Select Literature.

BIANCA,

OR SFORZA'S TOWER.

Francesco Sforza entered the saloon where the Duke sat waiting his arrival, with a stately and firm step. The Duke of Milan was no sovereign of his; he considered himself since the decision of the Pope, an independent prince, he therefore, neither bent his knee, nor offered any other token of respect to Filippo Maria, than to his equal in rank. With the Count de Ricci, who entered the saloon with Sforza, the case was different. He acknowledged the Duke as his Sovereign Prince, and treated him as such, no one of the Duke's household was present, except the Marchese Rinaldo.

'My Lord Duke,' says Francesco Sforza, in a firm, clear voice, 'I have requested an audience of your Highness as an envoy of Venice, in the first place, and for personal reasons, in the second.'

'Well, then, my Lord Duke,' rejoined Sforza, 'I will state them. The last time I visited the dominions of your Highness, my life was attempted by assassins. I was visiting an old comrade, and forced to seek safety on an island in Lago Maggiore, where I was pursued; and, my weapon breaking, I was run through the body and left for dead upon the beach. And, certainly, but for the generous assistance of the Count de Ricci's daughter, who prevented the assassins from making quite sure of their work, I should have been slain. As it was, to her care of my wound, I owe my life.'

'As an envoy of Venice, my Lord,' said the Duke, interupting him, we will give you an audience in due form to,morrew; for I know not you visited my Court in such a capacity. But whatever personal reasons you may have for requesting this interview, I will not willingly here them.

'Well, my lord,' hastily interrupted the Duke, his features betraying considerable agitation, while Francesco Sforza spoke, 'well, what have I to do with that affair? Do you know who the assassins were? If so, point them out, and they shall meet the doom they merit.'

'No, my Lord Duke,' returned Sforza calmly, and fixing his geze upon the ruler of Milan, 'I do not know who the assassins were. Of them, or their attempt, I care little. Nay, I owe them much; and readily forgive them the sufferings they caused me for the blessing their villany bestowed upon me. To the Count de Ricci's daughter I owe my life. I have derived mine to her, and, with her father's full consent.'

'A strange, mocking smile passed over the features of the Duke, as, raising his head, he said—

'Stop, my lord; one word to the Count de Ricci before you utter another syllable.' Sforza's cheek flushed, and he turned and looked anxiously into the stern, unmoved features of the old Count. 'Count De Ricci,' pursued the Duke, fixing his dark eyes, with a bitter expression in their glance, on his subject, 'you have deceived me. You have deprived me for years of a daughter's love, you stated she died; whereas your own and only child, also named Bianca, perished—not Bianca Visconti. What say you to this accusation Count de Ricci?'

'I say, your Highness,' returned the old Count, that you would not make this assertion without a good foundation. As you carried off old Dame Gertrude, I suppose you gained the knowledge from her.'

'The torture wrung it from her, my lord,' returned the Duke fiercely. 'There was no mistaking the striking likeness the girl bore to her mother. Suspicion being once roused, I sought for confirmation of my thoughts. And now, Count, what punishment think you a man deserves who dared to act as you have done? What motive had you in thus robbing the father of his child?'

'The old warrior remained quite unmoved; he showed no symptoms of fear at the Duke's fierce looks or words, but replied with perfect calmness, while Sforza stood, with folded arms, gazing with intense anxiety from one to the other, and waiting the result of a most unexpected discovery.

'My Lord Duke,' said the Count, 'I never intended to rob you of your child, for I acknowledge her to be your daughter. You may remember when the pestilence raged in Lombardy, and your Grace's child and mine were seized with it, you sent your physician to administer to their tearful distemper. He was a timid man, and when he beheld half my household dead from the plague, and the two poor little children senseless and cold as the dead, he said—There is nothing more to be done here. And he left in haste, carrying the plague with him, of which he perished. Alas! my child died that night. But my Countess, who loved the children as her life, insisted there were signs of life in Bianca Visconti, and devoted herself day and night to her recovery. The physician informed your Highness that your child was dead. My wife restored her to life, and sacrificed her own in doing so. I resolved then to keep the girl as my own, and leave her all my possessions. As she grew in years, I loved her as my own; and I considered her destiny might be much happier, as the acknowledged daughter of the Count de Ricci, than even as Bianca Visconti. But your Highness having no children, and Bianca bestowing her truth upon the Count Francesco Sforza, whose life she saved—and he plighting his in return—altered my mind on the subject. I informed Sforza whose child Bianca was, and he at once resolved to come here, without waiting for his credentials as a Venetian envoy, and lay his proposal before your Highness, trusting when you heard them, that you would accept him for a son-in-law.'

'What!' exclaimed the Duke, with a low augh of scorn; 'bestow the daughter of a Visconti upon the son of a peasant, even though he be Lord of Ancona, and Count and Suzerain of some important fiefs in the kingdom of Naples.'

'Take care, my Lord Duke,' interrupted Sforza, with a fierce look at the ruler of Milan, 'that the peasant's son—'

'Nay, nay, Francesco Sforza,' hastily interrupted the old Count de Ricci, laying his hand upon the extended and powerful arm of the Condotteri leader. 'nay, nay, keep your temper—my Lord Duke will hear what you have to propose before he destroys his daughter's happiness, and turns a willing follower into a bitter enemy.'

While the old Count spoke, Rinaldo, Marchese de Braccioni, whispered some few words in the ear of the Duke. For a moment giving way to his gloomy and passionate temper, was on the point of crushing his own political designs. Mastering his temper, he turned to Sforza, saying:

'You expect to receive the hand of Bianca Visconti. What do you propose to do to gain so great a prize.'

'Relieve you, my Lord Duke,' said Sforza, boldly, 'from the persecution you are now enduring from your own generals. Abandon the siege of Marignano, and I will engage to conclude a peace with all the opposing states, advantageous to your highness, and thus conclude the war. Moreover, from this time forth I will enter your Grace's service with all the forces I command.'

'If,' said the Duke eagerly, 'you undertake to conclude a peace advantageous to my dukedom, and do that at once, I, on my part, will agree to give you my daughter Bianca, and for her dowry, Cremona and its territory.* As to you, Count de Ricci, I pardon you, leaving you your territories; stipulating, however, that you bequeath them, as you have no successor, to her you so long considered your daughter.'

Francesco Sforza stepped forward, and, bending his knee, with delight beaming on his handsome features, kissed the Duke's hand, doing him homage as his lord and sovereign.

Thus Francesco Sforza gained the first step to the throne he was so shortly destined to mount. So successfully did he manage his negociations, that a treaty of peace was eagerly signed by a all the belligerents, who were heartily sick of the war. On the restoration of tranquility, he received the hand of the happy Bianca Visconti, who, not only brought him youth, beauty, amiability, but the rich dowry of Cremona and its territories.

The future history of this most successful Condotteri leader is too well known for me to touch upon. Suffice it to say, that on the death of Filippo Maria, he forced the Milanese to open their gates to him, and finally to select him as their duke and ruler. Thus the son of a peasant of Castignola won a crown for his descendants.

At the death of the old Count de Ricci, who continued to reside at his castle near Bavino, his possessions passed into the hands of Duke Sforza; who, to commemorate his happy meeting with his beloved Bianca, built a splendid palace on the Island of Fishera, where he often retired to spend a few weeks in the summer months. The old tower was dear to them both, for there their loves commenced. A painting, commemorating the event, representing Sforza's attempted assassination, and Bianca hastening to his rescue, was painted by the great Leonardo da Vinci. This picture, the Count de Ricci informed us, was preserved by his ancestors till, in a sudden popular commotion, the palace built by Duke Sforza was burned to the ground. The tower we first sheltered in on the Island still stands, though much dilapidated, and is, as I mentioned, know as Sforza's Tower.

THE END.

GENERAL GRANT.

The following pen and ink portrait of the most successful Commander-in-Chief of the Federal armies appeared under the signature of "A Yankee," in the *Spectator* of May 6th:—

"General Grant under whose direction the war has been brought to a close—for closed it is to all intents and purposes—is, as all my readers probably know, a thoroughly educated soldier, a graduate of West Point. But just before the outbreak of the rebellion he was living in St. Louis in a very simple western fashion, doing a small business as a land agent. Very few of our educated soldiers, except those from the Slave States, used to retain their commissions after they had served their time upon the frontier against the Indians. "Soldiering" was looked upon among us as but a kind of decorated idleness, and our young officers generally became engineers and some of them even clergymen. Ulysses Grant, the land agent five years ago, amid his homely belongings and surroundings, was one of the last men that would have been picked out as a person likely to take a prominent part in deciding the fate of a great nation. Mr. Lincoln and he had that point of resemblance. General Grant is, I have told you is a small man; but unlike Sherman, he is very strongly built, and has a sturdy look. His head is set well down towards his shoulders, and this, added to the expression of his features, gives him a look of firmness, in fact of obstinacy. His photographs are generally good likenesses in all respects. He is exceeding careless in his dress, and simple in his habits. His manner does not lack dignity, but is almost entirely without polish. A man of strong, deep feeling, he rarely betrays emotion, and is not only reticent, but taciturn. His tenacity of purpose, all the world knows by this time, but not so well the calm serenity of his mind in the midst of turbulence and under the weight of great responsibility. A man who lived with him almost in the same tent for many months during this war, is my authority for saying that during all that time, and it was one full of incident, he became excited but on one occasion. It was immediately after the battle of Chattanooga. One of his principal subordinates was in pursuit of the flying enemy, who turned upon him in a pass between two of those hills which make pursuit here such perilous business, and in one hour this General, who pushed straight on in the heat of the chase, lost 500 men.

When the report was brought to Grant he said nothing, but his face flushed, the veins swelled in his forehead, and he gnawed his firmly set lips until my friend thought the blood would come. A few moments and he began to walk swiftly and in silence, at intervals swallowing the choke in his throat. After he had walked himself somewhat calm, he broke out, "the man ought to be broke! such perilous rashness! Such wicked waste of life." (This was "butcher Grant," you know.) "He ought to be broke instantly!" "But," his companion suggested, "you have not heard——'s report. That may put another face on the matter.—Would it not be better to wait?" "Right, I'll wait." The report was kept back for a week, and when it came, Grant, after reading it, handed it to my friend, saying, "you see this does not change the matter. I ought strictly to send this to the Department with a request that he should be relieved. There is no excuse for such rashness in a commander. But—how can I?—how can I? He is so good a soldier in the field, so true a man, his men love him, and will follow him anywhere. He was rash; but I can't supply his place." And the report went into Grant's pocket. Now this general was even more rash in talk than in battle, and was the only one in the army who criticised Grant so severely and so openly that it reached his ears. But he only listened with his slight meditative smile, and bore no malice. The same gentleman told me another story illustrative of Grant's reticence. It was in Virginia. The army had moved suddenly, and Grant occupied a planter's house as his head-quarters. He came upon the household almost without warning. The master was away.—He apologized curtly but very kindly to the lady for the inconvenience to which he must put her. She was a firm, handsome woman. She came into Grant with a child at her breast, and rather astonished him and his staff by the perfect indifference, a lack of all concealment with which she performed this tender office, which a planter's wife usually commits to a negress. She begged the general that she might be allowed to pass his lines to her husband or her friends. He regretted it much, but it was impossible.—She was importunate, she spoke of her child, of her inability to bear hard usage or excitement. In vain. She implored. He was inflexible. She endeavored to enlist his staff officers in her behalf. They shook their heads. then she flamed into anger, and turning to leave the room said, "you make war on women. May each one of you live to see a negro's arm around his sister's waist." She was passing out with a haughty step, when one of the officers replied, "no fear of that madam. Our sisters have not the tastes of Southern gentlemen."

Now Grant felt sorry for his unwilling hostess, and he could have comforted her by a single word, but that word he would not speak. He knew that he should leave his headquarters the next day, and leave her in undisputed communication with her friends. But it was essential that no one elsewhere should know this, and he kept his own counsel. I told you that in capacity Gen. Grant was Sherman and something more. Grant said of Sherman, 'He is the best field officer in this country,' adding, as he might, when the person to whom he spoke looked up significantly, "I don't except myself." Grant's superiority to Sherman is not in military knowledge or skill, or possibly even in resource. It is a moral superiority. His nature has that grandeur and that power that is given by repose, and the capacity of serene contemplation. His imperturbable manner is no affectation or result of self-discipline. It is the reflex of an imperturbable soul. Sherman fidgets continually. Violently smokes half a dozen cigars, and breaks in upon those with whom he talks. Grant will sit by the half-hour without moving, smoking deliberately, and listening silently as he watches the smoke wreaths curl up into the air. He has a large and firm grasp of mind, and when he has once mastered a subject and decided upon a course of action, obstacles or even severe reverses, unless they reveal new conditions, do not disturb his judgment. He reads men well, knows how to put them to their best uses, and how to command and control them. He does not expect perfection, and will forgive almost anything but insubordination. He has the faculty of reconciling element by common sense, good nature, and a gentle exercise of authority, where they cannot be reconciled he has the decision to get rid of them instantly. He has the faculty of seeing but disregarding the minor and non-essential, and of basing his conclusions upon the greater truths and guiding his action by the greater laws. He knows when to take a great responsibility, and with all his calm and seeming indifferences of manner decides instantly and executes as he decides.

General Grant is not only quiet in manner, but very modest. A sword was to be presented to him, for the privilage of which his admirers had paid at the great sanitary fair nearly $50,000. To the private note sent to him asking him when he would meet the New York people to receive the sword, he answered that it would give him great pleasure to meet them, but not for the purpose of receiving a sword. He begged that he might receive their noble compliment privately. This surprised no one. General McLellan did much the same thing saying that he had not yet earned the sword.) Gen. Grant is vain only upon one point—his horsemanship. He rides as if he and his horse were one, body and mind. An unruly horse fell upon him in New Orleans and hurt him severely. Had he been willing to yield his seat he would have escaped uninjured. But here his obstinacy and vanity worked together. General Grant won the first important victory of the war—Fort Donelson; that which opened the Mississippi—Vicksburg; that which was the turning point of the contest—Chattanooga; and that which virtually brought it to a close—Richmond. He alone has captured armies, and he has captured three—Buckner's at Donelson, Pemberton's at Vicksburg, and Lee's at Appomatox Court House. But my gorge rises now, at seeing newspapers fawn upon him that six months ago called him a baffled butcher."

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