Select Literature.

BIANCA,

OR SFORZA'S TOWER.

The Royal Palace of Milan, built by Azzo Visconti in the century preceding the events I have narrated, was a magnificent structure, of which little remains, if we except the Church of San Gottardo, which is included in the present Palazzo Imperiale as its chapel, and Azzo's tower, which still exists, a remarkably curious specimen of antiquity. Its construction is a mixture of Norman and Lombard, or the Cinquecento style, one truly national. On its summit is the structure of an angel in brass-gilt, of which a curious legend is told.

One of the earlier artillerymen, called a bombardier, being condemned to death, proposed to knock off the head of the statue the first shot, if life would be spared; he did so, and purchased his life. Whether this story is true or not—at the period of our tale the statue was without a head. At the time Filippo Maria ruled in Milan, this tower was used occasionally as a place of temporary confinement for petty offences by any of the officers of the court. Some of the chambers were large and lofty—and the upper ones enjoyed a most unrivalled view over the city, and the adjacent plains, to the not very distant range of Alps.

In one of these chambers, rather richly furnished was a youthful female captive, seated at the open window, and gazing out from its dizzy height upon the snow-clad summits of the Alps. It was now the latter end of August, and the weather was still hot and oppressive. The captive was Bianca de Ricci. As yet, her captivity was easily borne, as four days only had elapsed since her occupation of the chamber in Azzo's tower. Tears were in the beautiful eyes of the maiden, as she gazed over the wonderful extent of country before her. The garden of Italy was beneath—plains teeming with the luxuries of human life, and watered by magnificent rivers soon destined to be cut into numerous canals, so rapidly was the commerce of Milan increasing. Little thought the fair girl of the destiny before her; and though her meditations were fixed upon her absent lover, whom she scarcely expected ever to see again, little could she imagine that Francesco Sforza would hand down his name to posterity as the constructer of the first canal, called the Martesano, a canal that employed the genius of the great Leonardo da Vinci to complete. The hum of the busy population of Milan ascended to the ears of Bianca, as she sat lonely and unthought-of amid thousands. The breeze, as it swept past, cooled her feverish cheek; and, wearied and miserable, she gave way to the unhappiness that oppressed her.

One morning, after the departure of her lover to liberate her father, Bianca was walking in the shady garden, at the back of the tower of Fisher's, when Lucia came hurrying towards her, saying, in rather a flurried manner, that a long galley, full of armed men, was approaching the Island. From the stern floated a banner, which she at once recognized as the Ducal flag; she beheld several armed men, and one Signor richly attired, with a Spanish hat and rich plume.

Extremely surprised, and beginning to dread, she knew not what, she watched the Signor as he landed, and walked up towards the great gate of the tower. In a few moments, Lucia entered the room, and, in an agitated manner, announced that the Count Cusani requested an audience.

'Oh, Madonna!' added the poor girl, 'they are come to take you with them to Milan.'

Bianca grew pale, and her voice for a moment faltered, as she desired Lucia to show the Count Cusani to the saloon, whither, in a few minutes, having recovered her firmness, she proceeded. The Count Cusani was an elderly man, of prepossessing appearance. On the entrance of Bianca, he rose and advanced towards her, saluting her according to the costom of the times, and leading her to a seat.

'It grieves me, lady,' said the Count, 'to be the bearer of unpleasant tidings. I am ordered by his Highness, the Duke, to conduct you with due respect to Milan. You are to be lodged in the Ducal Palace.'

'An honor, my lord,' returned Bianca, 'I by no means covet. Might I request to know, if in your power to say, the reason of so unexpected a mandate?'

'One reason, fair lady,' answered the Count, mildly, 'is the Duke's wishes to hold the daughter of the Count de Ricci in his power, as her father has been released from captivity by the band of the famous Condottieri leader, Francesco Sforza. And—'

'Ah, Heaven be praised!' interrupted Bianca, her eyes sparkling, and her hands clasped, 'my dear old father is no longer a prisoner. The noble Sforza has kept his word.'

The Count de Cusani looked grave; but said, in a kindly tone—

'My dear young lady, our Duke is not exactly a person you can venture to trifle with. Whatever your sentiments may be, take an old courtier's advice; keep them to yourself when before his Highness. Will you now get ready as soon as possible? You may take a single female attendant with you, but no more. My orders are precise.'

Bianca, quite aware that obedience was absolutely necessary, replied—

'I thank you sincerely, my lord, for your advice, and will be sure to follow it. I will not detain you long. In the meantime, be pleased to accept whatever refreshment my poor abode can afford.'

The Count bowed; and Bianca, with a firm step, though beating heart left the room.

In less than an hour, the galley was under way for Cestio-Calendo, with Bianca, and her faithful Lucia, on board. The journey by land was performed in a close litter. Entering Milan, at night, Bianca was conveyed to Azzo's tower, and there confined to a suite of these chambers.

On the seventh day of her captivity, the door of her sitting chamber opened, and, without any previous announcement, a Signor, rather plainly attired, entered the room. Bianca at once surmised that her visitor was Filippo Maria, Duke of Milan. With a flushed cheek, and a beating heart, she rose from her chair, and stood for a moment scarcely knowing whether she ought to bend her knee to the sovereign prince, or let him imagine she knew not who he was. Before she had time to form a resolution, the Duke, with a strange expression on his gloomy, but handsome features, advanced close to Bianca, saying, in a rather agitated tone—

'Are you the Count de Ricci's daughter?'

'My Lord Duke,' replied Bianca, surprised at the manner and question of Filippo Maria, 'I am the Count de Ricci's daughter, and would gladly know what offence I have committed, to cause my being taken from my home and confined in this tower.'

'It's a strange likeness!' muttered the Duke in an abstracted manner. Throwing himself in a chair, he drew a gold-chain from his vest, to which was attached a miniature case, magnificently set with diamonds. Touching a spring, the case opened; and then the Duke gazed intently on the picture within.

'Strange freak of nature!' he muttered to himself. Then, looking up, he fixed his gaze upon the striking figure of Bianca de Ricci.

'Come hither, maiden?' said the Duke. 'Look on this portrait. Did you ever behold a countenance like that?' And he held out the miniature to the astonished Bianca. With a timid step, she approached the Duke, and let her eyes rest on the miniature. The moment she did so she started back with surprise, for at the first glance, she actually thought she beheld herself. 'Ha!' ejaculated the Duke, 'you see it. By the blessed saints! there is something more in this resemblance than a mere chance likeness! Say, how old are you, maiden?'

'Seventeen,' returned Bianca, more and more surprised, and venturing to look the gloomy prince in the face, as he replaced the picture in his vest.

'Seventeen? good!' muttered the Duke. And letting his eyes rest upon the floor, he seemed to fall into a reverie.

Filippo Maria was, at this period, about thirty-nine years of age. He was tall, large boned, and rather gaunt, with a high arched brow, and noble forehead. His dark penetrating eyes were almost hidden when his heavy brow was lowered in thought. He wore no moustache; and his beard, black as jet, was short and peaked. Gloomy and suspicious by nature, cruel and remorseless in disposition, he yet, now and then, performed a good and generous act. When he succeeded to the Ducal throne, his dominion only included Milan and Pavia; but by treachery and deceit, together with the courage and abilities of the famous Francesco Carmagnola, he utterly rooted out the petty tyrants of Lombardy, and seized upon their possessions. Biacenza, Lodi, Cremona, and Parma, all fell under his sway; and, at this period of his reign, his dominions were extensive, and his power great; but he had no children to inherit his sovereignty.

When Count of Pavia, and while his elder brother, the ferocious Giovanni Maria, was Lord of Milan, Filippo became devotedly attached to the daughter of a wealthy citizen of Pavia, who returned his affection, unfortunately without knowing his name or rank. Too proud and ambitious to marry the fair daughter of a jeweller, he persuaded her to leave her home, and, after disclosing his name and rank, placed her in a castle he possessed near Bausasco. He was passionately attached to the unfortunate girl, who died the second year of their union in giving birth to a daughter. Filippo Maria was distracted at his loss. At that time, the Count de Ricci was his bosom friend, and just married. He confided his daughter to the Count's care, who took her to his castle on the Lago Maggiore. The death of the tyrant of Milan, some years after, convulsed the whole of Lombardy; and Filippo, though entirely devoted to his ambitious projects, received the news of his daughter's death from the Count de Ricci, with a despondency, that for a time rendered him even more savage and remorseless than before. He now took a violent dislike to the Count; and, when Lord of Milan, by marrying the widow of his brother, and the sister of the Count de Ricci's wife, in so hurried and indecent a haste, he so disgusted the Count that he quitted the court altogether; and being a widower with an only daughter, fell into eccentric habits, living completely retired from the world.

After this digression, let us return to Azzo's tower, where we left the Duke and the Count's daughter. Filippo remained for some time in deep thought upon the past; while Bianca herself, struck by his questions, and some recollections of her own, remained in a painful state of suspense as to the result of her interview with the Duke. At length, Filippo Maria looked up, and the expression of his almost gloomy features (was) changed; he looked kindly, if not affectionately, at Bianca, saying, as he rose to his feet, and took her hand—

'Be of good heart, maiden. No harm will come to you here, but be not surprised if you lose one father to find another.' And without a word more the Duke left the chamber. Bianca remaining bewildered, if not startled, by the strange words of the ruler of Milan.

Filippo Maria had scarcely gained the ducal apartments, when one of his personal attendants, a nobleman of considerable influence and wealth, entered the saloon, saying—

'My Lord Duke, the very persons you were speaking of this morning, are actually at this moment in the palace, and request an audience of your Highness.'

'What!' exclaimed the Duke, with a fierce scowl, 'what! the traitor Sforza and the Count de Ricci. This audacity and insolence exceeds belief—I mean as respects this Condottieri leader's conduct, after daring to assault a state fortress, and release a prisoner I had particular reasons for retaining captive. Arrest them both, Marchese. We will teach this bold Condottieri a lesson he has not yet learnt.'

'Pardon me, your Highness,' returned the Marchese Rinaldo, 'if I venture to request you will restrain, for a time, your just resentment against Francesco Sforza. His troops amounting to about four thousand men, adore their leader. Before your levies could possibly prevent them, this desperate and determined body of men would, in revenge, ravage and lay waste the whole of Lombardy. Before entering the territory Francesco, as you know, made a rapid conquest of the March of Ancona and other territories. The Pope, I have heard, has confirmed him in his possession of the March, as a fief of the holy see; and it is even rumored that Sforza intends to establish himself as an independent prince. His gendarmerie are accounted a most brilliant body of men. Better, my Lord Duke, see him; listen to what he has to say; if possible, secure him on your side in the struggle that is now going fiercely against your Highness. His joining your standard would crush your enemies at once.'

Filippo Maria paused, thought a moment, and then said—

'I was hasty, you are right; and your advice, Rinaldo, is good. I will receive these strange visitors in the Chamber of Audience in less than half an hour. Let our conference be strictly private.'

All historians allow that Filippo Maria was gifted with consummate political sagacity. He clearly saw all the splendid opportunities which the convulsed state of Italy offered to his ambition; and all he seemed to want was the strong arm of a soldier of Fortune, like Sforza, on his side. He therefore determined to play a cautious but wily game with the young, but most brilliant leader of Condottieri then existing. As to the Count de Ricci, once his most attached friend and supporter, with him he had a different game to play. The old lord, he knew, had no ambition, but great wealth, and was possessed of some secrets, relating to his early career, that would be better buried in oblivion; and it is very probable, had not Sforza released him from captivity, he had ended his last days a prisoner at Pizzighitone.

To be concluded.

ALMANACK FOR MAY.

MOON'S PHASES.

First Quarter, 2d day, 11h. 52m., morning.
Full Moon, 10th day, 4h. 11m., afternoon.
Last Quarter, 18th day, 2h. 27m., morning.
New Moon, 24th day, 6h. 37m., afternoon.

DAY OF MONTH.	DAY OF WEEK.	SUN rises	SUN sets	High Water	Moon sets	Day's length.
		h m	h m	h m	h m	h m
1	Monday	4 51	7 4	3 8	0 5	14 13
2	Tuesday	49	5	3 54	0 44	16
3	Wednesday	47	6	4 39	1 16	19
4	Thursday	46	7	5 52	1 45	22
5	Friday	45	8	6 4	2 12	24
6	Saturday	44	9	6 46	2 38	25
7	Sunday	43	10	7 28	3 4	27
8	Monday	42	12	8 12	3 32	30
9	Tuesday	41	13	8 58	4 9	32
10	Wednesday	40	14	9 22	rises	34
11	Thursday	39	16	9 46	8 9	37
12	Friday	38	17	10 35	9 4	39
13	Saturday	36	18	11 27	9 55	42
14	Sunday	35	19	even.	10 42	44
15	Monday	34	20	1 12	11 23	46
16	Tuesday	33	21	2 4	11 58	49
17	Wednesday	31	23	2 56	morn.	52
18	Thursday	30	24	3 48	0 37	54
19	Friday	29	25	4 39	1 9	56
20	Saturday	28	26	5 31	1 43	58
21	Sunday	27	27	6 25	2 17	15 0
22	Monday	26	28	7 20	2 53	2
23	Tuesday	25	29	8 17	3 34	4
24	Wednesday	24	30	9 15	sets	7
25	Thursday	23	31	10 13	8 18	10
26	Friday	22	32	11 9	9 13	11
27	Saturday	21	33	morn	10	13
28	Sunday	20	35	0 58	10 40	15
29	Monday	19	36	1 47	11 15	17
30	Tuesday	18	39	2 33	11 46	18
31	Wednesday	17	37	3 18	morn	20

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Bank of P. E. Island.
(Corner of Queen and Water Streets.)

HON. THOMAS H. HAVILAND, President; WM. CUNDALL, Esquire, Cashier. Discount Days—Mondays and Thursdays. Business Hours—From 10 a.m., to 1 p.m., and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

AUGUSTUS HERMANS,
Locksmith, Gunsmith and Bell Hanger,
COPPER, SHEET IRON, ZINC & TIN PLATE
WORKER,
QUEEN STREET, - - - - - CHARLOTTETOWN.

☞ TIN and ZINC WATER SPOUTS, STOVE PIPES, and TIN WARE, constantly on hand.

Stoves fitted up and repaired.

*** All orders promptly attended to.
Oct. 17, 1862.