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THE DOUBLE SACRIFICE, OR THE PONTIFICAL ZOUAVES.

A TALE OF CASTELFIDARDO.

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CHAPTER X.—TREACHERY.

It is by no choice of mine, respected reader, that I take up a pen which thrills with indignation between my fingers, to write one of the most disgraceful pages in the history of our day.

For we are now come to that moment of treacherous falsehood, cowardly cruelty, and insane folly, which will forever leave a bloody stain upon the white cross which once gleamed so brightly on the standard of Savoy.

The moment when a crowned head—the descendant of Christian heroes, in whose veins flows the blood of Amadeus, Humbert, Margaret, and Mary Christina, a prince un mindful of his ancestry— took arms, together with a band of howling robbers, against his mother the Church, and planted his murderous dagger in her breast. The moment when Europe stood in dumb helplessness to see right overmastered by might, courage over-matched by numbers, truth trampled down by impiety; when the horrible monster of revolution bathed its victorious banners in the noblest and holiest blood of earth. A shameful moment in the history of our day! We might forgive such crimes to the revolution; we stand amazed, yet we can comprehend it, she has been cradled in crime; evil is her nature, her very life is hatred against God and goddess; and, furious and unrelenting, she follows her aim of destruction by every means of baseness and perjury.

But that a king should make himself the monstrous accomplice, knowing—as he will know by experience—that the revolution will fling aside its useless tool when once its purpose shall be accomplished, is a blindness as incomprehensible as it is infuriated.

What indeed but the poor tool, the blind accomplice of the revolution, is the prince who, after his shameful victory over the Papal troops, gave himself out to the Italians as the deliverer of Italy, and shrank not from the blasphemy of attributing his victory to Divine Providence.—(Manifesto of Victor Emmanuel to the people of Northern Italy—Journ. hist. et. litt., T. 27, p. 344.)

There was a throne in Europe secured to a feeble old man by the most ancient and holiest prescription; he who filled it was the Vicar of God. No wonder, then, that as satan once arose against God, so satan's lieutenant has flung himself in his fury upon the ancient throne of Peter.

Already had the revolutionary bands stretched forth their robber claws to tear their prey in pieces, when a noble and chivalrous legion arose at the call of that old man, to circle his threatened throne with a ram art of steel.

Small was the number of those brave hearts, yet it was sufficient to keep the revolution at bay, and to render all its efforts vain.

The revolution, balked of its prey, gnashed its teeth with rage.

But it had fostered children who had this world's might in their hands. Will its children forsake it?

No.

It had been hoped that Garibaldi's band would have been strong enough afterwards, by the help of treachery, to snatch them from him. The Piedmontese would then have reaped the fruits of the crime without sharing in its disgrace.—But the lion of Juda flew to arms, and neither treachery nor selfishness lurked in the breasts of the Papal soldiers.

Alas! then, the mask must be, at least partly, laid aside.

The faithless Cavour sent his shameful 'ultimatum' to Rome, and at the same time sent his worthy accomplices, Fanti and Cialdini, at the head of two divisions, into the Pontifical States.

And now, before Rome could send an answer, the commander-in-chief of the Sardinian army made his disgraceful declaration of war.

I have called it disgraceful. For were not falsehood and treachery enough? Must the base hordes of Sardinia cast the poison of their slander upon the spotless fame of the Pontifical army, and the noble hearted heroes who were at their head?

And what did the crowned accomplice of the red shirt dare to say of the Pontifical Volunteers? He called them a rabble, from all lands, and of all languages.

What said the minister, Cavour, a servant worthy of his master? In his 'ultimatum' he carries his effrontery so far as to call them a

collection of people of all nations, of all languages, and of 'all religions,' without discipline, and insurrectionists, while he accuses the Pontifical commanders of imprudence.

But the two manifestoes of Fanti and Cialdini to their soldiers, surpass all imagination.

'In order,' says Bresciani, 'that honest men may know to what extent party spirit can degrade men not wholly devoid of good qualities we will give at length the two proclamations of war issued by these two 'carbonari.' Fanti thus excites his soldiers to arms: 'Foreign bands, collected from every part of Europe, on the soil of Umbria and the Marches, have planted there the false standard of a religion which they despise. Men without home or country, they provoke and insult the people in order to acquire a pretext for subduing them. Such oppression must cease; and to repress this presumption we have come to bring the aid of our arms to those unhappy sons of Italy who hope in vain to find justice and mercy in their rulers.— This mission, entrusted to us by King Victor Emmanuel, we will fulfill; and Europe shall know that Italy is no longer to be the prey and the trophy of the boldest, or the most fortunate adventurer.—M. FANTI.'

'But Cialdini, who, to his quality of 'carbonaro' adds that of a traitor to a prince who loved him as a father, exceeds his colleague in ferocity. 'Soldiers,' he says, 'I lead you against a horde of drunken foreigners who have been allured into our country by the thirst for gold and the desire of plunder. Fight inexorably against these vile murderers, that, destroyed by your hands, they may feel the wrath of a people which rises in defence of its nationality and independence. Soldiers! blood stained Perugia demands vengeance, and though late, she shall have it.—ENRICO CIALDINI.'

'The two men, who were for so many years mercenaries in the pay of foreign governments; who fought always for the wages of the revolutions; who even now are the paid servants of a government which has iniquitously despoiled their legitimate rulers—these two men had the effrontery to slander the noble Pontifical Volunteers with a ribaldry only befitting the vilest of men. They are like robbers, who, when assailing the house of a peaceful and honest man, break down the door and rush through the rooms, crying:—'Oh, traitor, assassin, thief! bring out your money, bring out your jewels, bring out your plate! Oh, robber, open the doors, or we will break your head!' Thus calling the innocent and honest defender of his own house by the name which belongs to themselves. The Pontifical Volunteers were sons defending their Father's possessions, and Fanti and Cialdini were bandits, who fell upon them to rob their father and to destroy them, because filial piety had drawn them from their country, from the bosoms of their families, from the side of their wives, from the embraces of their weeping little ones, to defend with their breasts the Church of God, the Mother of the faithful, and the throne and the august person of the Vicar of Christ on earth, the Head, the Master, and the Father of all Believers.

'Moreover, if it were not enough to call them by the names of drunkards, murderers and plunderers, they had the effrontery to accuse them of irreligion—of planting the false standard of a religion which they despise.' Oh yes! Let the world judge who bore the false standard of a religion which they despise—the Zouaves and the other Pontifical Volunteers who were the admiration of the people among whom they dwelt, who saw them frequent the Churches, prostrate themselves humbly before the altars, unbuckle their invincible swords, and approach with other pious citizens to receive the Body of Christ, the Bread of the strong, like the martyrs of old, to strengthen themselves to bear suffering and death in their confession of a Faith blasphemed and oppressed by its enemies; or, let the world say whether that false standard was not rather to be found in the hands of Fanti and Cialdini, who untold the banner of the White Cross, and under that sacred ensign assailed the standard of the Cross in Italy and Rome to profane churches, to rob sacred vessels, to imprison Bishops, to torture and mutilate Priests, as happened at Perugia, and happens even now in the Abruzzi and other parts of the kingdom of Naples....

'Fanti and Cialdini called the standard of Lepanto, raised by the Pontifical Zouaves, 'the false standard of a religion which they despise,' when around that standard and in the presence of the Holy House of Loreto, they beheld these heroes defend religion and its Head with their valiant swords, and by the sublime sacrifice of the last drop of their blood. They, on the contrary, under the sacred standard of the Cross, proclaim themselves heretics, descending into Umbria and the Marches 'to revive religion destroyed by the Priests, to restore morality injured by the vices of the Clergy, and to overthrow by the injustice and cruelty of the Papal government.'

A glorious religion indeed, a pure morality, an enviable government has unhappy Italy received from the hands of her deliverers!

But, dear reader, we will let the veil fall, for a moment at least, over all this treachery which makes us blush for our common humanity, and return to our good Zouaves, to see with what courage and with what piety they are preparing for the unequal conflict.

CHAPTER XI.—BEFORE THE STORM.

It is a lovely sight on a bright spring day to look upon a well-watered garden; the young leaves, the tender stalks, the delicate flowers with their glorious coloring, and to breathe in the fragrant scents which embalm the air.

The poppy, the balsam, the clove, the hyacinth, and a hundred other flowers checker the green turf with their various colors; the snow white lily rises next to the variegated tulip, and the simple daisy nestles under the shade of the proud peony.

They all shed their sweet odor around. The lowly violet, half hidden in the grass, as well as the noble rose blooming upon its stately stem, the scarce visible myosotis, as well as the hundred blossomed syringa.

The air is full of the incense which rises from these garlands of flowers.

But, see, there is a shuddering through the leaves. Why does nature seem to tremble?—Ah! yonder comes the storm. A vivid flash of lightning, then the thunder rolls around, shaking the atmosphere with shock after shock.

Poor flowers! you look fresher still against the dark clouds which come threatening over the horizon; but, alas! your end is at hand.—The wind rises, the rain pours in torrents over the hard earth.

Poor flowers! your petals lie strewn upon the ground, your stalks broken and colors defiled with mud. Yet from that scene of desolation there arises a fragrance richer and sweeter than when you glittered in all the pride of your beauty.

The flowers are an image of the martyred heroes of Castelfidardo, of that garden sheltered within the Church's walls, where the lowly peasant's child blooms side by side with the noble offspring of some princely house. Poor flowers! you were the ornament of our century, but a dark and destructive storm has broken over your head, and broken and crushed the spring-tide of your life. Yet the sweet odor of your virtues, the sweet odor of Christ, rises with fresh fragrance over your lonely resting place.

Fanti had sent his disgraceful 'ultimatum' to the commanders of the Papal forces.

The Zouaves, with the other divisions then at Terni, had broken up their camp and directed their march upon Foligno, Serravalle, Tolentino and Macerata; in order, if possible, to unite with the troops of De Lamoriciere, while the Piedmontese were hastening to besiege Ancona.

The Zouaves of De Pimodan left Macerata on the night of the 16th September, and encamped at a short distance from Loreto.

Meanwhile the enemy had already taken Pizaro with a force of 12,000 men against 1,200 Papal troops, which, under the command of the brave Colonel Zappi, had defended it for four and twenty hours; they had disgraced themselves by a shameful victory at Perugia, obtained by treachery and the force of unequal numbers, and crowned by the murder of an innocent priest. They had taken the castle of Spoleto after a desperate defence, led by the noble Irishman, Miles O'Reilly.

We cannot linger over all the circumstances (not one of which is without honor to the Pontifical troops and shame to their opponents,) for our object is not to give a history of this crusade of the nineteenth century, but only to give a few free sketches from the life of the Papal Zouaves, and especially of the Belgian Volunteers.

It was evening. The Zouaves, as we have said, were encamped a short distance from Loreto.

A striking scene was presented by the camp at that moment. A scene to rivet the attention of angels and of men.

Bedelierre, the commander of the Zouaves, had addressed them in the following words:

'My Zouaves, we have at last reached the eve of that day in which we are to testify before God, the Church, and the whole of Christian Europe, the fervor of our zeal, the courage of our hearts, the noble and unshrinking fortitude with which we will maintain the Foundation of the Faith against its impious assailants, who are now before us as ten to one. Many of us must shortly appear before the Throne of God. Let us endeavor to appear before Him with our souls washed pure and white, that the baptism of our blood may be the more acceptable in the presence of Eternal Purity. I have already purified my conscience at Foligno; let those who

now desire to do the same go to the Chaplain.'

In a corner between two thick hedges, beside a deep trench, sat the Rev. Heer Sacre, the chaplain of the Zouaves, and our fellow-countryman; and all these brave young men, having unbuckled their swords, knelt one by one at his feet, calm, recollected, humble, and full of reverence, and having received Holy Absolution, rose cheerfully again, and knelt at a little distance on the green turf to say their penance.

The author of 'Olderico' has given us a moving picture of this scene. I venture once again to borrow his colors.

'It was a sight worthy of God and His Angels. The sky, glittering with stars, covered them with its azure mantle; the waves of the Adriatic softly kissed the feet of the hills, and greeted with their gentle murmur the future martyrs of the Church; the wild laurels which clothed the hills of Loreto prepared their immortal crowns. Mary accepted the fervent prayers which rose around the house of Nazareth, where, in obedience to her 'Fiat Mihi,' the Son of God became Incarnate and presented them to her Only Begotten that he might induce his champions with strength.

'Thus must it have been with the camp of Godfrey de Bouillon the night before the assault upon Jerusalem, when the Crusaders prepared themselves for the glorious enterprise of the deliverance of Christ's Sepulchre by fasting and prayer, and by the Sacraments of Confession, and of the Body of the Lord.

'Godfrey, Bohemond, Tancred, Rinaldo, and the other Barons of the west, having laid aside their invincible swords, knelt before the Priests, and, beating their fearless breasts, contritely confessed their sins to those who bore Christ's commission to bind and to loose.

'There, also, beneath the walls of the Holy City, the blue sky was the temple of the Crusaders; the Confessor sat under the shadow of the palm tree, and the distant Jordan, by the soft murmur of the waters which had been sanctified by the baptism of Christ, invited to cleanse and pardon, and hymned the triumph of the martyrs who were to fight on the morrow for His Sepulchre.

'But then, O my God, Thou didst permit the Crusaders to deliver Thy Tomb from the thralldom of the infidel; and now Thou hast suffered the holy place, in which Thou didst take our human nature upon Thee, to fall into the robber hands of Thy enemies. Alas! is the room in which the Virgin of Zion heard the Ave of the Angel less sacred than Thy sepulchre? If there Thou didst lay down Thy Divine Body, crucified for our redemption, remember that here Thou didst assume that manhood which was the beginning of the salvation of the world. In order that this precious cell should not remain in the power of the dogs Thou didst command Thy Angels to remove it from Nazareth, and to bring it into a faithful land where it should be revered and venerated; and the Angels bore into the bosom of Thy Church, and placed it on this laurel-covered hill hard by the sea-shore, to be visited by pilgrims from the east and the west. Hither they came, age after age, to invoke Thy Mother's name and to kiss those walls on which is inscribed, in letters of gold, 'Hic Verbum caro factum est.' To these walls they came kneeling, trembling, kissing the sacred ground, with eyes full of tears, and hearts full of hope and love. And now, most merciful Lord, dost Thou suffer this most august temple to be wrested from the hands of Thy Vicar upon earth, to remain enslaved and neglected in the hands of robbers.

Ab, fe licito m'o Son li giusti tuoi riv lii altrove? O e preparazioni ohe nell'ibfio Del tuo consiglio fai per alcun bene In tutto dall'accorger non lo sciano. —DANTE, PURG. VI.

'We humbly adore Thy inscrutable will, but suffer us to pray, to implore, to conjure Thee, from the very bottom of our hearts, to restore to us these sacred walls, wherein Thou wast conceived in the most pure womb of Mary, wherein Thou didst pass Thy youth, whence Thou didst come forth to spread Thy Divine Word, and to die upon the Cross for us. (Olderico) XII. L'arrivo in Loreto.)

While the Priest of the Lord was giving the blessing of Heaven to his children, Joseph and Martin, who had already made their confession were conversing together at about forty paces distant on the border of the trench.

Victor had just received absolution, and was saying his penance at a little distance from his friends.

He seemed quite absorbed in prayer. He had turned towards Loreto, and his eye remained fixed on the dome of Mary's Temple, which, like a dark shadow in the evening sky, seemed pointing up to heaven; his hands were crossed upon his breast, and his lips murmured hopefully the name of his Heavenly Mother.

Was his a prayer for protection in the battle,

or was it the renewal of the brave young man's offer of his life? Or was he praying to the Mother of sinners for the conversion of his beloved and unbelieving father?

At last he rose from the ground, and came to join his two friends.

'It is all right,' cried he when he came near to them; 'we are all in good order now.'

'Yes, friends, continued he half in jest and half in earnest: 'the victims are ready, there is nothing wanting now but the sacrificer, and we shall not have long to wait for him.'

'The sacrificer?' cried Martin, 'do you mean our enemies? They will not find us so easy to deal with, and they shall find, at all events, that they have no defenceless flock of sheep to slaughter.'

The giant sprang to his feet and stood in a threatening posture with his arms outspread.—His countenance, ordinarily so mild, was fearful to look upon; a deep wrinkle marked his forehead, and his eyes shot fire.

'Assuredly,' replied Victor, 'we shall sell our lives dearly, for we are soldiers as well as victims. But the enemy, which has fallen upon us so treacherously, is far more than a match for us, the greater number of us, if not all, will tomorrow seal our engagement with our blood; and yet I have never been so much at peace; never—shall I say it?—so happy as at this moment.'

'It is the same with me,' answered Joseph. 'And indeed Victor, is not our lot, when viewed by the eye of Faith, happy; nay, enviable? We are sure to triumph whatever befalls us, either by victory or by death; if we die, we die under the blessing of the Vicar of Christ and we rise from the Holy House of Nazareth to the tabernacles of the Everlasting Zion.'

Joseph, interrupted Martin, what are you saying? It is so beautiful that I shall be grieved to my heart if I live the battle to-morrow.'

The two young men could not refrain from a smile at the simple, yet sublime words of their comrade.

'An' continued Victor, after a short pause, 'you said well, Joseph, that our lot may be accounted enviable. At least I would not exchange mine for anything in the world. Have I not kissed the hand of the dear Father of the Faithful? Has not his blessing fallen from the fullness of his heart upon my head? Has not my foot trodden the earth hallowed by the blood of the Apostles? Have I not knelt before their relics? And shall I not to-morrow have the unspeakable happiness of receiving my Jesus into my heart? There,' and he pointed towards Loreto, 'there in the same sacred walls wherein the Eternal Word once descended for our salvation into the Immaculate Maiden of Nazareth! I have but one more grace to desire and that perhaps I shall win by my death; for it I have joyfully offered my life, and my first and last prayer in Mary's dwelling shall be for that grace.'

The three friends were silent for some minutes for Victor's words had moved them deeply.

'Do you know,' said Joseph at last, 'what I was thinking of just now? My thoughts were far away in our Fatherland. I thought I saw our dear ones praying for us in the Troost-kapel.'

'It is not impossible that they were doing so, indeed. At all events, we may rest assured that their prayers will not be wanting to us.'

'Will they have received our letters from Foligno yet?' asked Martin.

'I think not,' answered Victor; 'there has not been time yet. But the newspapers will no doubt have informed them of the faithless invasion of the Piedmontese.'

'Poor friends!' said Joseph, 'how anxious they will be on our account.'

'God will strengthen them,' said Victor. 'As they pray for us, so will we pray for them that the Lord will infuse comfort into their hearts. Should we fall in the battle I hope that the sweet trust to meet once more in Heaven will soften their grief. But my father!' cried the youth, after a short pause. 'Oh, my father! I love him so dearly, and what anguish it is to my heart. How do I know whether I shall meet him again throughout eternity? Comrades, brothers you will pray to-morrow at Mary's feet for my poor father? and he wept bitter tears.

'Courage and confidence,' answered Joseph hopefully. 'You must not despair. Is not prayer omnipotent; and above all the prayer of a child for his father's salvation? Who knows, my friend, but grace is already victorious over unbelief in your father's heart. Has not your mother mentioned a wonderful change in his despondent? Victor, I think, and there is something in my inmost heart that tells me that your father will be converted.'

'Thanks, Joseph,' said Victor; 'your good words have comforted me. God grant it may be so. I will hope also; but sometimes the thought of my poor father pierces my heart like a dagger, and give me unutterable pain.'