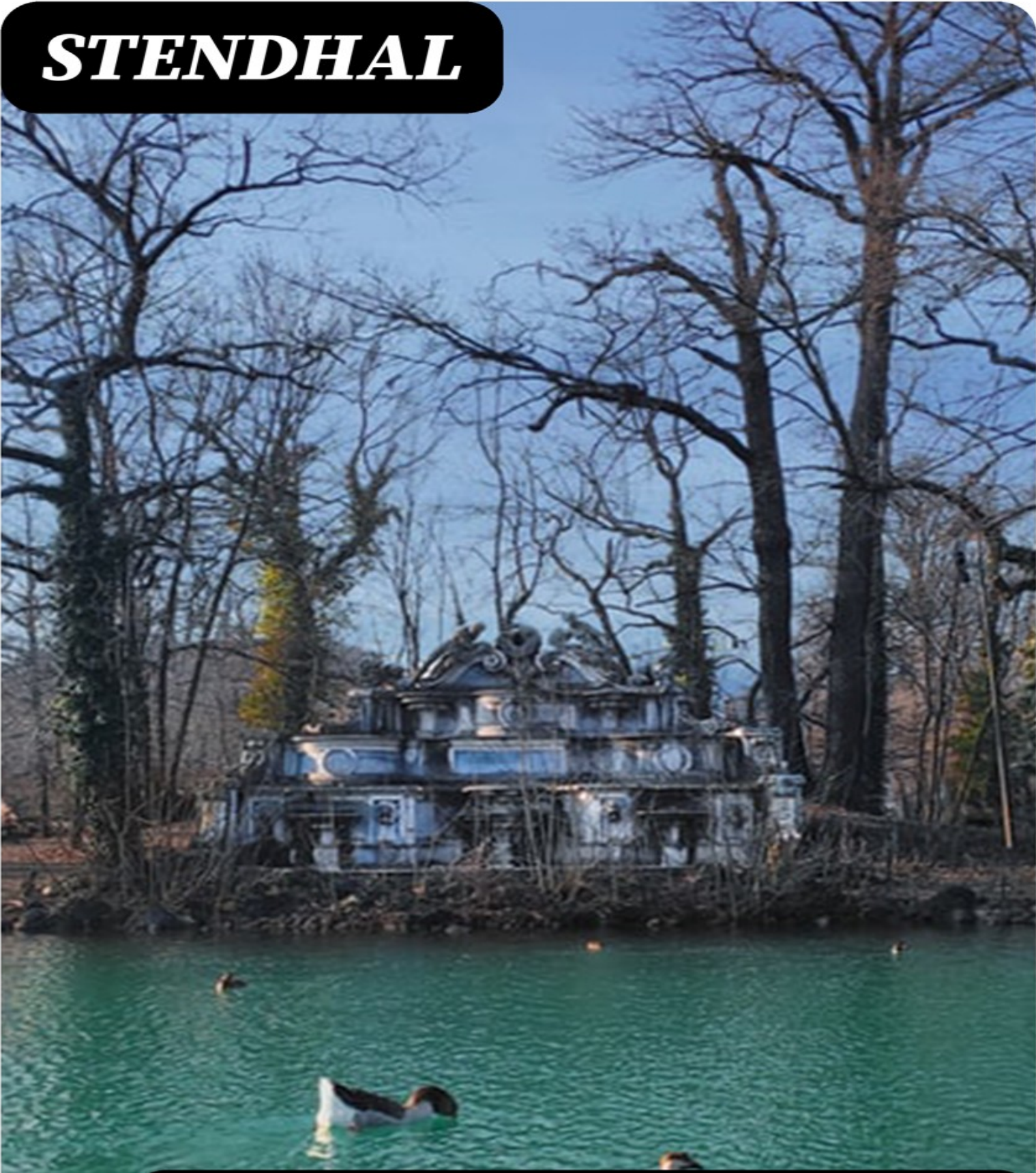


STENDHAL



***THE CHARTREUSE
OF PARMA***

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The Chartreuse of Parma

Translated from the French of Stendhal (Henri Beyle)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

[CHAPTER I MILAN IN 1796](#)

[CHAPTER II](#)

[CHAPTER III](#)

[CHAPTER IV](#)

[CHAPTER V](#)

[CHAPTER VI](#)

[CHAPTER VII](#)

[CHAPTER VIII](#)

[CHAPTER IX](#)

[CHAPTER X](#)

[CHAPTER XI](#)

[CHAPTER XII](#)

[CHAPTER XIII](#)

[CHAPTER XIV](#)

[CHAPTER XV](#)

[CHAPTER XVI](#)

[CHAPTER XVII](#)

[CHAPTER XVIII](#)

[CHAPTER XIX](#)

[CHAPTER XX](#)

[CHAPTER XXI](#)

[CHAPTER XXII](#)

[CHAPTER XXIII](#)

[CHAPTER XXIV](#)

[CHAPTER XXV](#)

[CHAPTER XXVI](#)

CHAPTER XXVII

CHAPTER XXVIII

CHAPTER I

MILAN IN 1796

[Table of Contents](#)

On the 15th of May, 1796, General Bonaparte marched into the city of Milan, at the head of the youthful army which had just crossed the Bridge of Lodi, and taught the world that, after the lapse of centuries, Cæsar and Alexander had found a successor at last.

The prodigies of genius and daring witnessed by Italy in the course of a few months, roused her people from their slumbers. But one week before the arrival of the French, the Milanese still took them for a horde of brigands, whose habit it was to fly before the troops of his Royal and Imperial Majesty. Such, at all events, was the information repeated three times a week in their little newspaper, no bigger than a man's hand, and printed on dirty-looking paper.

In the middle ages, the Milanese had been as brave as the French of the Revolution, and their courage earned the complete destruction of their city by the German emperor. But their chief occupation, since they had become his "*faithful subjects*," was to print sonnets on pink silk handkerchiefs whenever any rich or well-born young lady was given in marriage. Two or three years after that great epoch in her life the said young lady chose herself a *cavaliere servente*; the name of this *cicisbeo*, selected by the husband's family, occasionally held an honoured place in the marriage contract. Between such effeminate habits and the deep emotions stirred by the unexpected arrival of the French army, a great gulf lay. Before long a new and

passionate order of things had supervened. On May 15, 1796, a whole people became aware that all it had hitherto respected was supremely ridiculous, and occasionally hateful, to boot. The departure of the last Austrian regiment marked the downfall of the old ideas. To expose one's life became the fashionable thing. People perceived, after these centuries of hypocrisy and insipidities, that the only chance of happiness lay in loving with real passion, and knowing how to risk one's life upon occasion. The continuance of the watchful despotism of Charles V and Philip II had plunged the Lombards into impenetrable darkness. They overthrew these rulers' statues, and forthwith found themselves bathed in light. For fifty years, while Voltaire's *Encyclopédie* was appearing in France, the monks had been assuring the good folk of Milan that to learn to read, or to learn anything on earth, was idle vexation of the spirit, and that if they would only pay their priest's dues honestly, and tell him all their small sins faithfully, they were almost certain to secure a comfortable place in paradise. To complete the emasculation of this whilom doughty people, the Austrian had sold them, on moderate terms, the privilege of not furnishing recruits to the imperial army.

In 1796, the Milanese army consisted of eighty "*facchini*" in red coats, who kept guard over the town, assisted by four splendid Hungarian regiments. Morals were exceedingly loose, but real passion excessively rare. Apart from the inconvenience of being obliged to tell everything to his priest, the Milanese of the period of 1790 really did not know the meaning of any vehement desire. The worthy citizens were still trammelled by certain monarchical bonds,

which had their vexatious side. For instance, the archduke, who resided in the city and governed it in the Emperor's name, had pitched on the very lucrative notion of dealing in corn stuffs. Consequently, no peasant could sell his crops until his Imperial Highness had filled up his granaries.

In May, 1796, three days after the entry of the French, a young miniature painter of the name of Gros, rather a mad fellow—he has since become famous—who had arrived with the troops, heard somebody at the *Café dei Servi*, then a fashionable resort, relate the doings of the archduke, who was a very fat man. Seizing the list of ices, printed on a slip of common yellowish paper, he sketched on its blank side the portly archduke, with immoderate quantities of corn, instead of blood, pouring out of the hole in his stomach, made by a French soldier's bayonet. In this land of crafty despotism, that which we call jest or caricature was unknown. The drawing left by Gros on the *café* table acted like a miracle from heaven. During the night the sketch was engraved; on the morrow twenty thousand copies of it were sold.

That same day the walls were posted with the proclamation of a war tax of six millions of francs, levied for the support of the French army, which, though it had just won six battles and conquered twenty provinces, was short of shoes, pantaloons, coats, and hats.

So great was the volume of happiness and pleasure which poured into Lombardy with these Frenchmen, poor as they were, that nobody, save the priests and a few nobles, perceived the weight of the tax, which was soon followed by many others. The French soldiers laughed and sang from

morning till night. They were all of them under five-and-twenty, and their general in chief, who numbered twenty-seven years, was said to be the oldest man in his command. All this youth and mirth and gay carelessness made cheery answer to the furious sermons of the monks, who for six months past had been asserting from the pulpit of every sacred edifice that these Frenchmen were all monsters, forced, on pain of death, to burn down everything, and cut off every head, and that for this last purpose a guillotine was borne at the head of every regiment.

In country places the French soldier was to be seen sitting at cottage doors rocking the owner's baby; and almost every evening some drummer would tune up his violin, and dancing would begin. The French square dances were far too difficult and complicated to be taught to the peasant women by the soldiers, who, indeed, knew but little about them. So it was the women who taught the Frenchmen the *monferino*, the *saltarello*, and other Italian dances.

The officers had been billeted, as far as possible, upon rich families. They were in sore need of an opportunity to retrieve past losses. A lieutenant named Robert, for instance, was billeted in the palace of the Marchesa del Dongo. When this officer, a tolerably handy young recruit, entered into occupation of his apartment, his sole worldly wealth consisted of a six-franc piece, which had been paid him at Piacenza. After the passage of the Bridge of Lodi he had stripped a handsome Austrian officer, killed by a round shot, of a splendid new pair of nankeen pantaloons. Never did garment appear at a more appropriate moment! His

officer's epaulets were woollen, and the cloth of his coat was sewed to the sleeve linings, to keep the bits together. A yet more melancholy circumstance was that the soles of his shoes were composed of portions of hats, picked up on the battle-field beyond the Bridge of Lodi. These improvised soles were bound to his shoes by strings, which were aggressively visible—so much so, in fact, that when the major-domo of the household made his appearance in Robert's room, to invite him to dine with the marchesa, the lieutenant was cast into a state of mortal confusion. He and his orderly spent the two hours intervening before the dreaded repast in trying to stitch the coat together, and dye the unlucky shoe-strings with ink. At last the awful moment struck. "Never in all my life did I feel so uncomfortable," said Lieutenant Robert to me. "The ladies thought I was going to frighten them—but I trembled much more than they! I kept my eyes on my shoes, and could not contrive to move with ease or grace.

"The Marchesa del Dongo," he added, "was then in the heyday of her beauty. You know what she was, with her lovely eyes, angelic in their gentleness, and the pretty, fair hair, which made so perfect a frame for the oval of her charming face. In my room there was an Herodia, by Leonardo da Vinci, which might have been her portrait. God willed that her supernatural beauty should so overwhelm my senses as to make me quite forget my own appearance. For two years I had been in the Genoese mountains, looking at nothing but ugliness and misery. I ventured to say a few words about my delight.

“But I had too much good sense to dally long with compliments. While I was making mine, I perceived in a palatial marble dining hall some dozen lackeys and men servants, dressed in what then appeared to me the height of magnificence. Think of it! The rascals not only wore good shoes, but silver buckles into the bargain! Out of the corner of my eye I could see their stupid gaze riveted on my coat, and perhaps, too—and this wrung my heart—upon my shoes. With one word I could have terrified the whole set, but how was I to put them in their place without running the risk of alarming the ladies? For to give herself a little courage, the marchesa—she has told me so a hundred times over since—had sent to the convent, where she was then at school, for her husband’s sister, Gina del Dongo, who afterward became that charming Contessa Pietranera. No woman was ever more gay and lovable in prosperity, and none ever surpassed her in courage and serenity under Fortune’s frowns.

“Gina, who may then have been thirteen, but looked eighteen, frank and lively, as you know, was so afraid of bursting out laughing at my dress that she dared not even eat. The marchesa, on the contrary, overwhelmed me with stiff civilities; she read my impatience and discomfort in my eyes. In a word, I cut a sorry figure. I was chewing the cud of scorn, which no Frenchman is supposed to be capable of doing. At last Heaven sent me a brilliant notion. I began to tell the ladies about my poverty and the misery we had suffered during those two years in the Genoese mountains, where the folly of our old generals had kept us. ‘There,’ said I, ‘they gave us *assignats* which the people would not take

in payment, and three ounces of bread a day.' Before I had been talking for two minutes the kind marchesa's eyes were full of tears and Gina had grown quite serious. 'What, lieutenant!' she cried, 'three ounces of bread?'

"'Yes, mademoiselle. But, on the other hand, the supply failed three times in the week, and as the peasants with whom we lived were even poorer than ourselves, we used to give them a little of our bread.'

"When we rose from table I offered the marchesa my arm, escorted her as far as the drawing-room door, then, hastily retracing my steps, presented the servant who had waited upon me at dinner with the solitary coin on the spending of which I had built such castles in the air.

"A week later," Robert went on, "when it had become quite clear that the French did not guillotine anybody, the Marchese del Dongo returned from Grianza, his country house on Lake Como, where he had valiantly taken refuge when the army drew near, leaving his young and lovely wife and his sister to the chances of war. The marchese's hatred of us was only equalled by his dread. Both were immeasurable. It used to amuse me to see his large, pale, hypocritical face when he was trying to be polite to me. The day after his return to Milan I received three ells of cloth and two hundred francs out of the six millions. I put on fresh plumage and became the ladies cavalier, for ball giving began."

Lieutenant Robert's story was very much that of all the French soldiers. Instead of laughing at the brave fellows' poverty, people pitied them and learned to love them. This period of unforeseen happiness and rapture lasted only two

short years. So excessive and so general was the frolic that I can not possibly convey an idea of it, unless it be by means of the following profound historic reflection: This nation had been bored for a century!

The sensuality natural to southern countries had formerly reigned at the courts of those famous Milanese dukes, the Sforza and the Visconti. But since the year 1624, when the Spaniards had seized the province, and held it under the proud, taciturn, distrustful sway of masters who suspected revolt in every corner, merriment had fled away, and the populace, aping its rulers' habits, was much more prone to avenge the slightest insult with a dagger thrust, than to enjoy the moment as it passed.

But between May 15, 1796, when the French entered Milan, and April, 1799, when they were driven out of the city by the battle of Cassano, wild merriment, gaiety, voluptuous pleasure, and oblivion of every sad, or even rational sentiment, reached such a pitch that old millionaire merchants, usurers, and notaries were actually quoted by name as having forgotten their morose and money-getting habits during that period. One might have found a few families of the highest rank that had retired to their country places to sulk at the general cheerfulness and universal joy. And it is a fact, further, that these families had been honoured with a disagreeable amount of attention by the authorities in charge of the war tax, levied for the benefit of the French troops.

The Marchese del Dongo, disgusted at the sight of so much gaiety, had been one of the first to return to his magnificent country seat at Grianza, beyond Como, whither

the ladies of his family conducted Lieutenant Robert. This castle, standing in what is probably a unique position, on a plateau some one hundred and fifty feet above the splendid lake, and commanding a great portion of it, had once been a fortress. It had been built, as the numerous marble slabs bearing the family arms attested, during the fifteenth century. The drawbridges were still to be seen, and the deep moats—now dry, to be sure. Still, with its walls eighty feet high and six feet thick, the castle was safe from a *coup de main*, and this fact endeared it to the suspicious marchese. Living there, surrounded by five-and-twenty or thirty servants, whom he believed to be devoted to him—apparently because he never spoke to them without abusing them—he was less harried by fear than at Milan.

This alarm was not entirely unwarranted. The marchese was in active correspondence with an Austrian spy stationed on the Swiss frontier, three leagues from Grianta, to assist the escape of prisoners taken in battle, and the French generals might have taken this exchange of notes very seriously.

The marchese had left his young wife at Milan to manage the family affairs. She it was who had to find means of supplying the contributions levied on the Casa del Dongo, as it was locally called, and to endeavour to get them reduced, which involved the necessity of her seeing the noblemen who had accepted public positions, and even some very influential persons who were not noble at all. A great event occurred in the family. The marchese had arranged a marriage for his young sister Gina with a gentleman of great wealth and the very highest descent. But he powdered his

head. Wherefore Gina received him with shrieks of laughter, and shortly committed the folly of marrying Count Pietranera. He, too, was a high-born gentleman, and very good-looking as well, but he was ruined, as his father had been before him, and—crowning disgrace!—he was an eager partisan of the modern ideas! The marchese's despair was completed by the fact that Pietranera was a lieutenant in the Italian Legion.

After two years of extravagance and bliss, the Paris Directorate, which took on all the airs of a well-established sovereignty, began to manifest a mortal hatred of everything that rose above mediocrity. The incapable generals sent to the Army of Italy lost a series of battles on those very plains of Verona which but two years previously had witnessed the feats of Arcola and Lonato. The Austrians approached Milan; Lieutenant Robert, now a major, was wounded at the battle of Cassano, and came back for the last time to the house of his friend the Marchesa del Dongo. It was a sad farewell. Robert departed with Count Pietranera, who was following the French retreat on Novi. The young countess, whose brother had refused to give up her fortune, followed the retreating army in a cart.

Then began that period of reaction and return to the old ideas which the Milanese call "*i tredici mesi*" (the thirteen months) because their lucky star did not permit this relapse into imbecility to last beyond the battle of Marengo. Everything that was old, bigoted, morose, and gloomy came back to the head of affairs and of society. Before long, those who had remained faithful to the old order were telling the

villagers that Napoleon had met the fate he so richly deserved, and had been hanged by the Mamelukes in Egypt.

Among the men who had retired to sulk in their country houses, and who now came back, thirsting for vengeance, the Marchese del Dongo distinguished himself by his eagerness. His zeal naturally bore him to the head of the party. The gentlemen composing it, very amiable fellows when they were not in a fright, but who were still in a state of trepidation, contrived to circumvent the Austrian general, who, though rather of a kindly disposition, allowed himself to be persuaded that severity was a mark of statesmanship, and ordered the arrest of a hundred and fifty patriots. They were the best men Italy then possessed.

Soon they were all deported to the Bocche de Cattaro, and cast into subterranean dungeons, where damp and, especially, starvation wreaked prompt and thorough justice on the villains.

The Marchese del Dongo was appointed to an important post; and as the meanest avarice accompanied his numerous other noble qualities, he publicly boasted that he had not sent a single crown to his sister, the Countess Pietranera. This lady, still fathoms deep in love, would not forsake her husband, and was starving with him in France. The kind-hearted marchesa was in despair. At last she contrived to abstract a few small diamonds from her jewel-case, which her husband took from her every night and locked up in an iron box under his bed. She had brought him a dowry of eight hundred thousand francs, and he allowed her eighty francs a month for her personal expenses. During the thirteen months of the absence of the French from

Milan, this woman, timid as she was, found pretexts of one sort or another which enabled her always to dress in black.

It must be confessed here that, after the example of many serious authors, we have begun the story of our hero a year before his birth. This important personage is no other, in fact, than Fabrizio Valserra, Marchesino del Dongo, as he would be called at Milan.^[1] He had just condescended to come into the world when the French were driven out, the chances of his birth making him the second son of that most noble Marchese del Dongo, with whose large, pallid countenance, deceitful smile, and boundless hatred of the new order of ideas, my readers are already acquainted. The whole of the family fortune was entailed on the eldest boy, Ascanio del Dongo, the perfect image of his father. He was eight years old, and Fabrizio two, when, like a flash, that General Bonaparte whom all well-born folk believed to have been hanged long since, descended from Mount St. Bernard. He made his entry into Milan; the event is still unique in history. Conceive a whole population over head and ears in love! A few days later Napoleon won the battle of Marengo. I need not tell the rest. The rapture of the Milanese overflowed the cup. But this time it was mingled with thoughts of vengeance. A good-natured folk had been taught to hate. Soon the remnant of the patriots exiled to Cattaro reappeared, and their return was celebrated by national festivities. Their pale faces, great startled eyes, and emaciated limbs, contrasted strangely with the joy that reigned on every side. Their arrival was the signal for the departure of the families most concerned in their banishment. The Marchese del Dongo was one of the first to

flee to his house at Grianta. The heads of the great families were filled with rage and terror, but their wives and daughters, remembering the delights of the first French occupation, sighed regretfully for Milan and the gay balls which, once Marengo was over, were given at the Casa Tanzi. A few days after the victory the French general charged with the duty of maintaining quiet in Lombardy became aware that all the tenants of the noble families, and all the old women in the country, far from dwelling on the wonderful victory which had changed the fate of Italy, and reconquered thirteen fortresses in one day, were thinking of nothing but the prophecy of San Giovità, the chief patron saint of Brescia, according to which sacred pronouncement the prosperity of Napoleon and of the French nation was to end just thirteen weeks after Marengo. Some slight excuse for the Marchese del Dongo and all the sulky country nobility is to be found in the fact that they really and truly did believe in this prophecy. None of these people had read four books in his life. They openly prepared to return to Milan at the end of the thirteenth week, but as time went on, it was marked by fresh successes on the French side. Napoleon, who had returned to Paris, saved the revolution from within by his wise decrees, even as he had saved it from foreign attack at Marengo. Then the Lombard nobles in their country refuges discovered that they had misunderstood the prediction of the patron saint of Brescia. He must have meant thirteen months instead of thirteen weeks! But the thirteen months slipped by, and the prosperity of France seemed to rise higher day by day.

We pass over the ten years of happiness and progress between 1800 and 1810. Fabrizio spent the earliest of them at Grianta, where he dealt out many hard knocks among the little peasant boys, and received them back with interest, but learned nothing—not even to read. Later he was sent to the Jesuit school at Milan. The marchese, his father, insisted that he should learn Latin, not out of those ancient authors who are always holding forth about republics, but out of a splendid tome enriched with more than a hundred and fifty engravings, a masterpiece of seventeenth-century art, the Latin Genealogy of the Valserra, Marchesi del Dongo, published by Fabrizio del Dongo, Archbishop of Parma, in the year 1650. The Valserra were essentially a fighting race, and these engravings represented numerous battles, in which some hero of the name was always depicted as laying about mightily with his sword.

This book was a great delight to young Fabrizio. His mother, who adored him, was allowed now and then to go to Milan to see him, but her husband never offered to pay the cost of these journeys. The money was always lent her by her sister-in-law, the charming Countess Pietranera, who, after the return of the French, had become one of the most brilliant of the ladies at the court of the Viceroy of Italy, Prince Eugène.

After Fabrizio had made his first communion, the countess persuaded the marchese, who still lived in voluntary exile, to allow the boy to pay her occasional visits. He struck her as being out of the common, clever, very serious, but handsome, and no discredit to a fashionable lady's drawing-room—though he was utterly ignorant, and

hardly knew how to write. The countess, who carried her characteristic enthusiasm into everything she did, promised her protection to the head of the Jesuit house if only her nephew Fabrizio made astonishing progress in his studies, and won several prizes at the close of the year. To put him in the way of earning such rewards, she sent for him every Saturday night, and frequently did not restore him to his teachers till the Wednesday or Thursday following. Though the Jesuits were tenderly cherished by the Viceroy, their presence in Italy was forbidden by the laws of the kingdom, and the Superior of the college, a clever man, realized all the benefits that might accrue from his relations with a lady who was all-powerful at court. He was too wise to complain of Fabrizio's absences, and at the end of the year five first prizes were conferred on the youth, who was more ignorant than ever. In the circumstances, the brilliant Countess Pietranera, attended by her husband, then general in command of one of the divisions of the Guard, and five or six of the most important personages about the Viceroy's court, attended the distribution of prizes in the Jesuit school. The Superior received the congratulations of the heads of his order.

The countess was in the habit of taking her nephew to all the gay fêtes which enlivened the kindly Viceroy's too short reign. She had made him an officer of hussars, on her own authority, and the twelve-year-old boy wore his uniform. One day the countess, delighted with his handsome looks, asked the prince to make him a page, which would have been tantamount, of course, to an acknowledgment of adherence to the new order of things of the Del Dongo

family. The next morning she was fain to use all her influence to induce the Viceroy kindly to forget her request, which lacked nothing but the consent of the father of the future page—a consent which would have been loudly refused. As a result of this piece of folly, which made him shiver, the sulky marchese coined some pretext for recalling young Fabrizio to Grianta. The countess nursed a sovereign contempt for her brother, whom she regarded as a dreary fool, who would be spiteful if he ever had the power. But she doted on Fabrizio, and after ten years of silence she wrote to the marchese, to beg that she might have her nephew with her. Her letter remained unanswered.

When Fabrizio returned to the formidable pile built by the most warlike of his ancestors he knew nothing about anything in the world except drill, and riding on horseback. Count Pietranera, who had been as fond of the child as his wife, had taught him to ride, and taken him with him on parade.

When the boy reached Grianta, with eyes still reddened by the tears he had shed on leaving his aunt's splendid apartments, his only greeting was that of his mother, who covered him with passionate caresses, and of his sisters. The marchese was shut up in his study with his eldest son, the Marchesino Ascanio. They were busy writing letters in cipher, which were to have the honour of being sent to Vienna, and they were only visible at mealtimes. The marchese ostentatiously declared that he was teaching his natural successor to keep the accounts of the revenues of each of his estates by double entry, but in reality he was far too jealous by nature to mention such matters to the son on

whom these properties were absolutely entailed. He really employed him to translate into cipher the despatches of fifteen or twenty pages which he sent, two or three times a week, across the Swiss frontier, whence they were conveyed to Vienna. The marchese claimed that he thus kept his legitimate sovereign informed as to the internal conditions of the kingdom of Italy—a subject about which he himself knew nothing at all. His letters, however, won him great credit, and for the following reason: He was in the habit of employing some trusty agent to count up the numbers of any French or Italian regiment that marched along the high-road when changing its place of garrison, and in making his report to Vienna he always carefully diminished the number of men reported present by a full fourth. These letters, then, ridiculous as they otherwise were, had the merit of contradicting others of a more truthful nature, and thus gave pleasure in high quarters. Consequently, not long before Fabrizio's return to Grianta, the marchese had received the star of a famous order—the fifth that adorned his chamberlain's coat. It is true, indeed, that he had to endure the grief of never wearing the said coat outside the walls of his own study, but, on the other hand, he never ventured to dictate any despatch without first enduing his person with the richly embroidered garment, hung with all his orders. Any other course would have seemed to him a failure in respect.

The marchesa was delighted with her boy's charms. But she had kept up the habit of writing, twice or thrice in the year, to General Comte d'A□ (the name then borne by Lieutenant Robert). She had a horror of lying to those she

loved; she questioned her son, and was startled by his ignorance.

“If,” she argued, “he appears ill-instructed to me, who know nothing, Robert, who knows so much, would think his education an utter failure; and nowadays some merit is indispensable to success!” Another peculiarity, which almost equally astounded her, was that Fabrizio had taken all the religious teaching given him by the Jesuits quite seriously. Though herself a very pious woman, her child’s fanaticism made her shiver. “If the marchese has the sense to suspect this means of influencing my son, he will rob me of his love!” She wept many tears, and her passionate love for Fabrizio deepened.

Life in the great country house, with its thirty or forty servants, was very dull; and Fabrizio spent all his days hunting, or skimming over the waters of the lake in a boat. He was soon the sworn ally of all the coachmen and stable assistants—every one of them a vehement partisan of the French—who made open sport of the highly religious valets attached to the persons of the marchese and his elder son. The great joke against these individuals was that, like their masters, they wore powder in their hair.

[1] The habit of the country, borrowed from that of Germany, is that all the sons of a marchese should be called *marchesino*. The son of a count is known as *contino*; each of his daughters is a *contessina*.

CHAPTER II

[Table of Contents](#)

... “Alors que Vesper vient embrunir nos yeux
Tout épris de l’avenir, je contemple les cieux,
En qui Dieu nous escrit, par notes non obscures
Les sorts et les destins de toutes créatures.
Car lui, du fond des cieux regardant un humain,
Parfois, mû de pitié, lui montre le chemin;
Par les astres du ciel, qui sont ses caractères,
Les choses nous prèdit, 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 hearty hatred of knowledge. “Ideas,” he said, “have been the ruin of Italy.” He was somewhat puzzled to reconcile this holy horror of information with his desire that Fabrizio should perfect the education so brilliantly begun under the auspices of the Jesuits.

To minimize the risk as far as possible, he commissioned the worthy priest of Grianta, Father Blanès, to carry on the boy’s Latin studies. To this end the priest should himself have been acquainted with the language. But he thoroughly despised it. His knowledge of it was restricted to the prayers in his missal, which he knew by rote, and the sense of which, or something near it, he was capable of imparting to his flock. None the less was the father respected, and even feared, all over the canton. He had always averred that the famous prophecy of San Giovità, patron saint of Brescia,

would not be accomplished either in thirteen weeks or thirteen months. He would confide to his trusted friends that if he dared speak openly he could give the proper interpretation of the number *thirteen*, and that it would cause general astonishment (1813).

The fact is that Father Blanès—a man of primitive virtue and honesty, and a clever one into the bargain—spent most of his nights on the top of his church tower. He had a mania for astrology, and, after calculating the positions and conjunctions of the stars all day, would pass the greater part of his nights in tracing them in the sky. So poor was he that his only instrument was a telescope with a long cardboard tube. My reader will conceive the scorn for linguistic study nursed by a man who spent his life in discovering the precise moment at which empires were to fall, and revolutions, destined to change the face of the whole world, were to begin. “What more do I know about a horse,” he would say to Fabrizio, “because somebody tells me its Latin name is *Equus*?”

The peasants dreaded the priest as a mighty magician, and he, through the fear inspired by his tarryings on the top of his tower, prevented them from thieving. His brother priests of the neighbouring parishes envied him his influence, and hated him accordingly. The marchese frankly despised him, because he reasoned too much for a person in so humble a position. Fabrizio worshipped him. To please him he would sometimes spend whole evenings over huge sums in addition or multiplication. And then he would climb up into the tower. This was a great favour—one the priest had never bestowed on any other person. But he loved the

boy for the sake of his simplicity. "If you don't become a hypocrite," he would say, "you may turn into a man!"

Twice or thrice in every year, Fabrizio, who was bold and passionate in the pursuit of his pleasures, ran serious risks of drowning in the lake. He was the head and front of all the great expeditions of the peasant boys of Grianta and Cadenabbia. These urchins had provided themselves with a collection of small keys, and when the very dark nights came, they did their best to open the padlocks on the chains by which the fishermen moored their boats to some big stone or tree close to the shore. It must be explained that on the Lake of Como the fisherman puts down his lines at a considerable distance from the edge of the lake. The upper end of each line is fastened to a lath lined with cork, to which is fixed a very flexible hazel rod bearing a little bell, which tinkles as soon as the fish takes the bait and shakes the float.

The great object of the nocturnal raids, in which Fabrizio acted as commander in chief, was to get to these lines before the fishermen heard the tinkling of their little bells. The boys chose stormy seasons, and embarked on their risky enterprises early in the morning, an hour before dawn. They felt convinced, when they got into their boats, that they were rushing into terrible danger—this constituted the splendid aspect of their undertaking—and, like their fathers, they always devoutly recited an *Ave Maria*. Now, it frequently would happen that at the very moment of the start, and the instant after the recital of the *Ave Maria*, Fabrizio would be struck by an omen. This was the fruit, as affecting him, of his friend the priest's astrology, in the

actual predictions of which he had no belief at all. To his juvenile imagination these omens were a certain indication of success or failure, and as he was more resolute than any of his comrades, the whole band gradually grew so accustomed to accept such signs that if, just as the boat was shoving off, a priest was seen on the coast line, or a raven flew away on the left, the padlock was hastily put back upon the chain and every boy went home to bed. Thus, though Father Blanès had not imparted his somewhat recondite science to Fabrizio, he had imbued him, all unconsciously, with an unlimited confidence in those signs and portents which may unveil the future.

The marchese was conscious that an accident to his secret correspondence might place him at his sister's mercy. Every year, therefore, when the St. Angela (the Countess Pietranera's feast day) came around, Fabrizio was allowed to spend a week at Milan. All through the year he lived on the hope, or the regretful memory, of those seven days. On so great an occasion, and to defray the expenses of this politic journey, the marchese would give his son four crowns. To his wife, who went with the boy, he gave, as usual, nothing at all. But a cook, six lackeys, and a coachman and pair of horses started for Como the night before the travellers, and while the marchesa was at Milan her carriage was at her disposal, and dinner for twelve persons was served every day.

The sullen retirement in which the Marchese del Dongo elected to live was certainly not an amusing form of existence. But it had one advantage, that of permanently enriching the coffers of the families who chose to adopt it.

The marchese owned a revenue of more than two hundred thousand francs; he did not spend a quarter of it. He lived on hope. During the years between 1800 and 1813 he remained in the firm and unceasing expectation that Napoleon would be overthrown before the next six months were out. His joy when he received the news of the catastrophe of the Beresina, in the spring of 1813, may consequently be imagined. The capture of Paris and the fall of Napoleon almost drove him wild with joy, and he ventured on behaviour of the most insulting nature, both to his wife and his sister. At last, after fourteen years of waiting, he tasted the inexpressible delight of seeing the Austrian troops re-enter Milan. The general in command, obeying orders sent from Vienna, received the Marchese del Dongo with a courtesy which almost amounted to respect. One of the highest offices connected with the Government was at once offered him, and he accepted it as the discharge of a just debt. His eldest son was made a lieutenant in one of the finest of the imperial regiments, but Fabrizio would never have anything to do with the cadet's commission which was offered for his acceptance. The marchese's triumph, which he enjoyed with peculiar insolence, lasted but a few months, and was followed by a most humiliating reverse. He had never possessed any business aptitude, and his fourteen years of country life, surrounded by his servants, his notary, and his doctor, coupled with the ill humour which had crept upon him with advancing years, had developed his incapacity to the extremest point. In Austria no important post can be held for long by any person lacking that particular talent demanded

by the slow and complicated, but essentially logical, system of administration peculiar to that ancient monarchy. The marchese's blunders scandalized the clerks of his department, and even hampered the progress of business, while his ultra-monarchical vapourings irritated a populace which it was important to lull back into its former state of slumbrous indifference. So, one fine day, he was informed that his Majesty was graciously pleased to accept his resignation of his office, and simultaneously appointed him second grand major-domo of the Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom. The marchese was furious at the abominable injustice of which he was the victim. In spite of his horror of the free press, he printed a Letter to a Friend. Then he wrote to the Emperor, assuring his Majesty that his ministers were playing him false, and were no better than Jacobins. This done, he betook himself sadly back to his home at Grianta. One consolation he possessed. After the downfall of Napoleon certain powerful individuals at Milan had organized a brutal attack on Count Prina, a man of first-class worth, who had acted as minister in the service of the King of Italy. Pietranera risked his own life to save that of the unhappy man, who was thrashed to death with umbrellas, and lingered in agony for five hours. If a certain priest, the Marchese del Dongo's own confessor, had chosen to open the iron gate of the Church of San Giovanni, in front of which Prina had been dragged (and, indeed, he had at one moment been left lying in the gutter running along the middle of the street), the victim might have been saved. But the cleric scornfully refused to unlock the gate, and within