

DUMAS
ALEXANDRE

THE SICILIAN
BANDIT

Александр Дюма
The Sicilian Bandit

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Дюма А.

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Alexandre Dumas

The Sicilian Bandit / From the Volume «Captain Paul»

CHAPTER I. – INTRODUCTION – PALERMO

It is with cities as with men – chance presides over their foundation; and the topographical situation of the first, and the social position of the latter, exercise a beneficial or an evil influence over their entire existence.

There are noble cities which, in their selfish pride of place, have refused to permit the erection even of a few humble cottages on the mountain on which their foundations rested: their domination must be exclusive and supreme; consequently they have remained as poor as they are proud.

There are villages so humble as to have taken refuge in the recesses of the valley – have built their farmsteads, mills, and cottages on the margin of a brook, and, protected by the hills that sheltered them from heat and cold, have passed an almost unknown and tranquil life, like that of men without ardour and without ambition – terrified by every sound, dazzled by every blaze of light, and whose whole happiness consists in shade and silence.

There are, again, others that have commenced their existence as paltry hamlets on the seashore, and which, by degrees, have seen sailing vessels succeed the simple boat, and noble ships the tiny barque – whose modest huts have given place to lordly palaces, while the gold of Potosi and the wealth of the Indies flow into their ample ports.

It is for these reasons that we give to cold, inanimate nature epithets that truly belong to man's nobility alone. Thus we say, Messina the noble, Syracuse the faithful, Girgenti the magnificent, Trapani the invincible, and Palermo the blessed.

If ever there was a city predestined to be blessed – that city is Palermo. Situated beneath a cloudless sky, on a luxuriously fertile plain, and sheltered by a belt of mountains, in the centre of a picturesquely beautiful country, its ample ports open to receive the gentle flow of the azure sea.

There is nothing more beautiful than the days at Palermo, except it be the nights – those eastern nights, so clear and balmy, in which the murmur of the sea, the rustling of the breeze, and the busy hum of the town seem like a universal concert of love, during which all created things, from the wave to the tree, from the tree to man himself, breathe a mysterious sigh.

At times, however, the sea suddenly assumes a livid tint; the wind drops, the noise of the city is hushed; a few bloodied clouds travel rapidly from the south to the north; these clouds foretell the coming of the dread sirocco, that scorching blast, borne in the sands of Libya and carried to Europe by the southerly gales: immediately everything animate droops and becomes oppressed and suffering, and the whole island feels as when Etna threatens. Animals and men alike seek shelter, and when they have found it, they crouch in breathless fear, for the blast has taken away all courage, paralysed the strength, and deadened every faculty; and this lasts until a purer air from the Calabrian hills restores the strength and appears to renew their existence, and on the morrow all again is pleasure and mirth.

It was the evening of the month of September, 1803, when the sirocco had lasted throughout the entire day; but at sunset the sky became clear, the sea resumed its azure tint, and a few blasts of cool air blew over the Liparian Archipelago. This atmospheric change had such an influence on all animated beings, that they gradually revived from their state of torpor, and you might have imagined you were present at a second creation, the more so from the fact of Palermo being, as we have already said, a perfect garden of Eden.

Among all the daughters of Eve who, in the paradise they inhabit, make love their principal occupation, there was one who will play a very important part in the course of this history. That we may direct the attention of our readers to her, and to the place in which she dwelt, let them leave Palermo by the San-Georgio gate along with us, leaving the castle of St Mark on the right, and, reaching the Mole, they will follow the course of the sea-shore for some distance, and stop before the delightful villa of the Prince of Carini, the Viceroy of Sicily under Ferdinand the Fourth, who had just returned from Naples to take up his abode in it.

On the first floor of this elegant villa, in a chamber tapestried with azure-blue silk, the ceiling of which was ornamented with fresco painting, a female, simply attired in a snow-white morning dress, was reclining on a sofa, her arms hung listlessly, her head was thrown back, and her hair dishevelled; for an instant she might have been taken for a marble statue, but a gentle tremor ran through her frame, colour gradually came to her cheeks, her eyes began to open, the beautiful statue became animated, sighed, stretched out its hand to a little silver bell placed on a table of peliminta marble, rang it lazily, and, as if fatigued with the effort she had made, fell back again on the sofa.

The silvery sound, however, had been heard, the door opened, and a young and pretty waiting-maid, whose disordered toilet declared that she, as well as her mistress, had felt the influence of the African wind, appeared on the threshold.

"Is it you, Teresa?" said her mistress, languidly, and turning her head. "It is enough to kill one: is the sirocco still blowing?"

"No, signora, it has quite passed over, and we begin to breathe again."

"Bring me some iced fruit, and let me have a little air."

Teresa obeyed these orders with as much promptitude as the remains of her languor would allow; she placed the refreshments on the table, and opened the window that looked out on the sea.

"Look, madame la comtesse," she said, "we shall have a magnificent day to-morrow; and the air is so clear that you can plainly see the island of Alicari, although the day is drawing to a close."

"Yes, yes, the air is refreshing; give me your arm, Teresa; I will try if I can drag myself as far as the window."

The attendant approached her mistress, who replaced on the table the refreshment her lips had scarcely touched, and, resting on Teresa's shoulder, walked languidly towards the balcony.

"How this delightful breeze revives one," she observed, as she inhaled the evening air; "bring me my chair, and open the other window that looks into the garden, – that will do. Has the prince returned from Montreal?"

"Not yet, my lady," replied Teresa.

"So much the better; I would not have him see me in this wretched state, so pale and weak: I must look dreadfully."

"Madame la comtesse never looked more beautiful than at this moment, and I am certain that in the whole city we see from this window, there is not a woman who would not be jealous of your ladyship."

"Do you include the Marchioness of Rudini and the Princess of Butera?"

"I except no one," replied the attendant.

"Ah, I see the prince has been bribing you to flatter me, Teresa."

"I assure you, madame, I only tell you what I think."

"Oh, what a delightful place Palermo is!" said the countess, taking a deep inspiration.

"Especially when one is two-and-twenty years of age, and rich and beautiful," continued Teresa, smiling.

"You have but completed my thoughts, and on that account I wish to see every one about me cheerful and happy. When is your marriage to take place, Teresa?" Teresa made no answer. "Is not Sunday the day fixed upon?" continued the countess.

"Yes, signora," answered her attendant with a sigh.

"Why do you sigh? Have you not made up your mind?"

"Oh, yes, certainly."

"Have you any dislike to the marriage!"

"No; I believe Gaetano is a good lad, and that he will make me happy. Besides, this marriage will enable me to remain with madame la comtesse, and that is my most earnest wish."

"Then why did you sigh?"

"Pray pardon me, my lady, but I was thinking of our native country."

"Our native country!" echoed the countess.

"Yes; madame la comtesse may remember, while at Palermo, that she had left a foster sister at the village of which her father was the signor; and when she wrote for me to come to her, I was about to be married to a young man belonging to Bauso."

"Why did you not tell me of that? The prince, at my recommendation, would have taken him into his service."

"Oh, he would not become a *servant*," said Teresa; "he was too proud for that."

"Indeed!" said the countess.

"Yes; he had before then refused the situation of shepherd to the Prince of Goto."

"He was a gentleman, then, this young man?"

"No, madame la comtesse; he was but a simple mountaineer," said Teresa, in a melancholy tone.

"What was his name?"

"Oh, I do not think that your ladyship would recollect it," said Teresa, eagerly.

"And do you then regret his loss?"

"I cannot tell; I only know that if I were to become his wife instead of Gaetano's, I should be obliged to work for my living; and that would be a laborious task for me, after leading so easy and pleasant a life under madame la comtesse."

"And yet, Teresa, is it not true that people accuse me of pride and violence?" asked the countess.

"Madame is very good to me, that is all I can say," replied Teresa.

"The nobles of Palermo say so, because the Counts of Castel Nuovo were ennobled by Charles the Fifth, while the Ventimillas and the Partanas descend, as they pretend, from Tancred and Rogero: but that is not the reason the women hate me; they conceal their hatred under the cloak of disdain, and they neglect me because Rodolpho loves me, and they are jealous of the viceroy's love; they do all they can to seduce him from me; but they will never succeed, for my beauty is greater than theirs – Carini tells me so every day, and so do you, story-teller."

"You have here a greater flatterer than either his excellency or myself," said Teresa, archly.

"Who is that?" asked the countess.

"The countess's mirror."

"Foolish girl!" said the countess, with a gratified smile. "There, go and light the tapers of the Psyche." The attendant obeyed her mistress's orders. "Now shut that window, and leave me; there will be sufficient air from the garden."

Teresa obeyed, and left the room. Scarcely did the countess perceive that she was gone, than she seated herself before the Psyche, and smiled as she looked at and admired herself in the glass.

A wonderful creature was the Countess Emma, or rather Gemma, for, from her very infancy, her parents had added a G to her baptismal name; and, on account of this addition, she called herself *Diamond*. She was certainly wrong in confining her origin to the signature of Charles the Fifth, for in her slight and pliant form, you might recognise an Ionian origin; in her black and expressive eyes, a descendant of the Arabs; and in her fair and vermilion skin, a daughter of Gaul. She could equally boast of her descent from an Athenian archon, a Saracen emir, and a Norman chieftain; she was one of those beauties that in the first instance were found in Sicily alone, at a later time in one town alone in the world – Arles. So that, instead, of calling the artifices of the toilet to her assistance, as she intended in the first instance, Gemma found herself more charming in her partial dishabille.

The glass, being placed before the window that was left open, reflected the sky from its surface, and Gemma, without intention or thought, wrapt herself up in a vague and delicious pleasure, counting in the glass the images of the stars as they each appeared in their turn, and giving them names as they successively appeared in the heavens.

Suddenly it appeared as if a rising shadow placed itself before the stars, and that a face appeared behind her; she turned herself quickly round and beheld a man standing at the window. Gemma rose and opened her mouth with the intention of screaming for assistance, when the stranger, springing into the chamber, clasped his hands, and said in supplicating accents —

"In the name of heaven do not call out, madame! for on my honour, you have nothing to fear: I will do you no harm."

Gemma fell back into her chair, and the apparition and words of the stranger were succeeded by a moment's silence, during which she had time to cast a rapid glance at the person who had introduced himself into her room in this extraordinary manner.

He was a young man, some twenty-five or twenty-six years of age, and appeared to belong to the ranks of the people; he wore a Calabrian hat, round which a piece of velvet was tied, the ends of which fell loosely on his shoulders, a velvet vest with silver buttons, breeches of the same material, and ornamented in a similar manner; round his waist he wore a red silk belt with green fringe; shoes and leather gaiters completed his costume, which appeared to have been selected to set off his fine figure to advantage. His features possessed a kind of savage beauty, his look was bold and proud, his beard black, his teeth sharp and white, and his nose aquiline.

For a certainty, Gemma was not a whit the more easy by her examination, for the stranger, when he saw her stretch out her hand towards the table, as if to take hold of the silver bell, said —

"Did you not hear me, madame?" giving his voice that gentle expression so peculiar to the Sicilian dialect. "I wish you no harm – far from it. If you will grant me the request I am about to make, I will adore you as if you were a Madonna. You are already as beautiful; be as good as one."

"But what is it you require?" said Gemma, her voice still trembling; "and why did you come here in this manner, and at such an hour?"

"Had I requested the favour of an interview with one so noble, so rich, and so much loved by a man who is almost a king, is it probable that you would have granted it to me, so poor and unknown? Tell me, madame. But even if you had been so condescending, you might have delayed your answer, and I have no time to wait."

"What, then, can I do for you?" said Gemma, recovering herself by degrees.

"Everything, madame; for you hold in your hands my despair or my happiness – my death or my life."

"I do not understand you; explain yourself," faltered out the countess.

"You have," said the stranger, "a young woman from Bauso in your service."

"Teresa?" asked the countess.

"Yes, Teresa," replied the young man in trembling accents. "Now, this young woman is to be married to a valet de chambre of the Prince de Carini, and she is betrothed to me."

"Ah! it is you, then?" said the countess.

"Yes, it was I she was about to marry when she received your letter desiring her to come to you. She promised to remain faithful to me – to mention me to you, and if you refused her request, she pledged her word to return to me. I continued to expect her; but three years passed by, and yet I saw her not; and as she has not returned to me, I have come to seek her. On my arrival I learnt all, and then I thought I would throw myself on my knees before you, and ask Teresa of you."

"Teresa is a girl I am partial to," said the countess, "and I do not wish her to leave me. Gaetano is the prince's valet de chambre, and by marrying him she will still remain near me."

"If that is one of the conditions, I will enter the prince's service," said the young man, evidently suppressing his feelings.

"But Teresa told me you would not enter into service."

"That is true," replied the stranger; "but if it is necessary, I will make any sacrifice for her; only, if it were possible, I would be one of the huntsmen rather than a domestic servant."

"Well," said the countess, "I will speak of it to the prince, and if he consents –"

"The prince will do all that you wish, madame," interrupted the young man. "You do not ask, you order; I know that well."

"But what guarantee have I for your good conduct?" asked the countess.

"My eternal gratitude, madame," said the young man.

"Still I must know who you are," said the countess.

"I am a man," said the stranger, "whom you can make miserable or happy; that is the sum of all."

"The prince will ask me your name," said the countess.

"What is my name to him?" asked the stranger. "Is he acquainted with it? Has the name of a poor peasant of Bauso ever reached the prince's ears?"

"But I belong to the same country as yourself," said the countess; "my father was Count of Castel Nuovo, and lived in a little fortress a quarter of a league from the village."

"I know it, madame," said the young man, in a low hoarse voice.

"Well, I ought to know your name," said the countess. "Tell me, then, and I will see what I can do for you."

"Believe me, madame la comtesse," said the stranger, "it would be better for you to remain ignorant of it. What does my name signify? I am an honest man. I would make Teresa happy; and if it were necessary, I would sacrifice my life for you or the prince."

"Your obstinacy is very strange," said the countess, "and I have a greater desire to know your name than ever, for when I asked Teresa what it was, she, like you, refused to tell me. In the meantime, I warn you that I will not consent to your wishes except on that condition."

"You wish to know it then, madame?"

"I insist upon it!" said the countess.

"For the last time," said the stranger, "I beg, I implore you, not to insist upon it."

"Either name it," said the countess, in an imperative tone, "or leave me."

"I am called Pascal Bruno," said the young man, in so calm a voice that you might have imagined every emotion had passed away if the paleness of his features had not been evidence of the internal struggle.

"*Pascal Bruno!*" cried the countess, drawing back in her chair in terror. "*Pascal Bruno!* You, the son of Antonio Bruno, whose head is placed in an iron cage at the Château de Bauso?"

"I am his son," coolly replied the young man.

"And do you not know," asked the countess, "why your father's head is placed there? Speak!" Pascal remained silent. "Well," continued the countess, "it was because *your* father attempted to assassinate *mine*."

"I know all that, madame," replied Pascal, calmly; "and I know, besides, that when you, then a child, was taken into the village, your attendants showed you that head, and told you it was my father's head; but they did not tell you, madame, that *your* father dishonoured *mine*."

"Thou liest!" passionately exclaimed the countess.

"May God punish me if I tell not the truth. Madame, my mother was beautiful and virtuous; your father, the count, became enamoured of her: but she resisted all his importunities, all his promises, and all his threats; but one day, when my father had gone to Taormina, the count caused her to be carried off by four men, taken to a small house that belonged to him between Limero and Furnari (it is now a tavern), and there – madame – he violated her!"

"The count was lord and master of the village of Bauso," said Gemma, proudly. "Both the property and the persons of its inhabitants belonged to him, and he did your mother much honour by admiring her."

"My father did not think so it appears," said Pascal, knitting his brow. "That, perhaps, was because he was born at Stilla, on the lands of the Prince de Moncada Paterno; and on that account he struck the count. The wound was not mortal; so much the better. For a long time I deeply regretted it; but now, to my shame, I congratulate myself on it."

"If my memory be correct," said the countess, "not only was your father put to death as murderer, but your uncles are still at the galleys."

"Your memory is good," said Pascal. "My uncles gave an asylum to the assassin, and defended him when the officers came to arrest him: they were, therefore, looked upon as accomplices, and sent, my uncle Placido, to Favignana; my uncle Pietro, to Lipari; and my uncle Pépe, to Vulcano. As for myself, I was too young; and, although I was arrested, they gave me up again to my mother."

"And what became of your mother?" asked Gemma.

"She died," said Pascal, mournfully.

"Where?" asked Gemma.

"In the mountains between Pizzo di Goto and Nisi," replied Pascal.

"Why did she leave Bauso?" inquired the countess.

"That every time we passed the castle," said Pascal, "she might not see the head of her husband, nor I that of my father! Yes, she died without a physician, without a priest – she was buried in unholy ground, and I dug her grave. There, madame – you will pardon me, I trust – over the newly-turned earth I swore to avenge the wrongs of my family – of whom I, alone, remain – upon *you*, the only survivor of the family of the count. But I became enamoured of Teresa, and I left the mountains that I might not see my mother's grave, towards which I felt myself perjured. I came down to the plain, and went to Bauso. I did more than that, for when I knew that Teresa had left the village to enter your service, I thought of entering that of the count. For a long time I felt repugnant at the idea; but my love for Teresa overcame every other feeling. I made up my mind to see you – I have seen you; here am I, without arms, and a suppliant before you, madame – before whom I ought only to appear as an enemy."

"You must perceive," said Gemma, "the prince cannot take into his service the son of a man who was hanged, and whose uncles are at the galleys."

"Why not, madame?" asked Bruno, "if that man consents to forget that those punishments were unjustly inflicted?"

"Are you mad?" said the countess.

"Madame la comtesse," said Pascal, "you know what an oath is to a mountaineer. Well, I have broken my oath. You also know the vengeance of a Sicilian. Well, I will renounce my vengeance and forget my oath. I ask only that all may be forgotten, and that you will not force me to remember it?"

"But if you should," said the countess, "how would you act?"

"I do not wish to think upon the subject."

"Then we must take our measures accordingly," said the countess.

"I beg of you, madame la comtesse," said Pascal, "to have pity on me; you see that I am doing all that I can to remain an honest man. Once engaged by the prince – once Teresa's husband, I can answer for myself: otherwise I shall never return to Bauso."

"It is impossible to do as you desire," said the countess, decidedly.

"Countess," said Pascal, earnestly, "you have loved?" Gemma smiled disdainfully. "You must know what jealousy is – you must know its sufferings, its maddening tortures. Well, I love Teresa – I am jealous of her; and I feel I should lose my senses if this marriage take place; and then –"

"Well, then –" said Gemma, in an agitated tone.

"Then, take heed! I do not remember the galleys where my uncles are, the cage in which my father's head is placed, and the grave where my mother sleeps!" At this instant a strange cry, which seemed to be a signal, was heard outside the window, and almost at the same instant a bell was rung.

"There is the prince," said Gemma, regaining her confidence.

"Yes, yes – I know it," muttered Pascal; "but before he passes through yonder door, you have time to say 'yes.' I implore you, madame, to grant me what I ask. Give me Teresa – place me in the prince's service!"

"Let me pass," said Gemma, imperiously, and advanced towards the door; but instead of obeying this order, Bruno sprang to the door and bolted it. "Would you dare to stop me?" cried Gemma, taking hold of the bell. "Help! help!"

"Do not call out, madame," said Bruno, still mastering his feelings, "for I have told you I will do you no harm."

A second cry, resembling the first, was heard outside the window.

"It is well – well, Ali; you watch faithfully, my boy," said Bruno. "Yes, I know the count has arrived; I hear him in the corridor. Madame, madame! an instant longer remains for you; one second, and all the misfortunes I foresee may be avoided."

"Help, Rodolpho! Help!" screamed Gemma.

"You have, then neither heart, nor soul, nor pity, either for yourself or others," cried Bruno plunging his hands in his hair and looking at the door, which was being violently shaken.

"I am fastened in!" cried the countess, who felt fresh courage from the assistance which had arrived; "fastened in with a man who is threatening my life. Help! help! Rodolpho, help!"

"I do not threaten you," said Pascal, "I am entreating you – I entreat you still; but since you will –" Bruno, uttering a yell like that of a tiger, sprang upon Gemma, no doubt with the intention of strangling her, for (as we have said) he had no arms. At the same instant a small door, concealed at the extremity of the alcove, opened, the report of a pistol was heard, the room was filled with smoke, and Gemma fainted: when she recovered her senses she was in the prince's arms.

"Where is he? where is he?" she cried, in a terrified accent, and looking around her.

"I cannot tell; I suppose I must have missed him," answered the prince; "for, while I was stepping over the bed, he leaped out of the window; and, as I saw you insensible, I did not trouble myself about him – I thought only of you; I must have missed him, and yet it is strange I do not see the mark of the ball in the hangings."

"Let them run after him," said Gemma: "show no mercy, no pity, to that man, my lord, for he was a robber, who would have assassinated me."

They searched the villa during the whole night, the gardens, and the shore, but without avail – Pascal Bruno had disappeared.

The next day a track of blood was discovered, which began at the foot of the window from which he had leaped and was lost on the sea-shore.

CHAPTER II. – BRUNO AND ALI

At daybreak the following morning, the fishermen's boats left the port as usual and dispersed themselves over the sea. In the meantime, one of their little fleet, having on board a man, and a boy of twelve or fourteen years of age, stopped when it came within sight of Palermo, and lowering its sail, brought to; but as this motionless state, at a spot little favourable for fishing, might have attracted suspicion, the boy occupied himself in mending his nets. As to the man, he was lying at the bottom of the boat, his head resting on the side, and he appeared to be plunged in a deep reverie, still, as if mechanically, he took up the sea-water with his right hand, and poured it over his left shoulder, which was bound up with a bandage stained with blood.

The man was Pascal Bruno, and the boy the same who, placed beneath the countess's window, had twice given him the signal for flight: at first sight, you could see that he was a native of a more ardent clime than that in which the events we record took place. He was born on the coast of Africa, and it was in the following manner that Pascal Bruno became acquainted with him: —

About a year before the occurrence of the events we have just narrated, a party of Algerine pirates, having learned that the Prince of Moncana Paterno, one of the richest noblemen in Sicily, was returning in a small vessel from Pantelleria to Catana with an escort of a dozen men only, lay in ambush behind the island of Porri, distant about two miles from the coast. The prince's vessel, as the pirates had foreseen, passed between the island and the shore, but the instant it entered the narrow strait, the pirates left the creek in which they had been concealed with three vessels and rowed forward to attack their expected prize, the prince. The latter, however, immediately perceiving the imminence of his danger, ordered his crew to turn the boat's head towards the shore, and run her aground on the beach at Furella. They did not succeed in reaching the point desired, but the place where the boat grounded had only about three feet of water, and the pirates were close upon them. The prince and his followers leaped into the sea, holding their arms above their heads, trusting to be able to reach a village they saw at some half a league distance without being obliged to employ them. But they had scarcely disembarked, when another party of the pirates who, having foreseen this manouvre, had rowed one of the boats as high as Bufaidone, issued from the reeds through which the river flowed, and cut off the retreat of the prince.

The attack immediately began, but while the followers of the prince were engaged with the first party, the second came up, and all resistance becoming evidently useless, the prince surrendered, asking for his life, and promising to ransom himself and all his followers. Immediately after the prisoners had laid down their arms, a party of countrymen were seen approaching, armed with muskets and pitchforks, and the pirates, having made themselves masters of the prince's person, the only object they had in view, did not think it worth while waiting for the arrival of the countrymen, but took to their boats in such haste as to leave behind them three of their men, whom they believed were either dead or mortally wounded.

Among those who had hastened to the scene of conflict, was Pascal Bruno, whose wandering life led him sometimes to one place and sometimes to another, his disturbed mind leading him into every kind of adventurous enterprise. When the countrymen reached the beach where the struggle had taken place, they found one of the Prince of Paterno's domestics dead, another slightly wounded in the thigh, and three of the pirates bathed in their blood, but still breathing. Two blows from the butt-end of a musket soon made an end of two of the number, and a pistol-ball was about to send the third to join his comrades, when Bruno perceiving it was a boy, turned the arm that held the pistol on one side, and declared that he would take the wounded lad under his own protection.

There were a few remonstrances against this ill-timed pity as it was called, but when Bruno had said a thing, he maintained what he had said; accordingly, he cocked his carbine, and declared that he would blow out the brains of the first man who should approach his *protégé*, and as they knew him

to be a man who would not hesitate an instant in putting his threat into execution, they allowed him to take the boy in his arms and go off with him. Bruno proceeded to the shore, and entered the boat in which he performed his adventurous excursions, whose qualities he knew so well that it seemed to obey him like a well-tutored horse, and spreading his sail, he steered towards Cape Aliga Grande.

As soon as he saw that the boat was in the right course, and that it no longer needed a steersman, he attended to the wounded boy, who was still insensible: he took off the white bournouse in which he was dressed, loosened the belt to which his yataghan was still attached, and perceived by the rays of the setting sun the situation of the wound. Upon examination, he discovered that a musket-ball had entered between the right hip and the false ribs, and gone out near the spine: the wound was dangerous, but it was not mortal.

The evening breeze, and the cool sensation produced by the sea-water with which Bruno washed the wound, recalled the boy to his senses, and he uttered a few words in a foreign language, but without opening his eyes. Bruno, however, knowing that a wound caused by fire-arms produced a burning thirst, guessed that he was asking for drink, and he placed a bottle of water to his lips. The boy drank greedily, uttered a few inarticulate sounds, and fell back in a fainting fit.

Pascal laid him down as gently as he could at the bottom of the boat, and, uncovering the wound, he continued, unceasingly, to apply to it his handkerchief dipped in the sea – a remedy considered infallible in the case of wounds by every seafaring man in the Mediterranean.

At length our navigators found themselves at the mouth of the Ragusa, and the wind setting in from the African coast. Pascal with little difficulty directed his bark into the stream; and leaving Modica to the right, he passed the bridge that is thrown across the high-road from Noto to Chiaramonti.

He went about half a league further, but there the river became no longer navigable; he drew his boat up among the shrubs that grew by the side of the stream, and taking the boy in his arms, he carried him inland. He soon reached the entrance to a valley, into which he descended, and presently came to a spot where the mountain was perpendicular, the smoother side of which was pierced in various places; for in this valley were to be seen the remains of the habitations of the dwellers in caves, the first occupants of the country, and who were afterwards civilised by the Greeks.

Bruno entered one of these caverns, which communicated by means of a few steps with an upper story, to which the air was admitted through a small, square hole that answered the purpose of a window. A bed of rushes was heaped up in the corner, and on this he spread out the boy's bournouse; and then having lighted a branch of fir, he fixed it in the wall, and seating himself on a stone near the bed, he waited until his *protégé* recovered his senses.

This was not the first visit Bruno had paid to this retreat, for often during his travels across the island without any object in view, but merely for the sake of passing away his solitary time, he had entered that valley, and rested in that chamber which had been excavated in the rock three thousand years before. Here it was that he gave himself up to vague and incoherent reveries, so habitual to imaginative but uninstructed minds.

He knew that a race of men had disappeared from the earth which in former times excavated these retreats; and, deeply tinged with the popular superstition, he believed, like all the inhabitants of the locality, that these men were enchanters and dealers in witchcraft; but this belief, far from driving him from these wild and terror-inspiring places, irresistibly attracted him to them; for in his youth he had heard numbers of tales related of enchanted guns, invulnerable men, and invisible travellers; and his fearless mind, delighting in the marvellous and the terrible, had but one engrossing desire, that of meeting with some mysterious being, some sorcerer, enchanter, or demon who, by means of an infernal compact, would endow him with some supernatural power, and make him superior to the rest of mankind. But he had vainly invoked the shades of the ancient inhabitants of the valley of Modica; no supernatural appearances had visited him, and Pascal Bruno remained, to his great regret, a man

like other men, with the exception of a degree of strength and skill for which no other mountaineer could be compared with him.

Bruno had been wholly absorbed in one of these visionary reveries for nearly an hour beside the bed of the wounded lad, when the latter awoke from a species of lethargy into which he had been plunged, opened his eyes, looked round him with a wandering gaze, and at last fixed his eyes upon the man who had saved him, but unconscious whether he saw in him a friend or an enemy. During this examination, and by an indefinite instinct of self-defence, he put his hand to his waist in search of his faithful yataghan; but not finding it there, he heaved a deep sigh, and again closed his eyes.

"Are you in pain?" said Bruno to him, making use of the *Lingua Franca*, a language so well understood on the coast of the Mediterranean, from Marseilles to Alexandria, from Constantinople to Algiers, and by means of which you may travel over the whole of the old world.

"Who are you?" asked the boy.

"A friend," replied Pascal.

"I am not a prisoner then?" said the boy.

"No," answered Pascal.

"Then how came I here?" asked the boy.

Pascal told him all that had happened; to which the boy listened attentively, and when he had finished his tale, he fixed his eyes gratefully upon Pascal, and said, "Then, since you have saved my life, you will be a father to me?"

"Yes," said Bruno, "I will."

"Father," said the wounded boy, "thy son's name is Ali; what is yours?"

"Pascal Bruno."

"May Allah protect thee," said the lad.

"Are you in want of anything?" asked Bruno.

"Yes, water," said the boy; "I am thirsty."

Pascal took up an earthen vessel concealed in a hole in the rock, and went to a spring that flowed near the cave; on going up again he cast his eyes on the boy's yataghan, which he had made no attempt to draw nearer to him. Ali greedily seized the cup, and drank off the water at a draught.

"May Allah grant you as many happy years as there were drops of water in this cup," said the boy, as he gave it back to Pascal.

"You are a good creature," murmured Bruno; "make haste and get well, and you shall, if you wish go back to Africa."

The boy recovered from his wound, but continued to remain in Sicily, for he became so much attached to Bruno that he would not leave him. Since that time, he had always remained with him, accompanying him in his hunting excursions over the mountains; assisting him in the management of his boat, and ready to sacrifice his life at a sign from the man he called his father.

On the previous evening, he had accompanied Pascal to the villa of the Prince de Carini, and waited for him beneath the windows during the interview with Gemma; and he it was who had twice given the signal of alarm; the first time, when the prince rang the bell at the gate, and again, when he entered the *château*. He was just about to climb into the window to render Bruno assistance when the latter sprang out; he followed him in his flight, and when they reached the shore, they both of them got into their boat which was awaiting them, and as they could not have put to sea in the evening without creating suspicion, they were content to remain among the fishing-boats that waited for the break of day, in order that they might put to sea.

During the night Ali, in his turn, returned to Pascal the attentions he had received under similar circumstances, for the Prince of Carini had taken a good aim, and the ball he had vainly searched for in the hangings had almost passed through Bruno's shoulder, so that Ali had but to make a slight incision with his yataghan to extract it from the side opposite to that at which it entered. All this took place without the interference of Bruno who appeared scarcely to pay any attention to the circumstance,

and the only care he bestowed on his wound was, as we have already said, to moisten it, from time to time, with sea-water, while the boy appeared to be busy mending his nets.

"Father," said Ali, suddenly interrupting himself in his pretended occupation, "look towards the shore."

"Well, what is it?" said Pascal.

"A number of people?" replied Ali.

"Where?" asked Pascal.

"Yonder, on the road leading to the church," replied Ali.

In fact, a considerable crowd of people were passing along the winding road that led to the church. Bruno saw that it was a marriage procession on its way to the chapel of St. Rosalie.

"Direct the boat's head to the shore, and row quickly," he cried, starting up and standing in the boat.

The boy obeyed, seized the oars, and the little vessel seemed to fly over the surface of the sea; the nearer they approached the shore the more terrible the features of Bruno became: at length, when they were within half a mile of the land, he cried out, in an accent of deep despair —

"It is Teresa! They have hurried on the ceremony; they would not wait until Sunday for fear I should have carried her off. God knows, I have done all in my power to bring this affair to a happy conclusion — but they would not have it, so woe betide them!"

At these words, Bruno, assisted by Ali, hoisted the sail of his little bark, which, doubling Mount Pellegrino, disappeared at the end of two hours behind Cape Gollo.

CHAPTER III. – THE FATAL BRIDAL

Pascal was not deceived in his conjectures: the countess, afraid of some attempt on the part of Bruno, had hurried on the marriage three days before the appointed time without informing Teresa of her interview with her old lover; and the young people had selected the chapel of St. Rosalie, the patroness of Palermo, for the celebration of the ceremony.

This was another of the characteristics of Palermo, that city of love; it had placed itself under the protection of a young and pretty saint! Thus, St. Rosalie was at Palermo what St. Januarius is at Naples, the omnipotent distributor of the blessings of heaven; but superior to St. Januarius, as she was of a royal French race, being descended from Charlemagne; this was proved by her genealogical tree, painted above the door on the exterior of the chapel; a tree whose trunk issues from the breast of the conqueror of Vitikind, and after dividing into many branches, it reunites at the summit to give birth to the Prince of Sinebaldo, the father of St. Rosalie; but her noble birth, the riches of her house and her own beauty had no effect on the young princess; at the age of eighteen she quitted the court, and, bent upon living a life of contemplation, she suddenly disappeared, and no one knew what had become of her; it was only after her death that she was found, as beautiful and perfect as if she still lived, in the grotto in which she had taken up her abode, and in the attitude in which she had fallen asleep. In after times, a chapel was erected over this grotto, and in this chapel Teresa and Gaetano were married.

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