a means of literary expression in whole of her life. She published her last collection of poems, *Inventario delle Cose Certe* [*An Inventory of Significant Things*], in 1990.[3]

Born in an Anglo-Italian family, Lussu experienced the violent side of Fascism since her childhood. She grew up in a liberal and progressive family who opposed the Fascist regime from the moment of its inception. The daughter and the son of rich landowners, both her parents, Guglielmo Salvadori (1879-1953) and Giacinta Galletti (1876-1960), rebelled against their fathers and opposed the class system. In 1924, her father was brutally attacked by Blackshirts because of his public antifascist stand and his whole were family exiled to Switzerland. In exile, they maintained their antifascist activism and described the Italian situation to the international community. At the outbreak of the Second World War, Joyce Lussu was ready to participate as a militant of *Giustizia e Libertà*, [Justice and Freedom] the antifascist movement founded in Paris in 1929 by exiled Italian activists, such as Emilio Lussu (1890-1975) whom she married in 1944. She thus became a resistance fighter.

After the war, she was awarded the silver medal for military valour and acclaimed as an historical heroine. Her war memories are narrated in the autobiographical travel book, *Fronti e Frontiere* (1944), which, at present, is the only complete work of hers that is translated into English.[4] She was engaged in her historical present: she was active in politics and feminism, peace and environmental movements.[5] She returned to

poetry to translate into Italian the poetic voices of cultures defined as 'minor,' such as Agostino Neto, Jose Craveirinha, Nazim Hikmet and Ho Chi Minh, whose cultural identities were oppressed and not recognised in official national passports by the dominant Western society.

Becoming a grandmother in 1971 was an event of particular importance in Lussu's life as it marked the beginning of her engagement with studying and writing about the past, which continued until her death. She was interested in oral cultural heritages silenced by generalising national educational discourses, such as the traditions and customs of Italian regional areas like Sardinia and the Marche. In 1975, after her husband's death, Lussu moved to her parents' home in San Tommaso, in the countryside of Fermo, in the Marche. This was the place in which her ancestors lived. She collaborated in many projects that aimed to tell the past of this region. For her, the Italian country she had dreamed of – into which she had entered with dubious documents to sustain national school exams, distribute underground material of antifascist propaganda, and fight for national democracy and freedom – became the country of local regional communities and their historical and cultural heritage. The Marche were the place of the legends of the Sybil transmitted in the Sybilline Mountains and the communities of the *Picena* civilization.[6] It was the place of discovery for foreign travellers, especially English ladies who settled there creating Anglo-Italian generations. As she describes in the introduction to her singular historical novel based on the stories of her great-great-grandfathers, *Le Inglesi in Italia. Una Saga Anglo-Franco-Marchigiana [English Ladies in Italy. The Story of an Anglo-French-Italian family from the Marche*],[7] two examples are in her family: her great-grandmother, Ethelin Welby, and her grandmother, Margaret Collier. They are cast as characters in the first and the last chapter. In this novel, the importance of the English maternal inheritance is underlined by the attention given to what Lussu defines a 'dissenting vein' that derives from the English women of her family in her autobiography *Portrait (Cose viste e vissute)* [*The Things I Saw and Lived*] (1988).[8]

This anthology includes a chapter of one of her grandmother's most popular work, *Our Home by the Adriatic*, in which Margaret Collier describes her first experience with the area of the Marche in which she settled with her Anglo-Italian family. The following extract is the first chapter of *Le Inglesi in Italia. Una Saga Anglo-Franco-Marchigiana* and, although the chapter focuses primarily on her great-great-grandfather Adlard Welby, it also tells the story of his five daughters and how four of them settled in Porto San Giorgio, in the southern area of the Marche. In the novel, the historical data and the family's memories merge to become a story of discovery of different cultures; of understanding of the Self through the dialogue with the Other. The text creates a dialogue between past and present through intertextuality. The original English texts of ancestors are cited, translated and echoed in the Italian text. In Lussu's opinion, this dialogue between the present individual and his or her ancestors 'helps to enlighten our present behaviour, the elements that compose us, and the choices we make every day among these elements, to mature instead of destroying ourselves.'[9]

The anthology ends with an account of the origins of Lussu's Anglo-Italian family in which the Marche become a place of encounter between cultures, languages and religion. As Mangani suggests in his introduction to Vernon Lee's *Amour Dure,* and which is applicable in Lussu's case, the literary imagination is inspired by the Marches' *genius loci.* For Lussu, they are the place in which ancestors become ghosts who meet the present in the literary imagination, in which a family's biography and fiction fuse together in a story of journeys and marriages, which always ends at San Tommaso. San Tommaso was Lussu's home in the last years of her life; there, she tells the reader, that '[i]n the old garden created by Ethelin in San Tommaso,[where] the legend of Adlard Welby's four daughters lives on' and she is its storyteller.[10] 'The Idea of the Ancestors' is the title of the introduction that Lussu writes to *Le Inglesi in Italia. Una Saga Anglo-Franco-Marchigiana* in which she reaffirms her belief in the inseparability of the political and personal in her writing and in the importance of transmitting the stories of our ancestors, that 'invisible thread of their lives that is interwoven in the macro text of the collective social events.'[11]

Notes

[1] J. Lussu, *Liriche*, Napoli, R. Ricciardi, 1939.

[2] B. Croce, 'Due libri di versi', in *La Critica*, vol. 37, Anno XXXVII, fasc. II, 1939, Napoli, Laterrza & Figli Editori, p. 153.

[3] J. Lussu, *Inventario delle cose certe*, Fermo, Andrea Livi Editore, 1990.

[4] J. Lussu, trans. William Clowes, *Freedom has no Frontier*, London, Joseph, 1969.

[5] Joyce Salvadori Lussu was among the founders of the Italian feminist movement, *Unione Donne Italiane*, in 1945. In 1965, she became the secretary of the Italian branch of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation. See J. Lussu, *Portrait (Cose Viste e Vissute)*, Ancona,Transeuropa, 1988.

[6] See J. Lussu, *Storia del Fermano: dall'arrivo dei piceni al regno napoleonico*, Roma, Lerici, 1982; reprinted as *La Storia del Fermano: dalle origini all'Unità d'Italia*, Ancona, Il Lavoro Editoriale, 1982. Id., *Comunanze Picene: appunti e immagini tra storia e attualità*, Fermo, Andrea Livi Editore, 1989.

[7] J. Lussu, *Le inglesi in Italia: Storia di una tribù Anglo-Franco-Marchigiana in un angolo remoto degli Stati Pontifici*, G. Mangani ed., Ancona, Il Lavoro Editoriale, 1999.

[8] In *Portrait (Cose Viste e Vissute*) Joyce Lussu claims, my parents' "dissenting vein descends from the women in their families, most of whom were English". J. Lussu, *Portrait (Cose Viste e Vissute)*, Ancona, Transeuropa, 1988, p. 14.

[9] J. Lussu, *Le inglesi in Italia: Storia di una tribù Anglo-Franco-Marchigiana in un angolo remoto degli Stati Pontifici*, G.Mangani ed., Ancona, Il Lavoro Editoriale, 1999, p. 24.

[10] *Ibid*., p. 47

[11] *Ibid*., p. 24

The Story of Adlard Welby

I. In the first chapter I narrate how my great-great-grandfather, Adlard, sought to resolve the difficult domestic problems between Martha and Mary and their nineteen children by travelling to the New World, where he met pioneers and slave-traders. I also give an account of how he happened to arrive with five unmarried daughters at an obscure corner of the Papal States, the erstwhile region of Fermo.

Adlard Welby was born on 3 October 1776 in a comfortable country house in South Rauceby, Lincolnshire. Lincolnshire is a pleasant fertile and almost wholly arable region of east central England. Since the beginning of its history, Lincolnshire attracted invaders because of its excellent pastures, cereal cultivations and a sea abounding in fish. The invaders who settled in this region were Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Danish and Norman. They forced the local farmers, shepherds and fishermen to work for them. Each invader subjugated the native community, which gradually absorbed the previously defeated populations. Lincoln derives its name from the Latin *Linduni Colonia*. The principal Roman Road connecting the South to the North as far as Caledonia, where the proud Picts refused to work for the new masters, ran through Lincoln, which became a place of meetings, exchanges and markets.

Although today Lincolnshire is cultivated to the highest technical level, at the time of Adlard Welby it still preserved some features of its original physiognomy. Instead of alternate fields of corn, rye and oats, the land alternated between moors and rich game warrens; in place of very green or white pastures covered with snow, there were

woods of birches and conifers; in place of vegetable gardens, there were gorse and blackberry bushes. The Welby family had been firmly settled in the good land of Lincolnshire for centuries, since the son of the Duke of Normandy, known as Robert the Devil, invaded England and became William the Conqueror. Among the *comites* of William the Conqueror was Guy de Credem, who was soon granted land in fief near Grantham. He was accompanied by a vassal named Ranulf.

The Conqueror expanded his conquests and encountered the problem of an insufficiently numerous ruling class. Most of the land had been granted to Norman noblemen who fought with him but many more noblemen were needed. William the Conqueror did not want to create large and powerful fiefdoms that could possibly compete with the central power in the future. He needed other loyal men who would ensure control over the defeated, the confiscation of produce, the collection of taxes, and military defence. William did not much believe in either noble blood or divine right, since his beautiful mother Arlette was the daughter of a tanner. Hence, he decided to bestow a title upon all the Normans who supported him. By giving two friendly taps on the shoulders with the flat of a sword, he made blacksmiths, butchers, craftsmen, tailors and scullery boys into knights and feudal lords of rural sites, on which they could become rich as long they paid the royal tribute, of course. Ranulf also received his land. It was near the village of Wellebi, as illustrated in the Domesday Book.

The descendants of Ranulf of Wellebi did not move from this beautiful place and its stable income but remained on the green hills of Lincolnshire for centuries. England was devastated by wars, uprisings, plagues, and cataclysms. Noblemen killed each other in the Wars of the Roses, and Christians slaughtered each other in religious wars. Vessels sailed away to colonise the world. A king was beheaded and bandits and rebels rampaged in the countryside. However, the Welbys remained on their lands in Lincolnshire and continued to enlarge their estate through sensible management and marriages. They respected the established authority and participated in its changes by becoming Members of Parliament, judges or sheriffs ('shire reeves' – they were executive officials). They belonged to the landed gentry, a class of moderately large landowners who formed the backbone of English social and economic stability, a foundation that resisted all political upheaval until the Industrial Revolution. The

great feudal regime had been destroyed long before, and the Glorious Revolution of 1688 had accomplished the union between landowners and the rising middle-class that surrounded the new Hanoverian monarchy, which was respectful of the Constitution and the Parliament.

Adlard Welby was thirteen years old when the French Revolution broke out. It was the reign of George III: he was on the throne for seventy years, alternating between periods of madness or semi-madness and periods of clarity and cunning, in which he was able to choose very capable ministers. The looms and steam engines began to transform the chain of production. Adam Smith was still alive. Ricardo and Owen were growing up. A new proletarian class gathered around the industrial centres and crowds of children were set to work at looms from the age of six. It did not matter that they were tired and asleep on their feet; they worked for twelve or fourteen hours, while owners read aloud passages from the Bible to save their souls.

Adlard grew up in the countryside. He trained his muscles well by practising sports, being outdoors, and eating rare roast beef and mutton. He became a tall, strong young man with regular features and large sky-blue eyes. He had an impetuous and irascible nature, did not like being contradicted and argued with his peers harshly as he defined them as hypocritical and sanctimonious people. He did not want to be a judge or a politician; he preferred dealing with his estate, which he managed skilfully but without greed. He was generous and liked women a lot, yet without humiliating them; on the contrary, he respected and protected them. He did not have an indifferent attitude, and the events in the world troubled him.

When Adlard was thirty years old, he married Mary, the daughter of Reverend Hall. In a little more than ten years he gave her eight children; he named his sixth son Erasmus in honour to the author of the *Praise of Folly*. However, soon after the wedding, Adlard fell in love with Martha Hutchinson, a sweet woman who also delivered a child per year.

In 1819, Adlard was forty-two years old and had sixteen children: half of them with one woman and the other half with another. There were a little too many to keep peace in the family, even for a rich gentleman who could provide governesses and tutors for his heirs in two separate houses and without making differences between his legitimate and his illegitimate children. Life became too complex between

Martha and Mary because of the endless gossip of high and low society. Adlard decided to avoid these tensions by leaving on a long journey. He left his two women and their shrill troops of children, servants and teachers on the green hills of Lincolnshire. He needed "to ease his mind of troubles of a domestic nature", as he succinctly put it. On the 5 May 1819 he embarked in Plymouth for the United States of America in the company of only his servant and his dog. The government unofficially entrusted him with investigating the opportunities for immigration by British citizens to the old colony.

Thus, in his diary, he diligently recorded data on that question, and after two years published part of it with Drury of London under the title *A Visit to North America and the English Settlements in Illinois, with a Winter Residence at Philadelphia: Solely to Ascertain the Actual Prospects of the Emigrating Agriculturalist, Mechanic, and Commercial Speculator*

In North America, the situation took a turn for the worse for the remaining British estates. The war which had begun in 1812 to defend Canada and the landing at the mouth of the Mississippi river in Louisiana ended in disastrous English defeats. General Jackson led an army consisting of farmers and shepherds from the North of the Union, owners of lands conquered and made fruitful with hard work and risk, bold adventurers who came to the New World from the whole of Europe to become rich. This had a far greater impact than His British Majesty's colonial troops, led by aristocratic officers – who brought with them silver cutlery with their coat of arms and clean linen of Flemish flax – and sergeants who whipped the soldiers into line, many of them reluctant recruits. Having managed to win the war, England proposed a peaceful entry of people and defence of interests through controlled migration.

Adlard landed in New York after a six-week journey, made exciting by a violent storm, a fire on board, a spectacular duel between a whale and a huge thresher shark, and other incidents. At the time, New York was a town with 120,000 citizens who were highly heterogeneous and lived mainly in wooden houses. Roads were in a very bad condition, sanitary facilities did not exist, and epidemics of yellow fever and cholera broke out frequently. It was after the fire of 1835 that New York was rebuilt as a modern city.

Adlard soon bought good horses and a "Dearborn waggon",[1] which had six seats and was light and very strong, to accommodate him and the friends he promptly made on the spot. He drove it him-

self. Raised to the rank of aide-de-camp, his servant drove a pioneers' wagon with the luggage. Adlard began his long journey with a rifle between his legs and two pistols at his side.

The United States were on their way to becoming an international power thanks to the annexation of the vast territory of Louisiana, which used to be the centre of flourishing Native American civilisation. It was colonised by the French under Louis XIV, later surrendered to the Spanish, and Napoleon in 1800. In 1803 Napoleon sold it to the United States' government for 15 million dollars. It was the first territory on the other side of the Mississippi and the epic conquest of the Western frontier began there. In 1812, Louisiana had joined the Union and created a juridical novelty. Each State entered into the Union with its own constitution, and the statute of Louisiana defined slavery as perfectly legal. To be sure, there were other slave-states in the Union, such as Georgia and Carolina, but the words "slave" and "slavery" were hypocritically forbidden in their statutory text. By contrast, the statute of Louisiana talked about slavery in clear terms and set the norms for which black people were not citizens, or even human beings. Like the soul of the once great President Jefferson, President Madison's god-fearing soul was shocked by such openness. Nevertheless, slavery was useful to the nation since it was the pillar of the agricultural production in the South. The Northern States put up with it. Thus, the whole Union legalised the slave-statute of Louisiana, which was then assumed by other States.

Despite the Union's expansion and the military victories, based on racism and genocide, against Tecumseh's confederation of Native American tribes and the proud Seminole people in 1818, American society could not find good order, and proceeded through various conflicting experiences with considerable confusion.

The English gentleman's impressions of the democratic republic of the New World are similarly conflicting. For one thing he observes that people have gained a dignity that does not exist in the old world: customs officers and servants refuse tips, farmers do not have an awkward gait or a bent back like the English. They all walk upright with confidence and merge with the crowds on the pavements (which are wide: the road is not only for those who have a carriage), and in shops and small restaurants, without apparent distinction. All children go to school instead of going to work in factories and, although dressed in rags, they are not all obsequious or answer back sharply. Prisons, hospitals, and asylums are clean and the patients are treated with respect,

contrary to what happens in England. New York is a city of white people only.

The negative sides that strike him are "the game of a desperate speculation" to become rich at all costs, [2] conducted with the most ruthless means and with no holds barred, and a deep sadness, a "flatness or insipidity of character" that Adlard attributes to the migrants' homesickness.[3] They long for those countries they left forever, with no hope of return. They concentrate all their resources on a quick enrichment which is rarely achieved (most of them were failures and misfits in their countries of origin). This democracy is only for white people since it is based on a subjection of all Native Americans and slaves that is crueller than the one exercised on the peoples of Europe by the privileged classes.

In Philadelphia Adlard meets a few people from Virginia who talk with him about their slaves with a smiling face. They explain to him how to buy and sell slaves, and that it is legitimate to flog a slave to death. A famous attorney argues for slavery by quoting from the Bible and St. Paul. At a stop in a small town, he jots down:

A little boy was playing upon the ground, at the tavern-door with a dog; I pointed to them and said to the landlord, (a very civilized man,) "Do you make christians of these?" "Oh no." - "You name them without the clergyman?" "Oh, yes; we sometimes give them one name and then alter it for another:" – "And does not your church find fault with you sometimes for such neglect?" "No, they never think of such things."

"And when they die you throw them into the ground without further ceremony?"

Answer, – "Always let them lie just where it happens – I suppose, you do not do so in your country; do you?"

Self, – "Certainly not; we think very differently upon the subject; that child would there be free, the moment it set foot upon our shores."

Landlord, – "Oh, you mean the *negre*; I thought you were speaking of the dog all the time. Yes, we christen *them*; but we do not let them eat with us, only the Quakers let them eat with them!"[4]

While he proceeds with his journey to Kentucky, Virginia, and Indiana, his critical opinions become more and more severe. With horror he mentions the public execution of two slaves who killed their owner in Augusta, Georgia. On 1 February 1820 a standard

court of justice found them guilty and sentenced them to be burnt alive after a regular trial. So, they – as well as many others – were frequently executed by order of courts of justice or a private initiative. Also in those states where slavery theoretically did not exist, newspapers advertised auctions of slaves in nearby states (the most valuable slaves came from Guinea).

Adlard writes in his diary:

[T]he slaves begin to know their own strength, and probably would not long bear oppression. To see their well-proportioned figures easy and unconstrained, and lively countenances, a stranger might be led to think that *they* were in fact the masters of the ill-formed, emaciated, care-worn whites, were it not for the fine clothes of the latter; in short they are well clothed, fed, and taken care of, and so numerous that I believe they are felt already in many places rather a burden on the community than an advantage. [...]. But the sins of the fathers have fallen upon their sons; and as far as human foresight may look into futurity, they never can get rid of the effects; they must always have an immense black population to support, unless indeed the period shall ever arrive when the latter shall change stations and *support them*.[5]

In Illinois he visits an English Owenist colony, which has no slaves, and a similar one named Harmony, made up of poor German farmers under the leadership of Reverend Rapp. They had fled from dictatorial governments. Founded five and a half years previously, Harmony is a flourishing community with a communist organisation: they own the estate collectively, so that there are no owners or hired workers. They all work the land together and divide its produce. Generally they all dress in the same way and have similar houses, although the size of a house depends on the number of family members. Adlard writes that this form of communism "is a fascinating principle which seems to strike at the root of most if not all of the moral evils of society".[6] He confesses that, if forced to live in America, Harmony would be his favourite choice, although the settlers are quite dull and appear to grow homesick for the countries they left not long ago.

In Washington, Adlard pays his respects to the President of the United States of America, as was expected from a foreigner, by visiting him in his stone house in the middle of a vast, poor-looking garden overrun by weeds on the outskirts of the city. In 1816, James

Monroe had been elected President after a series of diplomatic missions that allowed him to study Europe very closely. It was winter. Nobody had shovelled the snow from the flight of steps to his modest house. A wooden plank was laid upon the snow to allow the visitors access to the door, which a servant opened. The President then took care of placing the chairs for the guests. "A little demagogy", thought Adlard maliciously. Monroe was tall but slightly bent and his deep-set grey eyes on either side of his large nose had a calm, serious and reflective look. He was possibly pondering his famous policy of European non-intervention in the affairs of the American continent, which was so essential for the expansion of the Union towards the vast West.

When Adlard went back to England, he discovered that his wife Mary had decided to separate and go back to her father, Reverend Hall, with their eight legitimate children. She wanted to educate them away from her dissolute and non-religious husband. The relationship with her was by now only of a financial nature and Adlard was very generous on that matter.

During Adlard's absence, gentle Martha Hutchinson had a difficult life. She was tormented by the criticism and hostility from the local community, while her children grew up and questioned her inappropriate status and the humiliation they were subjected to. Adlard decided to live with her and they had another three children. In total, he was the father of nineteen children: eleven with Martha and eight with Mary. Ranulf Wellebi's progeny did not risk extinction.

The conformists' gossip and hostility irritated Adlard more and more. He became tired of his ancestors' Lincolnshire and decided to break his family's traditions for good by selling his inherited estate and moving somewhere else. One of his closest friends was Edward Moore from Sleaford, nearby South Rauceby. He was a civil servant in the Foreign Office, and the English government had sent him to the Papal States as the consul in Ancona. Moore was enthusiastic about the region of Ancona, which was then unknown even to the most curious of British globe-trotters. When he returned to England on holiday, he described at length the gentle landscape of that region, the fields ploughed by pairs of very white oxen in which tulips and bluebottles grew in the corn, the oak woods on the gentle slopes, the quiet beaches, and the fishermen who pulled the huge fishing nets to the shore while singing to give rhythm to their effort.

Moore added that the land was very cheap because of the eco-

nomic ruin of the Papal States but could bring Adlard in plenty through efficient cultivation of a land which was naturally fertile. Adlard liked radical decisions and prepared to move to that unknown location; he decided to take Martha and their five daughters with him because he did not want them to become prey to the right thinkers in Lincolnshire. His sons had grown up, except young Algar who was born in 1829. Algar was entrusted to Reverend James Hoyle together with an adequate pension. Adlard gave a thousand pounds to each of his other five sons and advised them on travelling across the world, as far away as possible from England. He suggested Australia, since America had not thrilled him. At the time that sum of money was considerable and Adlard made clear that they had to use it to create an autonomous life and economic independence because he would not give them any more. Once he had made arrangements for his children and bought carriages and horses for the long journey, Adlard left with Martha, his daughters and luggage, crossed the Channel, and then began travelling on dusty roads across France and Switzerland towards the Adriatic Sea. It was the summer of 1833.

After passing through the Kingdom of Lombardy and Veneto, the English party entered the Papal States, which soon appeared to be characterised by the untidy yellow and grey uniforms of customs officers and policemen, by crowds of monks or priests, and beggars, who clung on all sides to the English Lord's carriage. In those States a quarter of the population was at that time classified into the following categories: "Beggars, cheap-jacks, unqualified, idle or vagabond people, Gypsies, and other people included in such a pernicious social class."

Ancona was a small town, but its harbour had always had a strategic and commercial importance since the Greeks of Dorian origins settled there between the fifth and sixth century B.C. Gallic, Roman, Gothic, Longobardic, Saracen and Byzantine civilisations had left their traces there. In February 1797, the town had opened its doors to French Republicans and established a democratic republic whose autonomy survived for almost twenty years. In 1816, the Papal authorities had come back with Austrian help and reinstalled the Monsignor Delegate of the Roman Curia. His return had marked the beginning of a rapid decline. For example, the Fair in Senigallia, which had been the main centre of attraction for trade in the region since the eighteenth century, ceased completely. There were no ships in the harbour of Ancona anymore, except a few foreign vessels that

anchored for a few hours. Only a few poor small sailing boats and fishing smacks docked.

In 1830, there were 35,000 inhabitants in Ancona; about half of them lived in makeshift accommodation and were in a state of great need and lack of cleanliness (porters, hemp-workers, bandits, scoundrels, attendants, and other mercenary people; mendicants, refugees, smugglers, beggars and unemployed farm hands from the countryside). The English ladies were in consternation; they had never visited the factories in Manchester, Birmingham, or Liverpool and they were not accustomed to such scenes of human poverty.

Adlard Welby's party could not easily find convenient accommodation in Ancona. Moore suggested to his friend Adlard to go to the harbour of Fermo, sixty kilometres south of Ancona where a villa owned by Napoleon's younger brother, Jérôme Bonaparte, was on sale after he had moved to Trieste. Jérôme wanted to build it for his very beautiful Giustina Pecori, whom he then married morganatically. She had chosen that place because it was near the border with the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, in which she was born but to which she could not go back because of her liberal ideas. It is said that she galloped on her horse along the beach until the banks of the river Tronto, which marked the border, to stare at the other shore with longing.

The harbour of Fermo was named *Castellum Firmanum* by the Romans, *Castrum Sancti Georgi* in Medieval times, and Porto San Giorgio at present. It was then a little village by the seaside, six kilometres from Fermo. It was the harbour of Fermo, so to speak, since the wharf was small and only fishing boats could dock. Nevertheless, because of the central position in the Adriatic Sea and the importance Fermo had at the time, it happened quite often that foreign ships dropped anchor in front of the fortified seafront. In the eighteenth century, both Russia and France had appointed vice-consuls "pour y protéger ses sujets qui y naviguent."[7]

The Romans had solidly fortified the village to defend the colony of *Firmum Picenum*. In the Middle Ages, it was reinforced to hold out against the frequent raids from the seasoned Turks, who frightened the population until the beginning of the nineteenth century (for public opinion in the Marche, all pirates were Turks.). Walls and towers surrounded the built-up area and a castle dominated the top of a hill. The main road, called the *Corso*, was on the small flat stretch between the sea and the hill. The large houses owned by the landlords formed

a line along the *Corso*. Behind, the small houses for sailors and fishermen spread on Cacciò Mount. These houses had only one floor and often no windows. The farmers' houses were scattered in the countryside. They were mainly built of straw and sun-dried clay. They cultivated wheat which was only for landlords. The wives of farmers and sailors kneaded bread dough with corn for their men. These women also worked in the fields and on the beach. They had faces tanned by the sun and the sea air, muscular hands and bare feet. When they attended mass in the church, or went to the market square, they wore coral jewels and ankle-length skirts. When they worked, they tied their skirts around their waists by shortening them to the knee, and rolled up their sleeves above their elbows. They wore wooden-framed corsets of black velvet, a white low-cut blouse, and their backs were strong and straight since they were used to carrying weights on top of their heads. They wore gold dangling earrings, passed down from one generation to the next. The farmers ate next to the fireplace without a fork or a table. The newly-weds' bed was of oak and had a mattress of rustling corn leaves and thick bed linen woven at a loom.

By contrast, the wives and daughters of country gentlemen had pale faces and weak hands and legs. They were too fat, as they ate a lot and did very little exercise, or too slim, as they wasted away for unfulfilled desires of love. Their bodies were covered from head to toe, dressed in tight clothes from neck to wrist, and did not know either air or sun. Their minds were hives of pettiness and stratagems. Their fathers, their husbands, and the priest took care of their ignorance and weakness. Ladies never went out on their own. They knew nothing about nature or life, or at least, they knew nothing in depth. Nevertheless, they regarded themselves as superior to the farmers. After the country gentry had shaped from generation to generation the differences produced by natural selection and the discriminating way of life, they theorised their transcendent right to dominate. The rural community was still subordinate and convinced that the established order was immutable. They secretly cultivated their traditions and ancient wisdom deformed by servitude, without protest or power. They were losers and prisoners in their own land.

When the dusty carriages of the English lord stopped behind the pairs of steaming horses between the church and the small theatre in the village square, crowds of ragged young boys, unemployed and beggars rushed to see the scene. Adlard Welby's five daughters looked around and were disheartened. They sat down on the first

trunks unloaded by too many eager hands that sought good tips, and wept. Their names were Casson, Susanna, Joanna, Ethelin and Bertha. The youngest was fifteen years old and the eldest was twenty-one years old. Everything was so different, miserable, noisy, and gaily colourful in that remote corner of the Papal States. They took little comfort from settling into a villa previously owned by Bonaparte. They were all graceful, witty, and quite well educated. They wore light-coloured casual clothes without excessive embellishment. They went out without being accompanied by a maid, rode horses, and walked along the beach. Behind the thick curtains in their drawing rooms, local ladies and maidens criticised the brazenness of the young foreign ladies who, in addition, did not attend mass or go to confession, or welcome either priests or Monsignori, because they were Protestants. However, Adlard Welby was a rich gentleman and notables were keen to win his friendship. Rumours spread fast about the five unmarried daughters and their father who granted a thousand-pound dowry to each of them.

Young noble bachelors from the interior and seaside villages vied with one another to be introduced to the young English ladies.

There were very many noble families. Across the centuries, invasions and shifts in power brought an exceptional increase in the sources of aristocracy. Adlard was keen to marry his daughters off suitably in order to regain quickly his freedom. He therefore showed his sociable nature by organising receptions. His girls wore beautiful clothes bought in London before their departure. They conversed, danced, and were amused by the groups of suitors. They were reconciled with the strange country to which their father had dragged them. They learnt Italian while the young men who aspired to take their hand in marriage did all they could to learn a few English words and read the works of Shakespeare or Milton to be able to cite them. Nevertheless, the descendants of papal aristocracy faced insurmountable difficulties as the young English ladies did not want to convert to Catholicism but demanded that their future husbands convert to Protestantism and bring up their children as Protestants. Hence, the young men of secular noble families, who went back to the time of free cities and did not list bishops, cardinals, or ties of patronage to the papal power, were soon highly esteemed.

Melchiorre Salvadori's son, Luigi, courted Ethelin. After a few months, they were married: he was eighteen years old and she was seventeen. With a thousand pounds, Luigi bought back the estate his

father had had to surrender to creditors; restored an old country house, called San Tommaso, for his new life with his bride, and devoted himself to reclaim arable fields. Serafino Emiliani's son, Giacomo, come down from Falerone, a village which was many hours away on horseback, to marry the eighteen-year old Casson. Giacomo was a diligent young man, had graduated in *utroque jure* and was a good musician. He filled his country house with books and musical instruments. Susanna and Joanna had different fates. When a cholera epidemic broke out in Ancona in 1836, they were both there to help their sick mother in hospital and caught the disease. Cholera was the consequence of a terrible famine the previous year when the poor were seen cropping the grass at the edge of the road and there were insufficient hands to bury the bodies. Pierre Jourdan, the medical officer in the French Army, now an ally of the European reaction, served in the occupying army summoned by the Pontifex to garrison Ancona. He courageously assisted the young English ladies and risked infection. Susanna could not be saved, and so died. Joanna, on the other hand, succeeded in surviving and married the nice young healer, who took her to live in Paris.

The youngest of the five sisters, Bertha, married George King, an English officer who took her to Germany where he was assigned to the embassy. After a long sickness and much pain, sweet Martha died in Ancona in 1840, assisted by Adlard, who had been so affectionate and devoted.

Adlard was sixty-three years old: his hair was thick and wavy, his large side burns were quite white but he was still straight, strong, full of energy, and more and more irritable and intolerant. Now Adlard was alone and free. He could travel around the world at his pleasure, with his servant and his dog. He could discover unfamiliar places and people, stop and follow his fancy and curiosity. His family did not know anything about the following twenty years of his life. He did not write letters anymore, or diaries, and his trace was lost until the day his lawyers announced his death to his heirs in cold bureaucratic language. However, there was very little to inherit. After he had settled his children, Adlard spent all his fortune conscientiously.

Although scattered in Europe, Ethelin, Casson, Joanna and Bertha were always very close to each other. The Marche were their meeting place. There, Ethelin and Casson lived in their country houses at a little distance from each other in the area of Fermo. They had introduced great changes in their husbands' habits and way of life by per-

suading them to have showers, building modern sanitary fixtures (in the Papal States, Italian gentry of the time did not wash much). The four sisters cooked English meals, not the ones we are used to think about now, but tasty good meals from George III's Kingdom, such as juicy roasts and tasty puddings with eastern spices. They ordered holly, mistletoe and firs for Christmas. They demanded the construction of brick houses for the farmers who worked on their estates. When they noticed that the farmers tended to fall ill with pellagra because they ate cornbread, they accused their husbands of barbarism and ordered their stewards to provide the farmers with enough wheat for a whole year. They taught English to their families and made them become Protestant and firmly antipapal. They read speeches by Gladstone and Mazzini and supported Liberal movements with enthusiasm. Two of Ethelin's sons fought with Garibaldi.

The four sisters always remained a little different, defending that difference with gentleness but also conviction. They were foreigners to their own husbands and children in a few corners of their consciousness. They had never been able to go back to England but their homesickness was so sharp and penetrating that it developed into fantasy and myth because their childhood England had changed as much as they had. Their legendary love for a land which was more and more imaginary was nourished only by memories and readings. They could not discuss it with their husbands or their children but only among themselves.

In New Year 1872, Joanna wrote to Ethelin: "We are sisters indeed. We are sisters of soul as well as blood – although our children hold our hearts and thoughts and we are ready to sacrifice our life for them – they cannot understand us. By the way, we have discussed this so many times …"

In the old garden created by Ethelin in San Tommaso, the legend of Adlard Welby's four daughters lives on. It is a legend about their joy in meeting and having tea undisturbed at the rotunda in the garden surrounded by high laurel and elm hedges. The old fragile and lively ladies used to dress in light coloured well-starched muslin, lace collars and velvet ribbons. They sat around the stone table set with the embroidered tablecloth and the old pewter teapot, and chatted in an outdated colourful language that was closer to the full-blooded language of the eighteenth-century than to the Victorian hypocritical phraseology. They talked about their house and garden in South Rauceby, Lincolnshire, about birches, yellow gorse bushes, dreadful

Adlard and sweet Martha. In the long hot months of the Adriatic summer, they talked about the green hills on which they were born and which they would never see again.

(Translation by Claudia Capancioni)

Notes

[1] A. Welby, *A Visit to North America and the English Settlements in Illinois, with a Winter Residence at Philadelphia: Solely to Ascertain the Actual Prospects of the Emigrating Agriculturalist, Mechanic and Commercial Speculator*, London, 1821, J. Drury, p. 34 (translator's note).
[2] *Ibid*., p. 21.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 27.
[4] *Ibid*., p. 71.
[5] *Ibid*., pp. 81-82.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 130.
[7] "To protect those of their subjects who sailed there."

Amour dure
Passages from the diary of Spiridion Trepka

by Vernon Lee

Agnolo Bronzino, portrait of Lucrezia Panciatichi, about 1540
Florence, Uffizi (Photo Scala, Florence)

Note
by Giorgio Mangani

Vernon Lee (1856-1935, pseudonym of Violet Paget) is a writer of English nationality, famous for her fantastic stories and for her aesthetic and decadent inspiration.

She was born at Chateau St Leonard in France of a well off family. In her youth Violet Page strongly felt the influence of her mother, an energetic and convinced rationalist and she received a definitely non-conformist education. She travelled a lot, had a cosmopolitan education (her first languages were Italian and French and only later English); her first short story was published in French in a Swiss paper in 1870, when she was only thirteen.

She was mainly interested in history (her first important work is the essay *Studies in the Eighteenth century in Italy*, 1880), in landscape, in art and the so-called "genius loci" (*Genius Loci*, 1899; *The Sentimental Traveller. Notes on Places*, 1908), in literature of a fantastic nature that often makes use of supernatural events (*A Culture Ghost*, 1881*; A Phantom Lover,* 1886; the collection of short stories *Hauntings*, 1890) which at times remind us of Karen Blixen's stories. Some of her books were published by Leonard and Virginia Woolfe's Hogarth Press.

The author explained the reasons for her interest in the supernatural in literature in an article (*Faustus and Helena: Notes on the Supernatural Art*) published in the "Cornhill Magazine" (later re-published in *Belcaro* in 1888: *Being Essays on Sundry Aesthetic Questions,* London, W. Satchell).

In the article Lee defended her choice to keep in her stories (which were criticized for their lack of logical reliability) the paradoxical, ambiguous and obscure character of the fantastic, which was able to give back literature and art their original evocative and emotional strength.

The aesthetic sensibility of Vernon Lee had found a mentor in Walter Pater (1839-1894; fellow at Brasenose College, Oxford till 1880, the author of historical works, such as *Studies in the History of the Renaissance,* 1873, and literary works such as *Imaginary Portraits*) and his storiographic works.

In his studies Pater had tried to recreate the spirit of past ages and their emotions

through the suggestion of works of art by means of his impressionistic and literary style.

History – Pater and Lee maintained – must re-create the emotions of the past, not only ideas and past events. Both opposed what Nietzsche had already criticized as "monumental history", that is the history of scholars, unable to understand the deep cultural and emotional fractures between different ages.

In *Belcaro* (1881) Vernon Lee deepens this intuition and attributes to sensibility for the fantastic element an even more important, not only literary but also cultural and storiographic, function. The fantastic is the residual form of the ancient way of thinking. For it reality is just an opportunity to trigger imagination, which our modern world has completely lost. "Nowadays – she writes – we see things, but we cannot imagine them any longer."

Rather than being an evasion from a faithful historical reconstruction, the fantastic approach allows the emotions of a lost world, voiceless in the documents of the archives of erudition, to vibrate anew.

The short story *Amour dure* clearly reflects the literary, storiographic and feminist thought of Vernon Lee. The story, written in 1885, was at first rejected by the publisher Blackwood because it was considered too fantastic and the plot was not sufficiently realistic. It was later published in the collection *Hauntings* (London, W. Heinemann, 1890, re-printed London and New York, John Lane, 1906) together with other short stories: *Oke of Okehurst* – originally published under the title *A Phantom Lover, A Wicked Voice*, and *Dianea*, all of a fantastic character.

After Pater's style, the centre of the plot of this story is a portrait probably inspired by the Portrait of Lucrezia Panciatichi by Bronzino (about 1540, at Uffizi, Florence) and which, in the story, portraits Medea da Carpi, the beautiful daughter of Galeazzo IV Malatesta, Lord of Carpi, and wife to Pierluigi Orsini, Duke of Stimigliano and later to Guidalfonso II, Duke of Urbania, all fictitious characters of 16th century. Spiridion Trepka, a historian who has come to Urbania for his studies, soon falls in love with the portrait of Medea whose ghost he meets several times in churches and in the night landscapes of the duchy town where he experiences a series of growing emotions which, in the end, make him totally dependent on her.

The story is full of symbolic meanings. The painting shows how art can reawake imagination dormant in our times.

Images do not only reflect the spirit of the past, but they can actually reproduce it.

Spiridion Trepka, the historian of Polish origin, who came to Urbania in order to study dusty archive documents and to write a scholarly essay, discovers in the painting the emotions of a dead world that suddenly comes back to life revealing all the misery of academic storiography.

His typically masculine inability to operate a distinction between reality and imagination is showed by his blind infatuation for Medea, the fatal woman (in the literal meaning of the term) that takes inspiration from famous Renaissance women's stereotypes (such as the myth of Lucrezia Borgia) that were so popular at the end of 19th century.

Medea, however, is mainly described as an anti-Victorian heroine; she is the opposite of the timid, pale wife, devoted to her husband, that was celebrated in the London of those years.

Her manly ability to play the game highlights, ironically, Trepka's inadequacy and, through him, the inadequacy of academic science that cannot distinguish the truth from mental constructions.

The outwardly conformist provincial society of Urbania, devoted to the cult of saints and nostalgic of the Roman States, a town where the bells of all churches ring together on Christmas night, becomes the stage of a modern pagan ceremony that has Medea as its main character, Medea who kills her lovers as Medea of the classical world devoured her children: two anti-madonnas in an obscene and grotesque overthrowing of Victorian ethics.

Part I

Urbania, August 20th 1885. I had longed, these years and years, to be in Italy, to come face to face with the Past; and was this Italy, was this the Past? I could have cried, yes cried, for disappointment when I first wandered about Rome, with an invitation to dine at the German Embassy in my pocket, and three or four Berlin and Munich Vandals at my heels, telling me where the best beer and sauerkraut could be had, and what the last article by Grimm or Mommsen was about.

Is this folly? Is it falsehood? Am I not myself a product of modern, northern civilisation; is not my coming to Italy due to this very modern scientific vandalism, which has given me a travelling scholarship because I have written a book like all those other atrocious books of erudition and art-criticism? Nay, am I not here at Urbania on the express understanding that, in a certain number of months, I shall produce just another such book? Dost thou imagine, thou miserable Spiridion, thou Pole grown into the semblance of a German pedant, doctor of philosophy, professor even, author of a prize essay on the despots of the fifteenth century, dost thou imagine that thou, with thy ministerial letters and proof-sheets in thy black professorial coat-pocket, canst ever come in spirit into the presence of the Past?

Too true, alas! But let me forget it, at least, every now and then; as I forgot it this afternoon, while the white bullocks dragged my gig slowly winding along interminable valleys, crawling along interminable hillsides, with the invisible droning torrent far below, and only the bare grey and reddish peaks all around, up to this town of Urbania, forgotten of

mankind, towered and battlemented on the high Apennine ridge. Sigillo, Penna, Fossombrone, Mercatello, Montemurio. Each single village name, as the driver pointed it out, brought to my mind the recollection of some battle or some great act of treachery of former days. And as the huge mountains shut out the setting sun, and the valleys filled with bluish shadow and mist, only a band of threatening smoke red remaining behind the towers and cupolas of the city on its mountain-top, and the sound of church bells floated across the precipice from Urbania, I almost expected, at every turning of the road, that a troop of horsemen, with beaked helmets and clawed shoes, would emerge, with armour glittering and pennons waving in the sunset. And then, not two hours ago, entering the town at dusk, passing along the deserted streets, with only a smoky light here and there under a shrine or in front of a fruit-stall, or a fire reddening the blackness of a smithy; passing beneath the battlements and turrets of the palace… Ah, that was Italy, it was the Past!

August 21st And this is the Present! Four letters of introduction to deliver, and an hour's polite conversation to endure with the Vice-Prefect, the Syndic, the Director of the Archives, and the good man to whom my friend Max had sent me for lodgings…

August 22nd – 27th Spent the greater part of the day in the Archives, and the greater part of my time there in being bored to extinction by the Director thereof, who today spouted Aeneas Sylvius' Commentaries for three-quarters of an hour without taking breath. From this sort of martyrdom (what are the sensations of a former racehorse being driven in a cab? If you can conceive them, they are those of a Pole turned Prussian professor) I take refuge in long rambles through the town. This town is a handful of tall black houses huddled on to the top of an Alp, long narrow lanes trickling down its sides, like the slides we made on hillocks in our boyhood, and in the middle the superb red brick structure, turreted and battlemented, of Duke Ottobuono's palace, from whose windows you look down upon a sea, a kind of whirlpool, of melancholy grey mountains. Then there are the people, dark, bushy bearded men, riding about like brigands, wrapped in green-lined cloaks upon their shaggy pack mules; or loitering about, great, brawny, low-headed youngsters, like the parti-coloured bravos in Signorelli's frescoes; the beautiful boys, like so many young Raphaels, with eyes like the eyes of bullocks, and the huge women, Madonnas or St. Elizabeths, as the case may be, with their clogs firmly poised on their toes and their brass pitchers on their heads,

as they go up and down the steep black alleys. I do not talk much to these people; I fear my illusions being dispelled. At the corner of a street, opposite Francesco di Giorgio's beautiful little portico, is a great blue and red advertisement, representing an angel descending to crown Elias Howe, on account of his sewing machines; and the clerks of the Vice-Prefecture, who dine at the place where I get my dinner, yell politics, Minghetti, Cairoli, Tunis, ironclads, &c., at each other, and sing snatches of *La Fille de Mme. Angot*, which I imagine they have been performing here recently.

No; talking to the natives is evidently a dangerous experiment. Except indeed, perhaps, to my good landlord, *Signor Notaro* Porri, who is just as learned, and takes considerably less snuff (or rather brushes it off his coat more often) than the Director of the Archives. I forgot to jot down (and I feel I must jot down, in the vain belief that some day these scraps will help, like a withered twig of olive or a three-wicked Tuscan lamp on my table, to bring to my mind, in that hateful Babylon of Berlin, these happy Italian days), I forgot to record that I am lodging in the house of a dealer in antiquities. My window looks up the principal street to where the little column with Mercury on the top rises in the midst of the awnings and porticoes of the marketplace. Bending over the chipped ewers and tubs full of sweet basil, clove pinks, and marigolds, I can just see a corner of the palace turret, and the vague ultramarine of the hills beyond. The house, whose back goes sharp down into the ravine, is a queer up-and-down black place, whitewashed rooms, hung with the Raphaels and Francias and Peruginos, whom mine host regularly carries to the chief inn whenever a stranger is expected; and surrounded by old carved chairs, sofas of the Empire, embossed and gilded wedding chests, and the cupboards which contain bits of old damask and embroidered altar cloths scenting the place with the smell of old incense and mustiness; all of which are presided over by *Signor* Porri's three maiden sisters, *Sora* Serafina, *Sora* Lodovica, and *Sora* Adalgisa, the three Fates in person, even to the distaffs and their black cats.

Sor Asdrubale, as they call my landlord, is also a notary. He regrets the Pontifical Government, having had a cousin who was a Cardinal's train-bearer, and believes that if only you lay a table for two, light four candles made of dead men's fat, and perform certain rites about which he is not very precise, you can, on Christmas Eve and similar nights, summon up San Pasquale Baylon, who will write you the winning numbers of the lottery upon the smoked back of a plate, if you have previously slapped him on both cheeks and repeated three Ave Marias. The difficulty consists in

obtaining the dead men's fat for the candles, and also in slapping the saint before he have time to vanish.

"If it were not for that," says *Sor* Asdrubale, "the Government would have had to suppress the lottery ages ago, eh!".

Sept. 9th This history of Urbania is not without its romance, although that romance (as usual) has been overlooked by our Dryasdusts. Even before coming here I felt attracted by the strange figure of a woman, which appeared from out of the dry pages of Gualterio's and Padre de Sanctis' histories of this place. This woman is Medea, daughter of Galeazzo IV Malatesta, Lord of Carpi, wife first of Pierluigi Orsini, Duke of Stimigliano, and subsequently of Guidalfonso II, Duke of Urbania, predecessor of the great Duke Robert II.

This woman's history and character remind one of that of Bianca Cappello, and at the same time of Lucrezia Borgia. Born in 1556, she was affianced at the age of twelve to a cousin, a Malatesta of the Rimini family. This family having greatly gone down in the world, her engagement was broken, and she was betrothed a year later to a member of the Pico family, and married to him by proxy at the age of fourteen. But this match not satisfying her own or her father's ambition, the marriage by proxy was, upon some pretext, declared null and the suit encouraged of the Duke of Stimigliano, a great Umbrian feudatory of the Orsini family. But the bridegroom, Giovanfrancesco Pico, refused to submit, pleaded his case before the Pope, and tried to carry off by force his bride, with whom he was madly in love, as the lady was most lovely and of most cheerful and amiable manner, says an old anonymous chronicle. Pico waylaid her litter as she was going to a villa of her father's, and carried her to his castle near Mirandola, where he respectfully pressed his suit; insisting that he had a right to consider her as his wife. But the lady escaped by letting herself into the moat by a rope of sheets, and Giovanfrancesco Pico was discovered stabbed in the chest, by the hand of Madonna Medea da Carpi. He was a handsome youth only eighteen years old.

The Pico having been settled, and the marriage with him declared null by the Pope, Medea da Carpi was solemnly married to the Duke of Stimigliano and went to live upon his domains near Rome.

Two years later, Pierluigi Orsini was stabbed by one of his grooms at his castle of Stimigliano, near Orvieto; and suspicion fell upon his widow, more especially as, immediately after the event, she caused the murderer to be cut down by two servants in her own chamber; but not

before he had declared that she had induced him to assassinate his master by a promise of her love. Things became so hot for Medea da Carpi that she fled to Urbania and threw herself at the feet of Duke Guidalfonso II, declaring that she had caused the groom to be killed merely to avenge her good fame, which he had slandered, and that she was absolutely guiltless of the death of her husband. The marvellous beauty of the widowed Duchess of Stimigliano, who was only nineteen, entirely turned the head of the Duke of Urbania. He affected implicit belief in her innocence, refused to give her up to the Orsinis, kinsmen of her late husband, and assigned to her magnificent apartments in the left wing of the palace, among which the room containing the famous fireplace ornamented with marble Cupids on a blue ground. Guidalfonso fell madly in love with his beautiful guest. Hitherto timid and domestic in character, he began publicly to neglect his wife, Maddalena Varano of Camerino, with whom, although childless, he had hitherto lived on excellent terms; he not only treated with contempt the admonitions of his advisers and of his suzerain the Pope, but went so far as to take measures to repudiate his wife, on the score of quite imaginary ill-conduct. The Duchess Maddalena, unable to bear this treatment, fled to the convent of the barefooted sisters at Pesaro, where she pined away, while Medea da Carpi reigned in her place at Urbania, embroiling Duke Guidalfonso in quarrels both with the powerful Orsinis, who continued to accuse her of Stimigliano's murder, and with the Varanos, kinsmen of the injured Duchess Maddalena; until at length, in the year 1576, the Duke of Urbania, having become suddenly, and not without suspicious circumstances, a widower, publicly married Medea da Carpi two days after the decease of his unhappy wife. No child was born of this marriage; but such was the infatuation of Duke Guidalfonso, that the new Duchess induced him to settle the inheritance of the Duchy (having, with great difficulty, obtained the consent of the Pope) on the boy Bartolomeo, her son by Stimigliano, but whom the Orsinis refused to acknowledge as such, declaring him to be the child of that Giovanfrancesco Pico to whom Medea had been married by proxy, and whom, in defence, as she had said, of her honour, she had assassinated; and this investiture of the Duchy of Urbania on to a stranger and a bastard was at the expense of the obvious rights of the Cardinal Robert, Guidalfonso's younger brother.

In May 1579 Duke Guidalfonso died suddenly and mysteriously, Medea having forbidden all access to his chamber, lest, on his deathbed, he might repent and reinstate his brother in his rights. The Duchess

immediately caused her son, Bartolomeo Orsini, to be proclaimed Duke of Urbania, and herself regent; and, with the help of two or three unscrupulous young men, particularly a certain Captain Oliverotto da Narni, who was rumoured to be her lover, seized the reins of government with extraordinary and terrible vigour, marching an army against the Varanos and Orsinis, who were defeated at Sigillo, and ruthlessly exterminating every person who dared question the lawfulness of the succession; while, all the time, Cardinal Robert, who had flung aside his priest's garb and vows, went about in Rome, Tuscany, Venice – nay, even to the Emperor and the King of Spain, imploring help against the usurper. In a few months he had turned the tide of sympathy against the Duchess-Regent; the Pope solemnly declared the investiture of Bartolomeo Orsini worthless, and published the accession of Robert II, Duke of Urbania and Count of Montemurlo; the Grand Duke of Tuscany and the Venetians secretly promised assistance, but only if Robert were able to assert his rights by main force. Little by little, one town after the other of the Duchy went over to Robert, and Medea da Carpi found herself surrounded in the mountain citadel of Urbania like a scorpion surrounded by flames. (This simile is not mine, but belongs to Raffaello Gualterio, historiographer to Robert II). But, unlike the scorpion Medea refused to commit suicide. It is perfectly marvellous how, without money or allies, she could so long keep her enemies at bay; and Gualterio attributes this to those fatal fascinations which had brought Pico and Stimigliano to their deaths, which had turned the once honest Guidalfonso into a villain, and which were such that, of all her lovers, not one but preferred dying for her, even after he had been treated with ingratitude and ousted by a rival; a faculty which Messer Raffaello Gualterio clearly attributed to hellish connivance.

At last the ex-Cardinal Robert succeeded, and triumphantly entered Urbania in November 1579. His accession was marked by moderation and clemency. Not a man was put to death, save Oliverotto da Narni, who threw himself on the new Duke, tried to stab him as he alighted at the palace, and who was cut down by the Duke's men, crying: "Orsini, Orsini! Medea, Medea! Long live Duke Bartolomeo!", with his dying breath, although it is said that the Duchess had treated him with ignominy. The little Bartolomeo was sent to Rome to the Orsinis; the Duchess respectfully confined in the left wing of the palace.

It is said that she haughtily requested to see the new Duke, but that he shook his head, and, in his priest's fashion, quoted a verse about Ulysses and the Sirens; and it is remarkable that he persistently refused

to see her, abruptly leaving his chamber one day that she had entered it by stealth. After a few months a conspiracy was discovered to murder Duke Robert, which had obviously been set on foot by Medea. But the young man, one Marcantonio Frangipani of Rome, denied, even under the severest torture, any complicity of hers so that Duke Robert who wished to do nothing violent, merely transferred the Duchess from his villa at Sant'Elmo to the convent of the Clarisse in town, where she was guarded and watched in the closest manner. It seemed impossible that Medea should intrigue any further, for she certainly saw and could be seen by no one. Yet she contrived to send a letter and her portrait to one Prinzivalle degli Ordelaffi, a youth, only nineteen years old, of noble Romagnole family and who was betrothed to one of the most beautiful girls of Urbania. He immediately broke off his engagement, and, shortly afterwards, attempted to shoot Duke Robert with a holster-pistol as he knelt at mass on the festival of Easter Day. This time Duke Robert was determined to obtain proofs against Medea. Prinzivalle degli Ordelaffi was kept some days without food, then submitted to the most violent tortures, and finally condemned. When he was going to be flayed with red-hot princers and quartered by horses, he was told that he might obtain the grace of immediate death by confessing the complicity of the Duchess; and the confessor and nuns of the convent, which stood in the place of execution outside Porta San Romano, pressed Medea to save the wretch, whose screams reached her by confessing her own guilt. Medea asked permission to go to a balcony where she could see Prinzivalle and be seen by him. She looked on coldly, then threw down her embroidered kerchief to the poor mangled creature. He asked the executioner to wipe his mouth with it, kissed it and cried out that Medea was innocent. Then, after several hours of torments, he died. This was too much for the patience even of Duke Robert. Seeing that as long as Medea lived his life would be in perpetual danger, but unwilling to cause a scandal (somewhat of the priest-nature remaining), he had Medea strangled in the convent, and, what is remarkable, insisted that only women – two infanticides to whom he remitted their sentence – should be employed for the deed.

"This clement prince" – writes Don Arcangelo Zappi in his life of him, published in 1725" – can be blamed only for one act of cruelty, the more odious as he had himself, until released from his vows by the Pope, been in holy orders. It is said that when he caused the death of the infamous Medea da Carpi, his fear lest her extraordinary charms should seduce any man was such, that he not only employed women as execu-

tioners, but refused to permit her a priest or monk, thus forcing her to die unshriven, and refusing her the benefit of any penitence that may have lurked in her; adamantine heart."

Such is the story of Medea da Carpi, Duchess of Stimigliano Orsini, and then wife of Duke Guidalfonso II of Urbania. She was put to death just two hundred and ninety-seven years ago, December 1582, at the age of barely seven-and twenty, and having, in the course of her short life, brought to a violent end five of her lovers, from Giovanfrancesco Pico to Prinzivalle degli Ordelaffi.

Sept. 20th A grand illumination of the town in honour of the taking of Rome fifteen years ago. Except *Sor* Asdrubale, my landlord, who shakes his head at the Piedmontese, as he calls them, the people here are all *Italianissimi*. The Popes kept them very much down since Urbania lapsed to the Holy See in 1645.

Sept. 28th I have for some time been hunting for portraits of the Duchess Medea. Most of them, I imagine, must have been destroyed, perhaps by Duke Robert II's fear lest even after her death this terrible beauty should play him a trick. Three or four I have, however, been able to find, one a miniature in the Archives, said to be that which she sent to poor *Prinzivalle degli Ordelaffi* in order to turn his head; one a marble bust in the palace lumber room; one in a large composition, possibly by Baroccio, representing Cleopatra at the feet of Augustus. Augustus is the idealised portrait of Robert II., round cropped head, nose a little awry, clipped beard and scar as usual, but in Roman dress. Cleopatra seems to me for all her Oriental dress and although she wears a black wig to be meant for Medea da Carpi; she is kneeling, baring her breast for the victor to strike, but in reality to captivate him and he turns away with an awkward gesture of loathing. None of these portraits seem very good, save the miniature, but that is an exquisite work, and with it, and the suggestions of the bust, it is easy to reconstruct the beauty of this terrible being. The type is that most admired by the late Renaissance, and, in some measure, immortalised by Jean Goujon and the French. The face is a perfect oval, the forehead somewhat over round, with minute curls, like a fleece, of bright auburn hair; the nose a trifle over aquiline, and the cheekbones a trifle too low; the eyes grey, large, prominent, beneath exquisitely curved brows and lids just a little too tight at the corners; the mouth also, brilliantly red and most delicately designed, is a little too tight, the lips strained a trifle over the teeth. Tight eyelids and tight lips

give a strange refinement, and, at the same time, an air of mystery, a somewhat sinister seductiveness; they seem to take, but not to give. The mouth with a kind of childish pout, looks as if it could bite or suck like a leech. The complexion is dazzlingly fair, the perfect transparent roset lily of a red haired beauty; the head, with hair elaborately curled and plaited close to it, and adorned with pearls, sits like that of the antique Arethusa on a long, supple, swan-like neck. A curious, at first rather conventional, artificial looking sort of beauty, voluptuous yet cold, which, the more it is contemplated, the more it troubles and haunts the mind. Round the lady's neck is a gold chain with little gold lozenges at intervals, on which is engraved the posy or pun (the fashion of French devices is common in those days), "Amour Dure. Dure Amour." The same posy is inscribed in the hollow of the bust, and, thanks to it, I have been able to identify the latter as Medea's portrait. I often examine these tragic portraits, wondering what this face, which led so many men to their death, may have been like when it spoke or smiled, what at the moment when Medea da Carpi fascinated her victims into love unto death, "Amour Dure. Dure Amour," as runs her device, love that lasts, cruel love, yes indeed, when one thinks of the fidelity and fate of her lovers.

Oct. 13th I have literally not had time to write a line of my diary all these days. My whole mornings have gone in those Archives, my afternoons taking long walks in this lovely autumn weather (the highest hills are just tipped with snow). My evenings go in writing that confounded account of the Palace of Urbania which Government requires, merely to keep me at work at something useless. Of my history I have not yet been able to write a word... By the way, I must note down a curious circumstance mentioned in an anonymous Ms. life of Duke Robert, which I fell upon today. When this prince had the equestrian statue of himself by Antonio Tassi, Gianbologna's pupil, erected in the square of the *Corte*, he secretly caused to be made, says my anonymous Ms, a silver statuette of his familiar genius or angel, "*familiaris eius angelus seu genius, quod a vulgo dicitur idolino*", which statuette or idol, after having been consecrated by the astrologers, *ab astrologis quibusdam ritibus sacrato*, was placed in the cavity of the chest of the effigy by Tassi, in order, says the MS., that his soul might rest until the general Resurrection. This passage is curious and to me somewhat puzzling; how could the soul of Duke Robert await the general Resurrection, when, as a Catholic, he ought to have believed that it must, as soon as separated from his body, go to Purgatory? Or is there some semipagan superstition of the Renaissance

(most strange, certainly, in a man who had been a Cardinal) connecting the soul with a guardian genius, who could be compelled, by magic rites (*ab astrologis sacrato*, the Ms. says of the little idol), to remain fixed to earth, so that the soul should sleep in the body until the Day of Judgment? I confess this story baffles me. I wonder whether such an idol ever existed, or exists nowadays, in the body of Tassi's bronze effigy?

Oct. 20th I have been seeing a good deal of late of the Vice-Prefect's son: an amiable young man with a love sick face and a languid interest in Urbanian history and archaeology, of which he is profoundly ignorant. This young man, who has lived at Siena and Lucca before his father was promoted here, wears extremely long and tight trousers, which almost preclude his bending his knees, a stick-up collar and an eyeglass, and a pair of fresh kid gloves stuck in the breast of his coat, speaks of Urbania as Ovid might have spoken of Pontus, and complains (as well he may) of the barbarism of the young men, the officials who dine at my inn and howl and sing like madmen, and the nobles who drive gigs, showing almost as much throat as a lady at a ball. This person frequently entertains me with his *amori*, past, present, and future; he evidently thinks me very odd for having none to entertain him with in return; he points out to me the pretty (or ugly) servant-girls and dressmakers as we walk in the street, sighs deeply or sings in falsetto behind every tolerably young looking woman, and has finally taken me to the house of the lady of his heart, a great black-moustachioed countess, with a voice like a fishcrier; here, he says, I shall meet all the best company in Urbania and some beautiful women— ah, too beautiful, alas! I find three huge half-furnished rooms, with bare brick floors, petroleum lamps, and horribly bad pictures on bright wash-ball-blue and gamboge walls, and in the midst of it all, every evening, a dozen ladies and gentlemen seated in a circle, vociferating at each other the same news a year old; the younger ladies in bright yellows and greens, fanning themselves while my teeth chatter, and having sweet things whispered behind their fans by officers with hair brushed up like a hedgehog. And these are the women my friend expects me to fall in love with! I vainly wait for tea or supper which does not come, and rush home, determined to leave alone the Urbanian *beau monde*. It is quite true that I have no *amori*, although my friend does not believe it. When I came to Italy first, I looked out for romance; I sighed, like Goethe in Rome, for a window to open and a wondrous creature to appear, "welch mich versengend erquickt." Perhaps it is because Goethe was a German, accustomed to German *Fraus*, and I am, after all, a Pole,

accustomed to something very different from *Fraus*; but anyhow, for all my efforts, in Rome, Florence, and Siena, I never could find a woman to go mad about, either among the ladies, chattering bad French, or among the lower classes, as cute and cold as money-lenders; so I steer clear of Italian womankind, its shrill voice and gaudy toilettes. I am wedded to history, to the Past, to women like Lucrezia Borgia, Vittoria Accoramboni, or that Medea da Carpi, for the present; some day I shall perhaps find a grand passion, a woman to play the Don Quixote about, like the Pole that I am; a woman out of whose slipper to drink, and for whose pleasure to die; but not here! Few things strike me so much as the degeneracy of Italian women. What has become of the race of Faustinas, Marozias, Bianca Cappellos? Where discover nowadays (I confess she haunts me) another Medea da Carpi? Were it only possible to meet a woman of that extreme distinction of beauty, of that terribleness of nature, even if only potential, I do believe I could love her, even to the Day of Judgment, like any Oliverotto da Narni, or Frangipani or Prinzivalle.

Oct. 27th Fine sentiments the above are for a professor, a learned man! I thought the young artists of Rome childish because they played practical jokes and yelled at night in the streets, returning from the Caffe Greco or the cellar in the Via Palombella; but am I not as childish to the full. I, melancholy wretch, whom they called Hamlet and the Knight of the Doleful Countenance?

Nov. 5th I can't free myself from the thought of this Medea da Carpi. In my walks, my mornings in the Archives, my solitary evenings, I catch myself thinking over the woman. Am I turning novelist instead of historian? And still it seems to me that I understand her so well; so much better than my facts warrant. First, we must put aside all pedantic modern ideas of right and wrong. Right and wrong in a century of violence and treachery does not exist, least of all for creatures like Medea. Go preach right and wrong to a tigress, my dear sir! Yet is there in the world anything nobler than the huge creature, steel when she springs, velvet when she treads, as she stretches her supple body, or smooths her beautiful skin, or fastens her strong claws into her victim?

Yes; I can understand Medea. Fancy a woman of superlative beauty, of the highest courage and calmness, a woman of many resources, of genius, brought up by a petty princelet of a father, upon Tacitus and Sallust, and the tales of the great Malatestas, of Caesar Borgia and such

like! A woman whose one passion is conquest and empire, fancy her, on the eve of being wedded to a man of the power of the Duke of Stimigliano, claimed, carried off by a small fry of a Pico, locked up in his hereditary brigand's castle, and having to receive the young fool's red-hot love as an honour and a necessity! The mere thought of any violence to such a nature is an abominable outrage; and if Pico chooses to embrace such a woman at the risk of meeting a sharp piece of steel in her arms, why, it is a fair bargain. Young hound, or, if you prefer, young hero, to think to treat a woman like this as if she were any village wench! Medea marries her Orsini. A marriage, let it be noted, between an old soldier of fifty and a girl of sixteen. Reflect what that means: it means that this imperious woman is soon treated like a chattel, made roughly to understand that her business is to give the Duke an heir, not advice; that she must never ask – "wherefore this or that?" – that she must courtesy before the Duke's counsellors, his captains, his mistresses; that, at the 'least suspicion of rebelliousness, she is subject to his foul words and blows; at the least suspicion of infidelity, to be strangled or starved to death, or thrown down an oubliette. Suppose that she know that her husband has taken it into his head that she has looked too hard at this man or that, that one of his lieutenants or one of his women have whispered that, after all, the boy Bartolomeo might as soon be a Pico as an Orsini. Suppose she know that she must strike or be struck? Why, she strikes, or gets some one to strike for her. At what price? A promise of love, of love to a groom, the son of a serf! Why, the dog must be mad or drunk to believe such a thing possible; his very belief in anything so monstrous makes him worthy of death. And then he dares to blab! This is much worse than Pico. Medea is bound to defend her honour a second time; if she could stab Pico, she can certainly stab this fellow, or have him stabbed, hounded by her husband's kinsmen, she takes refuge at Urbania. The Duke, like every other man, falls wildly in love with Medea, and neglects his wife; let us even go so far as to say, breaks his wife's heart. Is this Medea's fault? Is it her fault that every stone that comes beneath her chariot-wheels is crushed? Certainly not. Do you suppose that a woman like Medea feels the smallest ill will against a poor, craven Duchess Maddalena? Why, she ignores her very existence. To suppose Medea a cruel woman is as grotesque as to call her an immoral woman. Her fate is, sooner or later, to triumph over her enemies, at all events to make their victory almost a defeat; her magic faculty is to enslave all the men who come across her path; all those who see her, love her, become her slaves; and it is the destiny of all her slaves to

perish. Her lovers, with the exception of Duke Guidalfonso, all come to an untimely end; and in this there is nothing unjust. The possession of a woman like Medea is a happiness too great for a mortal man; it would turn his head, make him forget even what he owed her; no man must survive long who conceives himself to have a right over her; it is a kind of sacrilege. And only death, the willingness to pay for such happiness by death, can at all make a man worthy of being her lover; he must be willing to love and suffer and die. This is the meaning of her device "Amour Dure. Dure Amour." The love of Medea da Carpi cannot fade, but the lover can die; it is a constant and a cruel love.

Nov. 11th I was right, quite right in my idea. I have found, oh, joy! I treated the Vice-Prefect's son to a dinner of five courses at the *Trattoria La Stella d'Italia* out of sheer jubilation, I have found in the Archives, unknown, of course, to the Director, a heap of letters, letters of Duke Robert about Medea da Carpi, letters of Medea herself! Yes, Medea's own handwriting; a round, scholarly character, full of abbreviations, with a Greek look about it, as befits a learned princess who could read Plato as well as Petrarch. The letters are of little importance, mere drafts of business letters for her secretary to copy, during the time that she governed the poor weak Guidalfonso. But they are her letters, and I can imagine almost that there hangs about these mouldering pieces of paper a scent as of a woman's hair.

The few letters of Duke Robert show him in a new light. A cunning, cold, but craven priest. He trembles at the bare thought of Medea, *la pessima Medea*, worse than her namesake of Colchis, as he calls her. His long clemency is a result of mere fear of laying violent hands upon her. He fears her as something almost supernatural; he would have enjoyed having had her burnt as a witch. After letter on letter, telling his crony, Cardinal Sanseverino, at Rome his various precautions during her lifetime – how he wears a jacket of mail under his coat; how he drinks only milk from a cow which he has milked in his presence; how he tries his dog with morsels of his food, lest it be poisoned; how he suspects the wax-candles because of their peculiar smell; how he fears riding out lest some one should frighten his horse and cause him to break his neck, after all this, and when Medea has been in her grave two years, he tells his correspondent of his fear of meeting the soul of Medea after his own death, and chuckles over the ingenious device (concocted by his astrologer and a certain *Fra'* Gaudenzio, a Capuchin) by which he shall secure the absolute peace of his soul until that of the wicked Medea be

finally "chained up in hell among the lakes of boiling pitch and the ice of Caina described by the immortal bard" old pedant! Here, then, is the explanation of that silver image – *quod vulgo dicitur idolino* – which he caused to be soldered into his effigy by Tassi. As long as the image of his soul was attached to the image of his body, he should sleep awaiting the Day of Judgment, fully convinced that Medea's soul will then be properly tarred and feathered, while his – honest man! – will fly straight to Paradise. And to think that, two weeks ago, I believed this man to be a hero! Aha! my good Duke Robert, you shall be shown up in my history; and no amount of silver *idolinos* shall save you from being heartily laughed at!

Nov. 15th Strange! That idiot of a Prefect's son, who has heard me talk a hundred times of Medea da Carpi, suddenly recollects that, when he was a child at Urbania, his nurse used to threaten him with a visit from Madonna Medea, who rode in the sky on a black he-goat. My Duchess Medea turned into a bogey for naughty little boys!

Nov. 20th I have been going about with a Bavarian Professor of mediaeval history, showing him all over the country. Among other places we went to *Rocca* Sant' Elmo, to see the former villa of the Dukes of Urbania, the villa where Medea was confined between the accession of Duke Robert and the conspiracy of Marcantonio Frangipani, which caused her removal to the nunnery immediately outside the town. A long ride up the desolate Apennine valleys, bleak beyond words just now with their thin fringe of oak scrub turned russet, thin patches of grass sered by the frost, the last few yellow leaves of the poplars by the torrents shaking and fluttering about in the chill Tramontana; the mountain-tops are wrapped in thick grey cloud; tomorrow, if the wind continues, we shall see them round masses of snow against the cold blue sky. Sant'Elmo is a wretched hamlet high on the Apennine ridge, where the Italian vegetation is already replaced by that of the North. You ride for miles through leafless chestnut woods the scent of the soaking brown leaves filling the air, the roar of the torrent, turbid with autumn rains, rising from the precipice below; then suddenly the leafless chestnut woods are replaced, as at Vallombrosa, by a belt of black, dense fir plantations. Emerging from these, you come to an open space, frozen blasted meadows, the rocks of snow clad peak, the newly fallen snow, close above you; and in the midst, on a knoll, with a gnarled larch on either side, the ducal villa of Sant'Elmo, a big black stone box with a stone escutcheon, grat-

ed windows, and a double flight of steps in front. It is now let out to the proprietor of the neighbouring woods, who uses it for the storage of chestnuts, faggots, and charcoal from the neighbouring ovens. We tied our horses to the iron rings and entered: an old woman, with dishevelled hair, was alone in the house. The villa is a mere hunting-lodge, built by Ottobuono IV, the father of Dukes Guidalfonso and Robert, about 1530. Some of the rooms have at one time been frescoed and panelled with oak carvings, but all this has disappeared. Only, in one of the big rooms, there remains a large marble fireplace, similar to those in the palace at Urbania, beautifully carved with Cupids on a blue ground; a charming naked boy sustains a jar on either side, one containing clove pinks, the other roses. The room was filled with stacks of faggots.

We returned home late, my companion in excessively bad humour at the fruitlessness of the expedition. We were caught in the skirt of a snowstorm as we got into the chestnut woods. The sight of the snow falling gently, of the earth and bushes whitened all round, made me feel back at Posen, once more a child. I sang and shouted, to my companion's horror. This will be a bad point against me if reported at Berlin. A historian of twenty-four who shouts and sings, and that when another historian is cursing at the snow and the bad roads! All night I lay awake watching the embers of my wood fire, and thinking of Medea da Carpi mewed up, in winter, in that solitude of Sant'Elmo, the firs groaning, the torrent roaring, the snow falling all round; miles and miles away from human creatures. I fancied I saw it all, and that I, somehow, was Marcantonio Frangipani come to liberate her, or was it *Prinzivalle degli Ordelaffi*? I suppose it was because of the long ride, the unaccustomed pricking feeling of the snow in the air; or perhaps the punch which my professor insisted on drinking after dinner.

Nov. 23rd Thank goodness, that Bavarian professor has finally departed! Those days he spent here drove me nearly crazy. Talking over my work, I told him one day my views on Medea da Carpi; whereupon he condescended to answer that those were the usual tales due to the mythopoetic (old idiot!) tendency of the Renaissance; that research would disprove the greater part of them, as it had disproved the stories current about the Borgias, &c.; that, moreover, such a woman as I made out was psychologically and physiologically impossible. Would that one could say as much of such professors as he and his fellows!

Nov. 24th I cannot get over my pleasure in being rid of that imbecile;

I felt as if I could have throttled him every time he spoke of the Lady of my thoughts, for such she has become, *Metea*, as the animal called her!

Nov. 30th I feel quite shaken at what has just happened; I am beginning to fear that that old pedant was right in saying that it was bad for me to live all alone in a strange country, that it would make me morbid. It is ridiculous that I should be put into such a state of excitement merely by the chance discovery of a portrait of a woman dead these three hundred years. With the case of my uncle Ladislas, and other suspicions of insanity in my family, I ought really to guard against such foolish excitement.

Yet the incident was really dramatic, uncanny. I could have sworn that I knew every picture in the palace here; and particularly every picture of Her. Anyhow, this morning, as I was leaving the Archives, I passed through one of the many small rooms – irregular-shaped closets – which fill up the ins and outs of this curious palace, turreted like a French chateau. I must have passed through that closet before, for the view was so familiar out of its window; just the particular bit of round tower in front, the cypress on the other side of the ravine, the belfry beyond, and the piece of the line of Monte Sant'Agata and the Leonessa, covered with snow, against the sky. I suppose there must be twin rooms, and that I had got into the wrong one; or rather, perhaps some shutter had been opened or curtain withdrawn. As I was passing, my eye was caught by a very beautiful old mirror-frame let into the brown and yellow inlaid wall. I approached, and looking at the frame, looked also, mechanically, into the glass. I gave a great start, and almost shrieked, I do believe (it's lucky the Munich professor is safe out of Urbania!). Behind my own image stood another, a figure close to my shoulder, a face close to mine; and that figure, that face, hers! Medea da Carpi's! I turned sharp round, as white, I think, as the ghost I expected to see. On the wall opposite the mirror, just a pace or two behind where I had been standing, hung a portrait. And such a portrait! Bronzino never painted a grander one. Against a background of harsh, dark blue, there stands out the figure of the Duchess (for it is Medea, the real Medea, a thousand times more real, individual, and powerful than in the other portraits), seated stiffly in a high-backed chair, sustained, as it were, almost rigid, by the stiff brocade of skirts and stomacher, stiffer for plaques of embroidered silver flowers and rows of seed pearl. The dress is, with its mixture of silver and pearl, of a strange dull red, a wicked poppy-juice colour, against which the flesh of the long,

narrow hands with fringe like fingers; of the long slender neck, and the face with bared forehead, looks white and hard, like alabaster. The face is the same as in the other portraits: the same rounded forehead, with the short fleece like, yellowish red curls; the same beautifully curved eyebrows, just barely marked; the same eyelids, a little tight across the eyes; the same lips, a little tight across the mouth; but with a purity of line, a dazzling splendour of skin, and intensity of look immeasurably superior to all the other portraits.

She looks out of the frame with a cold, level glance; yet the lips smile. One hand holds a dull-red rose; the other, long, narrow, tapering, plays with a thick rope of silk and gold and jewels hanging from the waist; round the throat, white as, marble, partially confined in the tight dull-red bodice, hangs a gold collar, with the device on alternate enamelled medallions, "Amour Dure. Dure Amour."

On reflection, I see that I simply could never have been in that room or closet before; I must have mistaken the door. But, although the explanation is so simple, I still, after several hours, feel terribly shaken in all my being. If I grow so excitable I shall have to go to Rome at Christmas for a holiday. I feel as if some danger pursued me here (can it be fever?); and yet, I don't see how I shall ever tear myself away.

Dec. 10th I have made an effort, and accepted the Vice-Prefect's son's invitation to see the oil-making at a villa of theirs near the coast. The villa, or farm, is an old fortified, towered place, standing on a hillside among olive-trees and little osier-bushes, which look like a bright orange flame. The olives are squeezed in a tremendous black cellar, like a prison: you see, by the faint white daylight, and the smoky yellow flare of resin burning in pans, great white bullocks moving round a huge millstone; vague figures working at pulleys and handles: it looks, to my fancy, like some scene of the Inquisition. The *Cavaliere* regaled me with his best wine and rusks. I took some long walks by the seaside; I had left Urbania wrapped in snow-clouds; down on the coast there was a bright sun; the sunshine, the sea, the bustle of the little port on the Adriatic seemed to do me good. I came back to Urbania another man. *Sor* Asdrubale, my landlord, poking about in slippers among the gilded chests, the Empire sofas, the old cups and saucers and pictures which no one will buy, congratulated me upon the improvement in my looks. "You work too much," he says; "youth requires amusement, theatres, promenades, *amori*. It is time enough to be serious when one is bald" and he took off his greasy red cap. Yes, I am better! and, as a result, I take to

my work with delight again. I will cut them out still, those wiseacres at Berlin!

Dec. I4th I don't think I have ever felt so happy about my work. I see it all so well, that crafty, cowardly Duke Robert; that melancholy Duchess Maddalena; that weak, showy, would be chivalrous Duke Guidalfonso; and above all, the splendid figure of Medea. I feel as if I were the greatest historian of the age; and, at the same time, as if I were a boy of twelve. It snowed yesterday for the first time in the city, for two good hours; When it had done, I actually went into the square and taught the ragamuffins to make a snow man; no, a snowoman; and I had the fancy to call her Medea. "*La pessima Medea*!" – cried one of the boys —"the one who used to ride through the air on a goat?" "No no" – I said – "she was a beautiful lady, the Duchess of Urbania, the most beautiful woman that ever lived". I made her a crown of tinsel, and taught the boys to cry – "*Evviva, Medea*!" – But one of them said – "She is a witch! She must be burnt!" – At which they all rushed to fetch burning faggots' and tow; in a minute the yelling demons had melted her down.

Dec. 15th What a goose I am, and to think I am twenty-four, and known in literature! In my long walks I have composed to a tune (I don't know what it is) which all the people are singing and whistling in the street at present, a poem in frightful Italian, beginning "*Medea, mia dea*," calling on her in the name of her various lovers. I go about humming between my teeth, "Why am I not Marcantonio? or Prinzivalle? or he of Narni? or the good Duke Alfonso? that I might be beloved by thee, *Medea, mia dea*," &c. Awful rubbish! My landlord, I think, suspects that Medea must be some lady I met while I was staying by the seaside. I am sure *Sora* Serafina, *Sora* Lodovica, and *Sora* Adalgisa – the three Parcæ or *Norns*, as I call them – have some such notion. This afternoon, at dusk, while tidying my room, *Sora* Lodovica said to me, "How beautifully the *Signorino* has taken to singing!" I was scarcely aware that I had been vociferating, "*Vieni, Medea, mia dea*", while the old lady bobbed about making up my fire. I stopped; a nice reputation I shall get! I thought, and all this will somehow get to Rome, and thence to Berlin. *Sora* Lodovica was leaning out of the window, pulling in the iron hook of the shrine lamp which marks *Sor* Asdrubale's house. As she was trimming the lamp previous to swinging it out again, she said in her odd, prudish little way, "You are wrong to stop singing, my son" (she varies between calling me Signor *Professore* and such terms of affection as

Nino, *Viscere mie* & c.); "you are wrong to stop singing, for there is a young lady there in the street who has actually stopped to listen to you".

I ran to the window. A woman, wrapped in a black shawl, was standing in an archway, looking up to the window.

"Eh, eh! the *Signor Professore* has admirers," said *Sora* Lodovica.

"*Medea, mia dea!*" I burst out as loud as I could, with a boy's pleasure in disconcerting the inquisitive passer by. She turned suddenly round to go away, waving her hand at me; at that moment *Sora* Lodovica swung the shrine lamp back into its place. A stream of light fell across the street. I felt myself grow quite cold; the face of the woman outside was that of Medea da Carpi!

What a fool I am, to be sure!

Part II

Dec. 17th I fear that my craze about Medea da Carpi has become well known, thanks to my silly talk and idiotic songs. That Vice-Prefect's son, or the assistant at the Archives, or perhaps some of the company at the *Contessa*'s, is trying to play me a trick! But take care, my good ladies and gentlemen, I shall pay you out in your own coin! Imagine my feelings when, this morning, I found on my desk a folded letter addressed to me in a curious handwriting which seemed strangely familiar to me, and which, after a moment, I recognised as that of the letters of Medea da Carpi at the Archives. It gave me a horrible shock. My next idea was that it must be a present from some one who knew my interest in Medea, a genuine letter of hers on which some idiot had written my address instead of putting it into an envelope. But it was addressed to me, written to me, no old letter; merely four lines, which ran as follows: "To Spiridon. A person who knows the interest you bear her will be at the Church of San Giovanni Decollato this evening at nine. Look out, in the left aisle, for a lady wearing a black mantle, and holding a rose."

By this time I understood that I was the object of a conspiracy, the victim of a hoax. I turned the letter round and round. It was written on paper such as was made in the sixteenth century, and in an extraordinarily precise imitation of Medea da Carpi's characters. Who had written it? I thought over all the possible people. On the whole, it must be the Vice-Prefect's son, perhaps in combination with his lady-love, the Countess. They must have torn a blank page off some old letter; but that

either of them should have had the ingenuity of inventing such a hoax, or the power of committing such a forgery, astounds me beyond measure. There is more in these people than I should have guessed. How pay them off? By taking no notice of the letter? Dignified, but dull. No, I will go; perhaps some one will be there, and I will mystify them in their turn. Or, if no one is there, how I shall crow over them for their imperfectly carried out plot! Perhaps this is some folly of the Cavalier Muzio's to bring me into the presence of some lady whom he destines to be the flame of my future *amori*. That is likely enough. And it would be too idiotic and professorial to refuse such an invitation; the lady must be worth knowing who can forge sixteenth-century letters like this, for I am sure that languid swell Muzio never could. I will go! By Heaven! I'll pay them back in their own coin! It is now five. How long these days are!

Dec. 18th Am I mad? Or are there really ghosts? That adventure of last night has shaken me to the very depth of my soul.

I went at nine, as the mysterious letter had bid me. It was bitterly cold, and the air full of fog and sleet; not a shop open, not a window unshuttered, not a creature visible; the narrow black streets, precipitous between their high walls and under their lofty archways, were only the blacker for the dull light of an oil-lamp here and there, with its flickering yellow reflection on the wet flags. San Giovanni Decollato is a little church, or rather oratory, which I have always hitherto seen shut up (as so many churches here are shut up except on great festivals); and situate behind the ducal palace, on a sharp ascent, and forming the bifurcation of two steep paved lanes. I have passed by the place a hundred times, and scarcely noticed the little church, except for the marble high relief over the door, showing the grizzly head of the Baptist in the charger, and for the iron cage close by, in which were formerly exposed the heads of criminals; the decapitated, or, as they call him here, decollated, John the Baptist, being apparently the patron of axe and block.

A few strides took me from my lodgings to San Giovanni Decollato. I confess I was excited; one is not twenty-four and a Pole for nothing. On getting to the kind of little platform at the bifurcation of the two precipitous streets, I found, to my surprise, that the windows of the church or oratory were not lighted, and that the door was locked! So this was the precious joke that had been played upon me; to send me on a bitter cold, sleety night, to a church which was shut up and had perhaps been shut up for years! I don't know what I couldn't have done in that moment of rage; I felt inclined to break open the church door, or to go

and pull the Vice-Prefect's son out of bed (for I felt sure that the joke was his). I determined upon the latter course; and was walking towards his door, along the black alley to the left of the church, when I was suddenly stopped by the sound as of an organ close by; an organ, yes, quite plainly, and the voice of choristers and the drone of a litany. So the church was not shut, after all! I retraced my steps to the top of the lane. All was dark and in complete silence. Suddenly there came again a faint gust of organ and voices. I listened; it clearly came from the other lane, the one on the right hand side. Was there, perhaps, another door there? I passed beneath the archway, and descended a little way in the direction whence the sounds seemed to come. But no door, no light, only the black walls, the black wet flags, with their faint yellow reflections of flickering oil-lamps; moreover, complete silence. I stopped a minute, and then the chant rose again; this time it seemed to me most certainly from the lane I had just left. I went back, nothing. Thus backwards and forwards, the sounds always beckoning, as it were, one way, only to beckon me back, vainly, to the other.

At last I lost patience; and I felt a sort of creeping terror, which only a violent action could dispel. If the mysterious sounds came neither from the street to the right, nor from the street to the left, they could come only from the church. Half-maddened, I rushed up the two or three steps, and prepared to wrench the door open with a tremendous effort. To my amazement, it opened with the greatest ease. I entered, and the sounds of the litany met me louder than before, as I paused a moment between the outer door and the heavy leathern curtain. I raised the latter and crept in. The altar was brilliantly illuminated with tapers and garlands of chandeliers; this was evidently some evening service connected with Christmas. The nave and aisles were comparatively dark, and about half full. I elbowed my way along the right aisle towards the altar. When my eyes had got accustomed to the unexpected light, I began to look round me, and with a beating heart. The idea that all this was a hoax, that I should meet merely some acquaintance of my friend the *Cavaliere*'s, had somehow departed: I looked about. The people were all wrapped up, the men in, big cloaks, the women in woollen veils and mantles. The body of the church was comparatively dark, and I could not make out anything very clearly, but it seemed to me, somehow, as if, under the cloaks and veils, these people were dressed in a rather extraordinary fashion. The man in front of me, I remarked, showed yellow stockings beneath his cloak; a woman, hard by, a red bodice, laced behind with gold tags. Could these be peasants from some remote part

come for the Christmas festivities, or did the inhabitants of Urbania don some old-fashioned garb in honour of Christmas?

As I was wondering, my eye suddenly caught that of a woman standing in the opposite aisle, close to the altar, and in the full blaze of its lights. She was wrapped in black, but held, in a very conspicuous way, a red rose, an unknown luxury at this time of the year in a place like Urbania. She evidently saw me, and turning even more fully into the light, she loosened her heavy black cloak, displaying a dress of deep red, with gleams of silver and gold embroideries; she turned her face towards me; the full blaze of the chandeliers and tapers fell upon it. It was the face of Medea da Carpi! I dashed across the nave, pushing people roughly aside, or rather, it seemed to me, passing through impalpable bodies. But the lady turned and walked rapidly down the aisle towards the door. I followed close upon her, but somehow I could not get up with her. Once, at the curtain, she turned round again. She was within a few paces of me. Yes, it was Medea. Medea herself, no mistake, no delusion, no sham; the oval face, the lips tightened over the mouth, the eyelids tight over the corner of the eyes, the exquisite alabaster complexion! She raised the curtain and glided out. I followed; the curtain alone separated me from her. I saw the wooden door swing to behind her. One step ahead of me! I tore open the door; she must be on the steps, within reach of my arm!

I stood outside the church. All was empty, merely the wet pavement and the yellow reflections in the pools: a sudden cold seized me; I could not go on. I tried to re-enter the church; it was shut. I rushed home, my hair standing on end, and trembling in all my limbs, and remained for an hour like a maniac. Is it a delusion? Am I too going mad? Oh God, God! am I going mad?

Dec. 19th A brilliant, sunny day; all the black snow slush has disappeared cut of the town, off the bushes and trees. The snow-clad mountains sparkle against the bright blue sky. A Sunday, and Sunday weather; all the bells are ringing for the approach of Christmas. They are preparing for a kind of fair in the square with the colonnade, putting up booths filled with coloured cotton and woollen ware, bright shawls and kerchiefs, mirrors, ribbons, brilliant pewter lamps; the whole turn out of the pedlar in "Winter's Tale." The pork-shops are all garlanded with green and with paper flowers, the hams and cheeses stuck full of little flags and green twigs. I strolled out to see the cattle-fair outside the gate; a forest of interlacing horns, an ocean of lowing and stamping: hundreds of

immense white bullocks, with horns a yard long and red tassels, packed close together on the little piazza d'armi under the city walls. Bah! why do I write this trash? What's the use of it all? While I am forcing myself to write about bells, and Christmas festivities, and cattle-fairs, one idea goes on like a bell within me: Medea, Medea! Have I really seen her; or am I mad?

Two hours later. That Church of San Giovanni Decollato – so my landlord informs me – has not been made use of within the memory of man. Could it have been all a hallucination or a dream, perhaps a dream dreamed that night? I have been out again to look at that church. There it is, at the bifurcation of the two steep lanes, with its bas-relief of the Baptist's head over the door. The door does look as if it had not been opened for years. I can see the cobwebs in the windowpanes; it does look as if, as *Sor* Asdrubale says, only rats and spiders congregated within it. And yet! – and yet; I have so clear a remembrance, so distinct a consciousness of it all. There was a picture of the daughter of Herodias dancing, upon the altar; I remember her white turban with a scarlet tuft of feathers, and Herod's blue caftan; I remember the shape of the central chandelier; it swung round slowly, and one of the wax lights had got bent almost in two by the heat and draught.

Things, all these, which I may have seen elsewhere, stored unawares in my brain, and which may have come out, somehow, in a dream; I have heard physiologists allude to such things. I will go again: if the church be shut, why then it must have been a dream, a vision, the result of over excitement. I must leave at once for Rome and see doctors, for I am afraid of going mad. If, on the other hand. Pshaw! there *is no other hand* in such a case. Yet if there were – why then, I should really have seen Medea; I might see her again; speak to her. The mere thought sets my blood in a whirl, not with horror, but with… I know not what to call it. The feeling terrifies me, but it is delicious. Idiot! There is some little coil of my brain, the twentieth of a hair's-breadth out of order. That's all!

Dec. 20th I have been again; I have heard the music; I have been inside the church; I have seen Her! I can no longer doubt my senses. Why should I? Those pedants say that the dead are dead, the past is past. For them, yes; but why for me? Why for a man who loves, who is consumed with the love of a woman? A woman who, indeed, yes, let me finish the sentence. Why should there not be ghosts to such as can see them? Why should she not return to the earth, if she knows that it contains a man who thinks of, desires, only her?

A hallucination? Why, I saw her, as I see this paper that I write upon; standing there, in the full blaze of the altar. Why, I heard the rustle of her skirts, I smelt the scent of her hair, I raised the curtain which was shaking from her touch. Again I missed her. But this time, as I rushed out into the empty moonlit street, I found upon the church steps a rose – the rose which I had seen in her hand the moment before – I felt it, smelt it; a rose, a real, living rose, dark red and only just plucked. I put it into water when I returned, after having kissed it, who knows how many times? I placed it on the top of the cupboard; I determined not to look at it for twenty-four hours lest it should be a delusion. But I must see it again; I must… Good Heavens! this is horrible, horrible; if I had found a skeleton it could not have been worse! The rose, which last night seemed freshly plucked, full of colour and perfume, is brown, dry – a thing kept for centuries between the leaves of a book – it has crumbled into dust between my fingers. Horrible horrible! But why so, pray? Did I not know that I was in love with a woman dead three hundred years? If I wanted fresh roses which, bloomed yesterday, the Countess Fiammetta or any little sempstress in Urbania might have given them me. What if the rose has fallen to dust? If only I could hold Medea in my arms as I held it in my fingers, kiss her lips as I kissed its petals, should I not be satisfied if she too were to fall to dust the next moment, if I were to fall to dust myself?

Dec. 22nd Eleven at night. I have seen her once more! Almost spoken to her. I have been promised her love! Ah, Spiridion! you were right when you felt that you were not made for any earthly amori. At the usual hour I betook myself this evening to San Giovanni Decollato. A bright winter night; the high houses and belfries standing out against a deep blue heaven luminous, shimmering like steel with myriads of stars; the moon has not yet risen. There was no light in the windows; but after a little effort, the door opened and I entered the church, the altar, as usual, brilliantly illuminated. It struck me suddenly that all this crowd of men and women standing all round, these priests chanting and moving about the altar, were dead! That they did not exist for any man save me. I touched, as if by accident, the hand of my neighbour; it was cold, like wet clay. He turned round, but did not seem to see me: his face was ashy, and his eyes staring, fixed, like those of a blind man or a corpse. I felt as if I must rush out. But at that moment my eye fell upon Her, standing as usual by the altar steps, wrapped in a black mantle, in the full blaze of the lights. She turned round; the light fell straight upon her face, the face

with the delicate features, the eyelids and lips a little tight, the alabaster skin faintly tinged with pale pink. Our eyes met.

I pushed my way across the nave towards where she stood by the altar steps; she turned quickly down the aisle, and I after her. Once or twice she lingered, and I thought I should overtake her; but again, when, not a second after the door had closed upon her, I stepped out into the street, she had vanished. On the church step lay something white. It was not a flower this time, but a letter. I rushed back to the church to read it; but the church was fast shut, as if it had not been opened for years. I could not see by the flickering shrinelamps; I rushed home, lit my lamp, pulled the letter from my breast. I have it before me. The handwriting is hers; the same as in the Archives, the same as in that first letter: "To Spiridion. Let thy courage be equal to thy love, and thy love shall be rewarded. On the night preceding Christmas, take a hatchet and saw; cut boldly into the body of the bronze rider who stands in the *Corte*, on the left side, near the waist. Saw open the body, and within it thou wilt find the silver effigy of a winged genius. Take it out, hack it into a hundred pieces, and fling them in all directions, so that the winds may sweep them away. That night she whom thou lovest will come to re-ward thy fidelity."

On the brownish wax is the device:

AMOUR DURE. DURE AMOUR

Dec. 23rd So it is true! I was reserved for something wonderful in this world. I have at last found that after which my soul has been straining. Ambition, love of art, love of Italy, these things which have occupied my spirit, and have yet left me continually unsatisfied, these were none of them my real destiny. I have sought for life, thirsting for it as a man in the desert thirsts for a well; but the life of the senses of other youths, the life of the intellect of other men, have never slaked that thirst. Shall life for me mean the love of a dead woman? We smile at what we choose to call the superstition of the past, forgetting that all our vaunted science of today may seem just such another superstition to the men of the future; but why should the present be right and the past wrong? The men who painted the pictures and built the palaces of three hundred years ago were certainly of as delicate fibre, of as keen reason, as ourselves, who merely print calico and build locomotives. What makes me think this, is that I have been calculating my nativity by help of an old book belonging to *Sor* Asdrubale and see, my horoscope tallies almost exactly with that of Medea da Carpi, as given by a chronicler. May this explain? No,

no; all is explained by the fact that the first time I read of this woman's career, the first time I saw her portrait, I loved her, though I hid my love to myself in the garb of historical interest. Historical interest indeed!

I have got the hatchet and the saw. I bought the saw of a poor joiner, in a village some miles off; he did not understand at first what I meant, and I think he thought me mad; perhaps I am. But if madness means the happiness of one's life, what of it? The hatchet I saw lying in a timber-yard, where they prepare the great trunks of the fir-trees which grow high on the Apennines of Sant'Elmo. There was no one in the yard, and I could not resist the temptation; I handled the thing, tried its edge, and stole it. This is the first time in my life that I have been a thief; why did I not go into a shop and buy a hatchet? I don't know; I seemed unable to resist the sight of the shining blade. What I am going to do is, I suppose, an act of vandalism; and certainly I have no right to spoil the property of this city of Urbania. But I wish no harm either to the statue or the city; if I could plaster up the bronze, I would do so willingly. But I must obey Her; I must avenge Her; I must get at that silver image which Robert of Montemurlo had made and consecrated in order that his cowardly soul might sleep in peace, and not encounter that of the being whom he dreaded most in the world. Aha! Duke Robert, you forced her to die unshriven, and you stuck the image of your soul into the image of your body, thinking thereby that, while she suffered the tortures of Hell, you would rest in peace, until your well-scoured little soul might fly straight up to Paradise; you were afraid of Her when both of you should be dead, and thought yourself very clever to have prepared for all emergencies! Not so, Serene Highness. You too shall taste what it is to wander after death, and to meet the dead whom one has injured.

What an interminable day! But I shall see her again tonight.

Eleven o'clock. No; the church was fast closed; the spell had ceased. Until tomorrow I shall not see her. But tomorrow! Ah, Medea! did any of thy lovers love thee as I do?

Twenty-four hours more till the moment of happiness, the moment for which I seem to have been waiting all my life. And after that, what next? Yes, I see it plainer every minute; after that, nothing more. All those who loved Medea da Carpi, who loved and who served her, died: Giovanfrancesco "Pico, her first husband, whom she left stabbed in the castle from which she fled; Stimigliano, who died of poison; the groom who gave him the poison, cut down by her orders; Oliverotto da Narni, Marcantonio Frangipani, and that poor boy of the Ordelaffi, who had never even looked upon her face, and whose only reward was that hand-

kerchief with which the hangman wiped the sweat off his face, when he was one mass of broken limbs and torn flesh": all had to die, and I shall die also.

The love of such a woman is enough, and is fatal *Amour Dure*, as her device says. I shall die also. But why not? Would it be possible to live in order to love another woman? Nay, would it be possible to drag on a life like this one after the happiness of tomorrow? Impossible; the others died, and I must die. I always felt that I should not live long; a gipsy in Poland told me once that I had in my hand the cut-line which signifies a violent death. I might have ended in a duel with some brother student, or in a railway accident. No, no; my death will not be of that sort! Death, and is not she also dead? What strange vistas does such a thought not open! Then the others – Pico, the Groom, Stimigliano, Oliverotto, Frangipani, *Prinzivalle degli Ordelaffi* – will they all be *there*? But she shall love me best; me by whom she has been loved after she has been three hundred years in the grave!

Dec. 24th I have made all my arrangements. Tonight at eleven I slip out; *Sor* Asdrubale and his sisters will be sound asleep. I have questioned them; their fear of rheumatism prevents their attending midnight mass. Luckily there are no churches between this and the Corte; whatever movement Christmas night may entail will be a good way off. The Vice-Prefect's rooms are on the other side of the palace; the rest of the square is taken up with staterooms, archives, and empty stables and coach houses of the palace. Besides, I shall be quick at my work.

I have tried my saw on a stout bronze vase I bought of *Sor* Asdrubale; and the bronze of the statue, hollow and worn away by rust (I have even noticed holes), cannot resist very much, especially after a blow with the sharp hatchet. I have put my papers in order, for the benefit of the Government which has sent me hither. I am sorry to have defrauded them of their *History of Urbania*. To pass the endless day and calm the fever of impatience, I have just taken a long walk. This is the coldest day we have had. The bright sun does not warm in the least, but seems only to increase the impression of cold, to make the snow on the mountains glitter, the blue air to sparkle like steel. The few people who are out are muffled to the nose, and carry earthenware braziers beneath their cloaks; long icicles hang from the fountain with the figure of Mercury upon it; one can imagine the wolves trooping down through the dry scrub and beleaguering this town. Somehow this cold makes me feel wonderfully calm; it seems to bring back to me my boyhood.

As I walked up the rough, steep, paved alleys, slippery with frost, and

with their vista of snow mountains against the sky, and passed by the church steps strewn with box and laurel, with the faint smell of incense coming out, there returned to me – I know not why – the recollection, almost the sensation, of those Christmas Eves long ago at Posen and Breslau, when I walked as a child along the wide streets, peeping into the windows where they were beginning to light the tapers of the Christmas-trees, and wondering whether I too, on returning home, should be let into a wonderful room all blazing with lights and gilded nuts and glass beads. They are hanging the last strings of those blue and red metallic beads, fastening on the last gilded and silvered walnuts on the trees out there at home in the North; they are lighting the blue and red tapers; the wax is beginning to run on to the beautiful spruce green branches; the children are waiting with beating hearts behind the door, to be told that the Christ-Child has been. And I, for what am I waiting? I don't know; all seems a dream; everything vague and unsubstantial about me, as if time had ceased, nothing could happen, my own desires and hopes were all dead, myself absorbed into I know not what passive dreamland. Do I long for tonight? Do I dread it? Will tonight ever come? Do I feel anything, does anything exist all round me? I sit and seem to see that street at Posen, the wide street with the windows illuminated by the Christmas lights, the green fir branches grazing the window-panes.

Christmas Eve, Midnight. I have done it. I slipped out noiselessly. *Sor* Asdrubale and his sisters were fast asleep. I feared I had waked them, for my hatchet fell as I was passing through the principal room where my landlord keeps his curiosities for sale; it struck against some old armour which he has been piecing. I heard him exclaim, half in his sleep; and blew out my light and hid in the stairs. He came out in his dressing-gown, but finding no one, went back to bed again. "Some cat, no doubt!" he said. I closed the house door softly behind me. The sky had become stormy since the afternoon, luminous with the full moon, but strewn with grey and bun-coloured vapours; every now and then the moon disappeared entirely. Not a creature abroad; the tall gaunt houses staring in the moonlight.

I know not why, I took a roundabout way to the Corte, past one or two church doors, whence issued the faint flicker of midnight mass. For a moment I felt a temptation to enter one of them; but something seemed to restrain me. I caught snatches of the Christmas hymn. I felt myself beginning to be unnerved, and hastened towards the Corte. As I passed under the portico at San Francesco I heard steps behind me; it

seemed to me that I was followed. I stopped to let the other pass. As he approached his pace flagged; he passed close by me and murmured, "Do not go: I am Giovanfrancesco Pico." I turned round; he was gone. A coldness numbed me; but I hastened on.

Behind the cathedral apse, in a narrow lane, I saw a man leaning against a wall. The moonlight was full upon him; it seemed to me that his face, with a thin pointed beard, was streaming with blood. I quickened my pace; but as I grazed by him he whispered, " Do not obey her; return home: I am Marcantonio Frangipani." My teeth chattered, but I hurried along the narrow lane, with the moonlight blue upon the white walls.

At last I saw the Corte before me: the square was flooded with moonlight, the windows of the palace seemed brightly illuminated, and the statue of Duke Robert, shimmering green, seemed advancing towards me on its horse. I came into the shadow. I had to pass beneath an archway. There started a figure as if out of the wall, and barred my passage with his outstretched cloaked arm. I tried to pass. He seized me by the arm, and his grasp was like a weight of ice. "You shall not pass!" he cried, and, as the moon came out once more, I saw his face, "ghastly white and bound with an embroidered kerchief; he seemed almost a child. "You shall not pass!" he cried; "you shall not have her! She is mine, and mine alone! I am Prinzivalle degli Ordelaffi." I felt his ice-cold clutch, but with my other arm I laid about me wildly with the hatchet which I carried beneath my cloak. The hatchet struck the wall and rang upon the stone. He had vanished.

I hurried on. I did it. I cut open the bronze; I sawed it into a wider gash. I tore out the silver image, and hacked it into innumerable pieces. As I scattered the last fragments about, the moon was suddenly veiled; a great wind arose, howling down the square; it seemed to me that the earth shook. I threw down the hatchet and the saw, and fled home. I felt pursued, as if by the tramp of hundreds of invisible horsemen.

Now I am calm. It is midnight; another moment and she will be here! Patience, my heart! I hear it beating loud. I trust that no one will accuse poor Sor Asdrubale. I will write a letter to the authorities to declare his innocence should anything happen…One! the clock in the palace tower has just struck… "I hereby certify that, should anything happen this night to me, Spiridion Trepka, no one but myself is to be held ..." A step on the staircase! It is she! it is she! At last, Medea, Medea! Ah!

AMOUR DURE. DURE AMOUR!

Note

Here ends the diary of the late Spiridion Trepka. The chief newspapers of the province of Umbria informed the public that, on Christmas morning of the year 1885, the bronze equestrian statue of Robert II had been found grievously mutilated; and that Professor Spiridion Trepka of Posen, in the German Empire, had been discovered dead of a stab in the region of the heart, given by an unknown hand.

Some biographic infos about Editors and Translators

Claudia Capancioni graduated from the University of Urbino, Italy, and was awarded an MA in Women and Literature in English from the University of Hull (Uk). She is currently completing a doctoral thesis at the University of Hull, which focuses on three women writers in the Galletti-Salvadori family: Margaret Collier, Giacinta Salvadori and Joyce Lussu.
Her research interests also include contemporary Afro-American women writers and women's travel writing in English, especially in relation to Italy. Her essays on Joyce Lussu's poetic translations and on British women travel writers in Italy in the 1930s are due to be published shortly by Peter Long, publishing house.

Giorgio Mangani, historian of geographic and cartographic thought, has taught Cultural Geography in some Italian Universities. He is Editorial Manager of the Il Lavoro Editoriale publishing house, devoted to the history, literature and art of the Marche region.
He has published books and essays about the history and anthropologic identity of Marche region. He has also edited the latest edition of Joyce Lussu's *Le inglesi in Italia* (1999).

Danilo Mori was born in 1972 in Montefortino, in the province of Ascoli Piceno (southern Le Marche). He has always been passionate about English literature and culture. He has a degree from the foreign language and literature faculty of the University of L'Aquila, his thesis entitled *British female perspectives on the Marche Region of Italy in the 19th Century: the travel diary of Mrs Gretton*.

Joyce Salvadori Lussu (1912-1998) and her husband Emilio Lussu, both writers, took part in the Italian *Resistenza*. She published the history of their adventures during the Second World War in *Fronti e frontiere* (1944).
She is also author of many novels about feminism, politic engagement. Joyce Lussu translated many well known poets, such as the Turkish Nazim Hikmet, and published many essays about history and anthropology of Marche region, where her parents lived (she was Margaret Collier's granddaughter).

Vittoria Zompanti graduated in English from Milan University. Her research interests include economics and sociology, but she is also greatly interested in translating and translation problems, topics on which she has published several books and essays.
In 1990 she was awarded the prestigious prize "San Girolamo" of Italian Association of Translators and Interpreters for the first Italian translation of the *Lectures on Jurisprudence-Report of 1762-1764* by Adam Smith as best Italian translation of the year. She is currently teaching English at the Faculty of Economics of Ancona University.

Content

The English in the Marche 5
Foreword
by Giorgio Mangani

The Englishwoman in Italy 17
by G. Gretton
Note by D. Mori 19

Our Home by the Adriatic 43
by M. Collier
Note by J. Lussu 45

English Ladies in Italy 77
The Story of an Anglo-French-Italian Family from the Marche
by J. Lussu
Note by C. Capancioni 79

Amour Dure 99
Passages from the diary of Spiridion Trepka
by V. Lee
Note by G. Mangani 101

Some biographic infos about Editors and Translators 135

First published in 2005
by *il lavoro editoriale*

Printed in Italy by
Arti Grafiche Stibu Urbania

From the end of the nineteenth century to the 1970s, four women writers of English origin described their individual encounters with an Italian region that is little known to the wider public: the Marche. This land presented a sweet, fertile undulating landscape, with many fortified villages in which the inhabitants seemed to be stuck in time. This was, at least, the opinion of an English traveller of that time, such as G. Gretton. In 1860, G. Gretton described the backwardness of the ruling classes and the bad government of the Papal States. After her marriage to a handsome Garibaldian officer, the aristocrat M. Collier, moved to the Marche and provided an account of the excessive promiscuity in the relationships between the gentry and the farmers, who, in truth, did not differ greatly. J. Lussu, who was Margaret Collier's granddaughter, narrated the story of her English ancestors and their adventurous and romantic pilgrimage to the Marche. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, they moved there in search of freedom, the same ideal that always inspired Lussu's life as a committed writer and an active politician. V. Lee set a gothic story in Urbania in the Montefeltro at the end of the nineteenth century. She transformed the sweet landscape of the Marche into a misty, damp moor, which provides the background for an impossible and fatal love story between a Polish visitor, the historian Spiridion Trepka, and a mysterious portrait of a wonderful lady, Medea of Carpi, who died four hundred years beforehand.

Isbn 88 7663 388 X