

The Charterhouse of Parma

Stendhal

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About Stendhal:

Marie-Henri Beyle (January 23, 1783 – March 23, 1842), better known by his penname Stendhal, was a 19th century French writer. Known for his acute analysis of his characters' psychology, he is considered one of the earliest and foremost practitioners of the realism in his two novels *Le Rouge et le Noir* (The Red and the Black, 1830) and *La Chartreuse de Parme* (The Charterhouse of Parma, 1839). Source: Wikipedia

TRANSLATOR'S DEDICATION

To MADAME C———— R————

In whom alone survives the spirit of the Sanseverina, to resist tyranny, to unmask intrigue, to encourage ambition, this story of her countrywoman is, in the language of her adopted country, dedicated by

C. K. S.-M. Pisa, December, 1924.

TO THE READER

It was in the winter of 1830 and three hundred leagues from Paris that this tale was written; thus it contains no allusion to the events of 1839.

Many years before 1830, at the time when our Armies were overrunning Europe, chance put me in possession of a billeting order on the house of a Canon: this was at Padua, a charming town in Italy; my stay being prolonged, we became friends.

Passing through Padua again towards the end of 1830, I hastened to the house of the good Canon: he himself was dead, that I knew, but I wished to see once again the room in which we had passed so many pleasant evenings, evenings on which I had often looked back since. I found there the Canon's nephew and his wife who welcomed me like an old friend. Several people came in, and we did not break up until a very late hour; the nephew sent out to the Caffè Pedrocchi for an excellent *zabaione*. What more than anything kept us up was the story of the Duchessa Sanseverina, to which someone made an allusion, and which the nephew was good enough to relate from beginning to end, in my honour.

"In the place to which I am going," I told my friends, "I am not likely to find evenings like this, and, to while away the long hours of darkness, I shall make a novel out of your story."

"In that case," said the nephew, "let me give you my uncle's journal, which, under the heading *Parma*, mentions several of the intrigues of that court, in the days when the Duchessa's word was law there; but, have a care! this story is anything but moral, and now that you pride yourselves in France on your gospel purity, it may win you the reputation of an *assassin*."

I publish this tale without any alteration from the manuscript of 1830, a course which may have two drawbacks:

The first for the reader: the characters being Italians will perhaps interest him less, hearts in that country differing considerably from hearts in France: the Italians are sincere, honest folk and, not taking offence, say what is in their minds; it is only when the mood seizes them that they shew any vanity; which then becomes passion, and goes by the name of *puntiglio*. Lastly, poverty is not, with them, a subject for ridicule.

The second drawback concerns the author.

I confess that I have been so bold as to leave my characters with their natural asperities; but, on the other hand—this I proclaim aloud—I heap the most moral censure upon many of their actions. To what purpose should I give them the exalted morality and other graces of French characters, who love money above all things, and sin scarcely ever from motives of hatred or love? The Italians in this tale are almost the opposite. Besides, it seems to me that, whenever one takes a stride of two hundred leagues from South to North, the change of scene that occurs is tantamount to a fresh tale. The Canon's charming niece had known and indeed had been greatly devoted to

the Duchessa Sanseverina, and begs me to alter nothing in her adventures, which are reprehensible.

23rd January, 1839.

Part 1

Chapter 1

On the 15th of May, 1796, General Bonaparte made his entry into Milan at the head of that young army which had shortly before crossed the Bridge of Lodi and taught the world that after all these centuries Caesar and Alexander had a successor. The miracles of gallantry and genius of which Italy was a witness in the space of a few months aroused a slumbering people; only a week before the arrival of the French, the Milanese still regarded them as a mere rabble of brigands, accustomed invariably to flee before the troops of His Imperial and Royal Majesty; so much at least was reported to them three times weekly by a little news-sheet no bigger than one's hand, and printed on soiled paper.

In the Middle Ages the Republicans of Lombardy had given proof of a valour equal to that of the French, and deserved to see their city rased to the ground by the German Emperors. Since they had become *loyal subjects*, their great occupation was the printing of sonnets upon handkerchiefs of rose-coloured taffeta whenever the marriage occurred of a young lady belonging to some rich or noble family. Two or three years after that great event in her life, the young lady in question used to engage a devoted admirer: sometimes the name of the *cicisbeo* chosen by the husband's family occupied an honourable place in the marriage contract. It was a far cry from these effeminate ways to the profound emotions aroused by the unexpected arrival of the French army. Presently there sprang up a new and passionate way of life. A whole people discovered, on the 15th of May, 1796, that everything which until then it had respected was supremely ridiculous, if not actually hateful. The departure of the last Austrian regiment marked the collapse of the old ideas: to risk one's life became the fashion. People saw that in order to be really happy after centuries of cloying sensations, it was necessary to love one's country with a real love and to seek out heroic actions. They had been plunged in the darkest night by the continuation of the jealous despotism of Charles V and Philip II; they overturned these monarchs' statues and immediately found themselves flooded with daylight. For the last half-century, as the *Encyclopaedia* and Voltaire gained ground in France, the monks had been dinning into the ears of the good people of Milan that to learn to read, or for that matter to learn anything at all was a great waste of labour, and that by paying one's exact tithe to one's parish priest and faithfully reporting to him all one's little misdeeds, one was practically certain of having a good place in Paradise. To complete the debilitation of this people once so formidable and so rational, Austria had sold them, on easy terms, the privilege of not having to furnish any recruits to her army.

In 1796, the Milanese army was composed of four and twenty rascallions dressed in scarlet, who guarded the town with the assistance of four magnificent regiments of Hungarian Grenadiers. Freedom of morals was extreme, but passion very rare; otherwise, apart from the inconvenience of having to repeat everything to one's parish priest, on pain of ruin even in this world, the good people of Milan were still subjected to certain little monarchical interferences which could not fail to be vexatious. For instance, the Archduke, who resided at Milan and governed in the name of the Emperor, his cousin, had had the lucrative idea of trading in corn. In consequence, an order

prohibiting the peasants from selling their grain until His Highness had filled his granaries.

In May, 1796, three days after the entry of the French, a young painter in miniature, slightly mad, named Gros, afterwards famous, who had come with the army, overhearing in the great Caffè dei Servi (which was then in fashion) an account of the exploits of the Archduke, who moreover was extremely stout, picked up the list of ices which was printed on a sheet of coarse yellow paper. On the back of this he drew the fat Archduke; a French soldier was stabbing him with his bayonet in the stomach, and instead of blood there gushed out an incredible quantity of corn. What we call a lampoon or caricature was unknown in this land of crafty 'despotism. The drawing, left by Gros on the table of the Caffè dei Servi, seemed a miracle fallen from heaven; it was engraved and printed during the night, and next day twenty thousand copies of it were sold.

The same day, there were posted up notices of a forced loan of six millions, levied to supply the needs of the French army which, having just won six battles and conquered a score of provinces, wanted nothing now but shoes, breeches, jackets and caps.

The mass of prosperity and pleasure which burst into Lombardy in the wake of these French ragamuffins was so great that only the priests and a few nobles were conscious of the burden of this levy of six millions, shortly to be followed by a number of others. These French soldiers laughed and sang all day long; they were all under twenty-five years of age, and their Commander in Chief, who had reached twenty-seven, was reckoned the oldest man in his army. This gaiety, this youthfulness, this irresponsibility furnished a jocular reply to the furious preachings of the monks, who, for six months, had been announcing from the pulpit that the French were monsters, obliged, upon pain of death, to burn down everything and to cut off everyone's head. With this object, each of their regiments marched with a guillotine at its head.

In the country districts one saw at the cottage doors the French soldier engaged in dandling the housewife's baby in his arms, and almost every evening some drummer, scraping a fiddle, would improvise a ball. Our country dances proving a great deal too skilful and complicated for the soldiers, who for that matter barely knew them themselves, to be able to teach them to the women of the country, it was the latter who shewed the young Frenchmen the *Monferrina*, *Salterello* and other Italian dances.

The officers had been lodged, as far as possible, with the wealthy inhabitants; they had every need of comfort. A certain lieutenant, for instance, named Robert, received a billeting order on the *palazzo* of the Marchesa del Dongo. This officer, a young conscript not over-burdened with scruples, possessed as his whole worldly wealth, when he entered this *palazzo*, a scudo of six francs which he had received at Piacenza. After the crossing of the Bridge of Lodi he had taken from a fine Austrian officer, killed by a ball, a magnificent pair of nankeen pantaloons, quite new, and never did any garment come more opportunely. His officer's epaulettes were of wool, and the cloth of his tunic was stitched to the lining of the sleeves so that its scraps might hold together; but there was something even more distressing; the soles of his shoes were made out of pieces of soldiers' caps, likewise picked up on the field of battle, somewhere beyond the Bridge of Lodi. These makeshift soles were tied on over his shoes with pieces of string which

were plainly visible, so that when the major-domo appeared at the door of Lieutenant Robert's room bringing him an invitation to dine with the Signora Marchesa, the officer was thrown into the utmost confusion. He and his orderly spent the two hours that divided him from this fatal dinner in trying to patch up the tunic a little and in dyeing black, with ink, those wretched strings round his shoes. At last the dread moment arrived. "Never in my life did I feel more ill at ease," Lieutenant Robert told me; "the ladies expected that I would terrify them, and I was trembling far more than they were. I looked down at my shoes and did not know how to walk gracefully. The Marchesa del Dongo," he went on, "was then in the full bloom of her beauty: you have seen her for yourself, with those lovely eyes of an angelic sweetness, and the dusky gold of her hair which made such a perfect frame for the oval of that charming face. I had in my room a *Herodias* by Leonardo da Vinci, which might have been her portrait. Mercifully, I was so overcome by her supernatural beauty that I forgot all about my clothes. For the last two years I had been seeing nothing that was not ugly and wretched, in the mountains behind Genoa: I ventured to say a few words to her to express my delight.

"But I had too much sense to waste any time upon compliments. As I was turning my phrases I saw, in a dining-room built entirely of marble, a dozen flunkeys and footmen dressed in what seemed to me then the height of magnificence. Just imagine, the rascals had not only good shoes on their feet, but silver buckles as well. I could see them all, out of the corner of my eye, staring stupidly at my coat and perhaps at my shoes also, which cut me to the heart. I could have frightened all these fellows with a word; but how was I to put them in their place without running the risk of offending the ladies? For the Marchesa, to fortify her own courage a little, as she has told me a hundred times since, had sent to fetch from the convent where she was still at school Gina del Dongo, her husband's sister, who was afterwards that charming Contessa Pietranera: no one, in prosperity, surpassed her in gaiety and sweetness of temper, just as no one surpassed her in courage and serenity of soul when fortune turned against her.

"Gina, who at that time might have been thirteen but looked more like eighteen, a lively, downright girl, as you know, was in such fear of bursting out laughing at the sight of my costume that she dared not eat; the Marchesa, on the other hand, loaded me with constrained civilities; she could see quite well the movements of impatience in my eyes. In a word, I cut a sorry figure, I chewed the bread of scorn, a thing which is said to be impossible for a Frenchman. At length, a heaven-sent idea shone in my mind: I set to work to tell the ladies of my poverty and of what we had suffered for the last two years in the mountains behind Genoa where we were kept by idiotic old Generals. There, I told them, we were paid in *assignats* which were not legal tender in the country, and given three ounces of bread daily. I had not been speaking for two minutes before there were tears in the good Marchesa's eyes, and Gina had grown serious.

"What, Lieutenant,' she broke in, 'three ounces of bread!'

"Yes, Signorina; but to make up for that the issue ran short three days in the week, and as the peasants on whom we were billeted were even worse off than ourselves, we used to hand on some of our bread to them.'

"On leaving the table, I offered the Marchesa my arm as far as the door of the drawing-room, then hurried back and gave the servant who had waited upon me at dinner that solitary scudo of six francs upon the spending of which I had built so many castles in the air.

"A week later," Robert went on, "when it was satisfactorily established that the French were not guillotining anyone, the Marchese del Dongo returned from his castle of Grianta on the Lake of Como, to which he had gallantly retired on the approach of the army, abandoning to the fortunes of war his young and beautiful wife and his sister. The hatred that this Marchese felt for us was equal to his fear, that is to say immeasurable: his fat face, pale and pious, was an amusing spectacle when he was being polite to me. On the day after his return to Milan, I received three ells of cloth and two hundred francs out of the levy of six millions; I renewed my wardrobe, and became cavalier to the ladies, for the season of balls was beginning."

Lieutenant Robert's story was more or less that of all the French troops; instead of laughing at the wretched plight of these poor soldiers, people were sorry for them and came to love them.

This period of unlooked-for happiness and wild excitement lasted but two short years; the frenzy had been so excessive and so general that it would be impossible for me to give any idea of it, were it not for this historical and profound reflexion: these people had been living in a state of boredom for the last hundred years.

The thirst for pleasure natural in southern countries had prevailed in former times at the court of the Visconti and Sforza, those famous Dukes of Milan. But from the year 1524, when the Spaniards conquered the Milanese, and conquered them as taciturn, suspicious, arrogant masters, always in dread of revolt, gaiety had fled. The subject race, adopting the manners of their masters, thought more of avenging the least insult by a dagger-blow than of enjoying the fleeting hour.

This frenzied joy, this gaiety, this thirst for pleasure, this tendency to forget every sad or even reasonable feeling, were carried to such a pitch, between the 15th of May, 1796, when the French entered Milan, and April, 1799, when they were driven out again after the battle of Cassano, that instances have been cited of old millionaire merchants, old money-lenders, old scribes who, during this interval, quite forgot to pull long faces and to amass money.

At the most it would have been possible to point to a few families belonging to the higher ranks of the nobility, who had retired to their palaces in the country, as though in a sullen revolt against the prevailing high spirits and the expansion of every heart. It is true that these noble and wealthy families had been given a distressing prominence in the allocation of the forced loans exacted for the French army.

The Marchese del Dongo, irritated by the spectacle of so much gaiety, had been one of the first to return to his magnificent castle of Grianta, on the farther side of Como, whither his ladies took with them Lieutenant Robert. This castle, standing in a position which is perhaps unique in the world, on a plateau one hundred and fifty feet above that sublime lake, a great part of which it commands, had been originally a fortress. The del

Dongo family had constructed it in the fifteenth century, as was everywhere attested by marble tablets charged with their arms; one could still see the drawbridges and deep moats, though the latter, it must be admitted, had been drained of their water; but with its walls eighty feet in height and six in thickness, this castle was safe from assault, and it was for this reason that it was dear to the timorous Marchese. Surrounded by some twenty-five or thirty retainers whom he supposed to be devoted to his person, presumably because he never opened his mouth except to curse them, he was less tormented by fear than at Milan.

This fear was not altogether groundless: he was in most active correspondence with a spy posted by Austria on the Swiss frontier three leagues from Grianta, to contrive the escape of the prisoners taken on the field of battle; conduct which might have been viewed in a serious light by the French Generals.

The Marchese had left his young wife at Milan; she looked after the affairs of the family there, and was responsible for providing the sums levied on the *casa del Dongo* (as they say in Italy); she sought to have these reduced, which obliged her to visit those of the nobility who had accepted public office, and even some highly influential persons who were not of noble birth. A great event now occurred in this family. The Marchese had arranged the marriage of his young sister Gina with a personage of great wealth and the very highest birth; but he powdered his hair; in virtue of which, Ghia received him with shouts of laughter, and presently took the rash step of marrying the Conte Pietranera. He was, it is true, a very fine gentleman, of the most personable appearance, but ruined for generations past in estate, and to complete the disgrace of the match, a fervent supporter of the new ideas. Pietranera was a sub-lieutenant in the Italian Legion; this was the last straw for the Marchese.

After these two years of folly and happiness, the Directory in Paris, giving itself the air of a sovereign firmly enthroned, began to shew a mortal hatred of everything that was not commonplace. The incompetent Generals whom it imposed on the Army of Italy lost a succession of battles on those same plains of Verona, which had witnessed two years before the prodigies of Arcole and Lonato. The Austrians again drew near to Milan; Lieutenant Robert, who had been promoted to the command of a battalion and had been wounded at the battle of Cassano, came to lodge for the last time in the house of his friend the Marchesa del Dongo. Their parting was a sad one; Robert set forth with Conte Pietranera, who followed the French in their retirement on Novi. The young Contessa, to whom her brother refused to pay her marriage portion, followed the army, riding in a cart.

Then began that period of reaction and a return to the old ideas, which the Milanese call *i tredici mesi* (the thirteen months), because as it turned out their destiny willed that this return to stupidity should endure for thirteen months only, until Marengo. Everyone who was old, bigoted, morose, reappeared at the head of affairs, and resumed the leadership of society; presently the people who had remained faithful to the sound doctrines published a report in the villages that Napoleon had been hanged by the Mamelukes in Egypt, as he so richly deserved.

Among these men who had retired to sulk on their estates and came back now athirst for vengeance, the Marchese del Dongo distinguished himself by his rabidity; the

extravagance of his sentiments carried him naturally to the head of his party. These gentlemen, quite worthy people when they were not in a state of panic, but who were always trembling, succeeded in getting round the Austrian General: a good enough man at heart, he let himself be persuaded that severity was the best policy, and ordered the arrest of one hundred and fifty patriots: quite the best man to be found in Italy at the time.

They were speedily deported to the Bocche di Cattaro, and, flung into subterranean caves, the moisture and above all the want of bread did prompt justice to each and all of these rascals.

The Marchese del Dongo had an exalted position, and, as he combined with a host of other fine qualities a sordid avarice, he would boast publicly that he never sent a scudo to his sister, the Contessa Pietranera: still madly in love, she refused to leave her husband, and was starving by his side in France. The good Marchesa was in despair; finally she managed to abstract a few small diamonds from her jewel case, which her husband took from her every evening to stow away under his bed, in an iron coffer: the Marchesa had brought him a dowry of 800,000 francs, and received 80 francs monthly for her personal expenses. During the thirteen months in which the French were absent from Milan, this most timid of women found various pretexts and never went out of mourning.

We must confess that, following the example of many grave authors, we have begun the history of our hero a year before his birth. This essential personage is none other than Fabrizio Valserra, Marchesino del Dongo, as the style is at Milan. [\[1\]](#)

He had taken the trouble to be born just when the French were driven out, and found himself, by the accident of birth, the second son of that Marchese del Dongo who was so great a gentleman, and with whose fat, pasty face, false smile and unbounded hatred for the new ideas the reader is already acquainted. The whole of the family fortune was already settled upon the elder son, Ascanio del Dongo, the worthy image of his father. He was eight years old and Fabrizio two when all of a sudden that General Bonaparte, whom everyone of good family understood to have been hanged long ago, came down from the Mont Saint-Bernard. He entered Milan: that moment is still unique in history; imagine a whole populace madly in love. A few days later, Napoleon won the battle of Marengo. The rest needs no telling. The frenzy of the Milanese reached its climax; but this time it was mingled with ideas of vengeance: these good people had been taught to hate. Presently they saw arrive in their midst all that remained of the patriots deported to the Bocche di Cattaro; their return was celebrated with a national festa. Their pale faces, their great startled eyes, their shrunken limbs were in strange contrast to the joy that broke out on every side. Their arrival was the signal for departure for the families most deeply compromised. The Marchese del Dongo was one of the first to flee to his castle of Grianta. The heads of the great families were filled with hatred and fear; but their wives, their daughters, remembered the joys of the former French occupation, and thought with regret of Milan and those gay balls, which, immediately after Marengo, were organised afresh at the *casa Tanzi*. A few days after the victory, the French General responsible for maintaining order in Lombardy discovered that all the farmers on the noblemen's estates, all the old wives in the villages, so far from still thinking of

this astonishing victory at Marengo, which had altered the destinies of Italy and recaptured thirteen fortified positions in a single day, had their minds occupied only by a prophecy of San Giovila, the principal Patron Saint of Brescia. According to this inspired utterance, the prosperity of France and of Napoleon was to cease just thirteen weeks after Marengo. What does to some extent excuse the Marchese del Dongo and all the nobles sulking on their estates is that literally and without any affectation they believed in the prophecy. Not one of these gentlemen had read as many as four volumes in his life; quite openly they were making their preparations to return to Milan at the end of the thirteen weeks; but time, as it went on, recorded fresh successes for the cause of France. Returning to Paris, Napoleon, by wise decrees, saved the country from revolution at home as he had saved it from its foreign enemies at Marengo. Then the Lombard nobles, in the safe shelter of their castles, discovered that at first they had misinterpreted the prophecy of the holy patron of Brescia; it was a question not of thirteen weeks, but of thirteen months. The thirteen months went by, and the prosperity of France seemed to increase daily.

We pass lightly over ten years of progress and happiness, from 1800 to 1810. Fabrizio spent the first part of this decade at the castle of Grianta, giving and receiving an abundance of fisticuffs among the little *contadini* of the village, and learning nothing, not even how to read. Later on, he was sent to the Jesuit College at Milan. The Marchese, his father, insisted on his being shewn the Latin tongue, not on any account in the works of those ancient writers who are always talking about Republics, but in a magnificent volume adorned with more than a hundred engravings, a masterpiece of seventeenth-century art; this was the Lathi genealogy of the Valserra, Marchesi del Dongo, published in 1650 by Fabrizio del Dongo, Archbishop of Parma. The fortunes of the Valserra being pre-eminently military, the engravings represented any number of battles, and everywhere one saw some hero of the name dealing mighty blows with his sword. This book greatly delighted the young Fabrizio. His mother, who adored him, obtained permission, from time to time, to pay him a visit at Milan; but as her husband never offered her any money for these journeys, it was her sister-in-law, the charming Contessa Pietranera, who lent her what she required. After the return of the French, the Contessa had become one of the most brilliant ladies at the court of Prince Eugène, the Viceroy of Italy.

When Fabrizio had made his First Communion, she obtained leave from the Marchese, still in voluntary exile, to invite him out, now and again, from his college. She found him unusual, thoughtful, very serious, but a nice-looking boy and not at all out of place in the drawing-room of a lady of fashion; otherwise, as ignorant as one could wish, and barely able to write. The Contessa, who carried her impulsive character into everything, promised her protection to the head of the establishment provided that her nephew Fabrizio made astounding progress and carried off a number of prizes at the end of the year. So that he should be in a position to deserve them, she used to send for bun every Saturday evening, and often did not restore him to his masters until the following Wednesday or Thursday. The Jesuits, although tenderly cherished by the Prince Viceroy, were expelled from Italy by the laws of the Kingdom, and the Superior of the College, an able man, was conscious of all that might be made out of his relations with a woman all-powerful at court. He never thought of complaining of the absences of

Fabrizio, who, more ignorant than ever, at the end of the year was awarded five first prizes. This being so, the Contessa, escorted by her husband, now the General commanding one of the Divisions of the Guard, and by five or six of the most important personages at the viceregal court, came to attend the prize-giving at the Jesuit College. The Superior was complimented by his chiefs.

The Contessa took her nephew with her to all those brilliant festivities which marked the too brief reign of the sociable Prince Eugène. She had on her own authority created him an officer of hussars, and Fabrizio, now twelve years old, wore that uniform. One day the Contessa, enchanted by his handsome figure, besought the Prince to give him a post as page, a request which implied that the del Dongo family was coming round. Next day she had need of all her credit to secure the Viceroy's kind consent not to remember this request, which lacked only the consent of the prospective page's father, and this consent would have been emphatically refused. After this act of folly, which made the sullen Marchese shudder, he found an excuse to recall young Fabrizio to Grianta. The Contessa had a supreme contempt for her brother, she regarded him as a melancholy fool, and one who would be troublesome if ever it lay in his power. But she was madly fond of Fabrizio, and, after ten years of silence, wrote to the Marchese reclaiming her nephew; her letter was left unanswered.

On his return to this formidable palace, built by the most bellicose of his ancestors, Fabrizio knew nothing in the world except how to drill and how to sit on a horse. Conte Pietranera, as fond of the boy as was his wife, used often to put him on a horse and take him with him on parade.

On reaching the castle of Grianta, Fabrizio, his eyes still red with the tears that he had shed on leaving his aunt's fine rooms, found only the passionate caresses of his mother and sisters. The Marchese was closeted in his study with his elder son, the Marchesino Ascanio; there they composed letters in cipher which had the honour to be forwarded to Vienna; father and son appeared in public only at meal-times. The Marchese used ostentatiously to repeat that he was teaching his natural successor to keep, by double entry, the accounts of the produce of each of his estates. As a matter of fact, the Marchese was too jealous of his own power ever to speak of these matters to a son, the necessary inheritor of all these entailed properties. He employed him to cipher despatches of fifteen or twenty pages which two or three times weekly he had conveyed into Switzerland, where they were put on the road for Vienna. The Marchese claimed to inform his rightful Sovereign of the internal condition of the Kingdom of Italy, of which he himself knew nothing, and his letters were invariably most successful, for the following reason: the Marchese would have a count taken on the high road, by some trusted agent, of the number of men in a certain French or Italian regiment that was changing its station, and in reporting the fact to the court of Vienna would take care to reduce by at least a quarter the number of the troops on the march. These letters, in other respects absurd, had the merit of contradicting others of greater accuracy, and gave pleasure. And so, a short time before Fabrizio's arrival at the castle, the Marchese had received the star of a famous order: it was the fifth to adorn his Chamberlain's coat. As a matter of fact, he suffered from the chagrin of not daring to sport this garment outside his study; but he never allowed himself to dictate a despatch without first putting on the

gold-laced coat, studded with all his orders. He would have felt himself to be wanting in respect had he acted otherwise.

The Marchesa was amazed by her son's graces. But she had kept up the habit of writing two or three times every year to General Comte d'A——, which was the title now borne by Lieutenant Robert. The Marchesa had a horror of lying to the people to whom she was attached; she examined her son and was appalled by his ignorance.

"If he appears to me to have learned little," she said to herself, "to me who know nothing, Robert, who is so clever, would find that his education had been entirely neglected; and in these days one must have merit." Another peculiarity, which astonished her almost as much, was that Fabrizio had taken seriously all the religious teaching that had been instilled into him by the Jesuits. Although very pious herself, the fanaticism of this child made her shudder; "If the Marchese has the sense to discover this way of influencing him, he will take my son's affection from me." She wept copiously, and her passion for Fabrizio was thereby increased.

Life in this castle, peopled by thirty or forty servants, was extremely dull; accordingly Fabrizio spent all his days in pursuit of game or exploring the lake in a boat. Soon he was on intimate terms with the coachmen and grooms; these were all hot supporters of the French, and laughed openly at the pious valets, attached to the person of the Marchese or to that of his elder son. The great theme for wit at the expense of these solemn personages was that, in imitation of their masters, they powdered their heads.

Chapter 2

... Alors que Vesper vient embrunir nos yeux, Tout épris d'avenir, je contemple les deux, En qui Dieu nous écrit, par notes non obscures, Les sorts et les destins de toutes créatures. Car lui, du fond des deux regardant un humain, Parfois mû de pitié, lui montre le chemin; Par les astres du ciel qui sont ses caractères, Les choses nous prédit et bonnes et contraires; Mais les hommes chargés de terre et de trépas, Méprisent tel écrit, et ne le lisent pas.

RONSARD.

The Marchese professed a vigorous hatred of enlightenment: "It is ideas," he used to say, "that have ruined Italy"; he did not know quite how to reconcile this holy horror of instruction with his desire to see his son Fabrizio perfect the education so brilliantly begun with the Jesuits. In order to incur the least possible risk, he charged the good Priore Blanès, parish priest of Grianta, with the task of continuing Fabrizio's Latin studies. For this it was necessary that the priest should himself know that language; whereas it was to him an object of scorn; his knowledge in the matter being confined to the recitation, by heart, of the prayers in his missal, the meaning of which he could interpret more or less to his flock. But this priest was nevertheless highly respected and indeed feared throughout the district; he had always said that it was by no means in thirteen weeks, nor even in thirteen months that they would see the fulfilment of the famous prophecy of San Giovila, the Patron Saint of Brescia. He added, when he was speaking to friends whom he could trust, that this number *thirteen* was to be interpreted in a fashion which would astonish many people, if it were permitted to say all that one knew (1813).

The fact was that the Priore Blanès, a man whose honesty and virtue were primitive, and a man of parts as well, spent all his nights up in his belfry; he was mad on astrology. After using up all his days in calculating the conjunctions and positions of the stars, he would devote the greater part of his nights to following their course in the sky. Such was his poverty, he had no other instrument than a long telescope with pasteboard tubes. One may imagine the contempt that was felt for the study of languages by a man who spent his time discovering the precise dates of the fall of empires and the revolutions that change the face of the world. "What more do I know about a horse," he asked Fabrizio, "when I am told that in Latin it is called equus?"

The *contadini* looked upon Priore Blanès with awe as a great magician: for his part, by dint of the fear that his nightly stations in the belfry inspired, he restrained them from stealing. His clerical brethren in the surrounding parishes, intensely jealous of his influence, detested him; the Marchese del Dongo merely despised him, because he reasoned too much for a man of such humble station. Fabrizio adored him: to gratify him he sometimes spent whole evenings in doing enormous sums of addition or multiplication. Then he would go up to the belfry: this was a great favour and one that Priore Blanès had never granted to anyone; but he liked the boy for his simplicity. "If you do not turn out a hypocrite," he would say to him, "you will perhaps be a man."

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