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The Viper of Milan.

A ROMANCE OF LOMBARDY.
BY MARJORIE BOWEN.

(Continued.)

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT.

The Viper

The Duke of Milan had sent a secret embassy to Mastino della Scala lying crushed outside Milan—a secret embassy he had long been meditating. The master-stroke of his policy should be the Duke of Verona's ruin, and his complete triumph.

And the moment of his sending was well chosen. The two days of which Mastino spoke had passed. The answer from d'Este at Novara had been unfavorable. His plans, he said, were to march back to Modena and Ferrara, protecting that part of Lombardy, held now by Julia Gonzaga's men alone, against Visconti; he would wait for his army to come up; he would wait for Mastino, but not long; his duty lay inside Modena and Ferrara, not outside the hopeless walls of Milan.

And Mastino had sent his teeth, and taken his answer in silence.

That night there was a wild attack on the walls of Milan, so sudden, so fierce, that it almost seemed as if the ramparts must fall before the furious onslaught.

For five hours the Veronese and the defenders had struggled on the walls. Twice Mastino had wrenched the towers of the western gate from the enemy's hand; twice he had been driven back, leaving his dead piled high. A third desperate attempt had also been lost, and Della Scala fell back toward Brescia with frightfully diminished numbers, and mad with the agony of final defeat.

His cause seemed hopeless. And in the moment of his hopelessness Visconti's embassy arrived.

"Give Della Scala one day to consider," Visconti said to Giannotto, who accompanied d'Este on this mission. "And if he mislikes the terms, say thou art to carry them to Imppolito d'Este."

It was evening and very still. Visconti stepped onto the balcony, and looked through the clustered pillars of its arcade into the garden.

The setting sun blended all flowers alike with soft gold; a little breeze shook the leaves, and stirred the jasmine that clung to the carved sandstone, fluttering its white stars delicately; the sky was very clear, as pure as a shell, and tinted like a wild rose.

Visconti was busy with his thoughts. His eyes rested on Isotta's dark prison with an utter satisfaction in gazing on this evidence of his power over Della Scala. And then he looked to Graziosa's dwelling, and a shade crossed his face. Even to himself he would not yet admit it—but with her it was not perfect success.

Since Valentine's cruel stab, Graziosa had faded, grown silent and dull; and her beauty had gone with her happiness. She looked no wife for a Visconti. Torn from its setting, her fresh face lost its charm; the simplicity that had pleased him in her father's house annoyed the Duke in his own palace, the meekness and devotion that had flattered his vanity now angered it—in his eyes she had no more presence than a serving-maid; she was making his choice a mock before all Milan, with her white face and timid voice.

Visconti frowned to himself as he thought of her. She had said no word, she had uttered no reproach; she had remained passive and dull; but she was grown a mere shadow, a reflection of her former self.

"Maybe her folly will wear away," mused Visconti moodily. "But if not—if she prefers her father before me—she may follow him."

Today he had not as yet seen her. This was the first thought he had spared her

now he had a free moment and he would visit her—see for himself if her humor should promise of changing—the humor of: "My Lady Graziosa Vistarnini, who hath not spirit for her destiny, who hath not the greatness to be proud to be a Duchess of Milan."

Visconti sneered at her scruples, and was inclined to be angry with his own folly in choosing his wife for a soft heart and true affection; and with more even than anger he thought of Valentine. He took his way alone through the sumptuous gardens.

Graziosa was not in her gorgeous residence. "She had gone to the little summer-house in the garden," he was told, "to see the sun set, and pray to Santa Teresa, whose name-day it was."

Visconti turned on his heel with an impatient shrug of the shoulders. He was not attuned to passive virtue or to saintly prayers, nor was his palace their best background.

He saw Tisio and his pages in the distance—behind them, the white marble summer-house, standing on a gentle eminence, half-hidden in laurel; and as he advanced through the clustering flowers he saw Tisio enter the low door, the scarlet liveries of the pages flashing through the deep green.

The perfect evening was like music in its calm loveliness. Visconti felt its charm; he was ever alive to obvious beauty, and none of his artist's perception could have walked this glorious summer garden, at such an hour, unmoved. His heart softened toward Graziosa; she had saved Milan—for his sake; in his great triumph he could afford to remember it, and the affection that prompted it, and set to her credit much else she might seem to lack.

He picked a white rose from the bush that crossed his path, and stuck it in his belt; he remembered she had often worn them—there was a bush in Agnolo's bowery, and they reminded him of her. He looked up at the white summer-house, a square tower, distinct against the sky; the top window was open wide, then suddenly blew to—and Visconti started at it curiously and so suddenly that a pang shot through his heart. Then he advanced with a quicker step toward the marble summer-house.

Graziosa stood in its upper chamber, a circular room, broken by three large windows—the walls a marvel of serpentine and jasper, the casements a glory of stained glass, through which there poured the last rays of the setting sun, flooding everything with a thousand dazzling colors.

A carved marble bench ran around the wall, and above it shallow niches, in one of which stood a gilt lamp. On the floor lay a forgotten lute, tied with a knot of cherry-colored ribbons.

Graziosa unlatched one of the windows; it opened center-wise, and the girl stood, one hand on either leaf, the sun making her golden bright from head to foot. Before her lay Milan, the beautiful, with its trees and gardens, clear in the setting sun, that sunk, a fiery ball, behind the distant purple hills. Graziosa breathed heavily. The tower looked toward the western gate; the sun caught the roof of a little house beside it, the roof of a house and a flock of white doves that flew around it, as if looking for something they could not find. Near rose the square tower of a little church, Santa Maria Nuova.

Graziosa stepped back into the room, letting the window fall-to with a clang. Some one must come soon. With a piteous little gesture she pulled at the jeweled fastening of her stiff satin robe. For some moments her trembling fingers could not undo the great pearl clasp. At last it opened, and the yellow robe fell apart. A rope of pearls bound her waist; with a hasty movement she undid them, and let slip the gorgeous dress, that fell stiff and gemmed onto the marble floor. Beneath was the blue robe she had worn when she first came to the palace.

With hasty fingers she pulled the ornaments from her hair, throwing them to the ground. Her long curls fell about her shoulders; a little sob shook her throat; she looked wistfully around, and sank into the chair. For a little while she sat silent, with closed eyes, panting.

Suddenly the sun sank, leaving the room dull, all the light and color gone. "I am so lonely!" she whispered to herself—"so lonely! I want some one—to kiss me—good-by!"

She rose and fumbled among the folds of her fallen gown; she found something small she grasped tight in her cold fingers.

"I am not brave—ah, I fear I am not brave!"

She rested her head against the arm of the chair, as if collecting herself; then, with a little smile, lifted it with a pitiful show of courage.

The wind blew the unlatched window open, showing the city roofs and the wall distant and gray; then it fell to again, leaving the chamber dull, almost dark, when a little later a footstep fell on the stair and the door was pushed open.

Tisio stepped in, peering around with vacant eyes. D'Orleans had lost his lute. Tisio remembered it left here. A heap of shimmering yellow satin caught his eye—yellow satin and a great rope of pearls. He marked it with vacant surprise, then, seeing the lute he sought for, made for it eagerly. He was proud to do these things. It pleased him to be so useful.

Daily Fashion Hint for Times Readers.



LANSDOWNE ADAPTS ITSELF TO THE PRESENT MODES.

The vogue of soft, clinging materials bring back an old favorite this season—lansdowne—a beautiful silk and wool fabric, lustrous as silk and even more graceful. The beauty of its draping quality is charmingly exemplified in this model by Drecol, a Parisian designer catering much to the American trade. The skirt is long and very plain, a front panel effect with fine pin tucks being the only attempt at elaboration. Decidedly the reverse is the bodice, which seems to be made of lace rather than lansdowne. In reality the sleeves only are made of the lace, these being the Japanese kimono pattern, which are so large that they give the effect of an entire lace waist. There is a chemise and vest of finest white net finely tucked and gathered into a yoke band of rouspouse insertion, and the little jacket-like fronts of the lansdowne are trimmed with satin ribbon, rosettes in the same apricot shade as the dress material. The lace is dyed in the same shade and an effective bit of color harmony is worked out with hand embroideries in several shades of blue, following the pattern of the lace. Cord tassels depend from the stole points in the back as well as in the front.

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Purifies and enriches the blood and builds up the whole system.

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He would not risk the page should find it. The lute lay near the bench against the wall, and picking it up, Tisio noticed that some one sat there, some one very still and silent, against the cold white marble. He dropped the lute and came nearer. The chamber was utterly silent in the cold light, and the window was blowing to and fro with a dismal, sullen sound; but Tisio knew no ghostly terrors, he was not fearful of the dark.

He leaned over the figure eagerly, and when he knew it for Graziosa he was pleased. He liked her. That morning she had met him and seized his hands, talked to him wildly, telling him with sob something he could not understand. He thought it had to do with Gian.

Her head lay back against the purple cushion, and Tisio stroked it tenderly, fondling the beautiful bright curls that fell over the plain blue dress.

"Pretty thing!" he said gently. "Pretty thing!"

He had no remembrance how he had stroked that hair before in the streets of Milan, in the sunshines.

She never moved under his touch, and something in the droop of her attitude struck him.

"She is sad," he thought, and with a change of tone lifted one of her limp hands.

"Poor thing!" he said again. "Poor, pretty thing! Art thou sad, poor pretty thing?"

She made no answer, and he laid her hand back on her lap tenderly, smoothing her dress, and whispering comfort in her unhearing ears.

Suddenly the door swung open under an impatient hand. It was the Duke, and Tisio was not startled.

"Gian!" he said, "be kind to her; talk to her, poor thing!"

Visconti stepped into the room, looking at Tisio keenly.

(To be continued.)

"Preventies" will promptly check a cold or the Grippe when taken early or at the "sneeze stage." Preventies cure seated colds as well. Preventies are little candy cold cure tablets, and Dr. Shoop, Racine, Wis., will gladly mail you samples and a book on Colds free, if you will write him. The samples prove their merit. Check early Colds with Preventies and stop Pneumonia. Sold in 5c. and 25c. boxes by druggists.

George Ham, of the C. P. R., who is now in Mexico, is rapidly regaining his health.

Wrapped in four wrappings.

Tastes like more.

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SWISS MILK CHOCOLATE

Cakes, 5c., 10c., 15c., 20c., and 75c. Croquettes, 20c. and 40c. each.

Wm. H. DUNN, MONTREAL, General Agent for Canada.

MOTHER TAFT SAYS HER WORD

She Does Want Not Her Son to be President of the United States.

LOS ANGELES, April 26—"I do not want my son to be president; he is not a candidate," smilingly declared Mrs. W. R. Taft, mother of the Secretary of War William H. Taft. "The supreme bench, where my boy would administer justice is his ambition for him. His is a judicial mind, you know, and he loves the law. Added to these are good health and an unflinching good nature."

Mrs. Taft, a 40-year-old, graceful matron of seventy, was attired in a handsome black embroidered gown with a dainty cap of white—a woman of the old school with whom traces of early beauty still remain. She is proud of her son's mental achievements and tells with pride of his record in school, his early boyhood, his graduation from the Cincinnati High School, his college days in Yale, and then his admission to the bar. It is his record in law and his innate love for it which cause her to wish him a supreme court justiceship, instead of the highest position in the United States.

"To be president is a dreadful responsibility and a very trying position," she continued. "He has not sought to be a candidate for it. It has been thrust upon him. I know that he himself does not want it, that his views are the same as mine."

To Counteract the Effect of Coughs, Colds, Chills

Nothing can be more effective than a drink containing thirty drops of Nerviline, a teaspoonful of sugar and a cup of hot water. This breaks up any tendency to cold, wards off croup and pneumonia. Rubbed in the chest it relieves coughing and prevents complications.

For all winter ills nothing serves the purpose like a 25c. bottle of Nerviline; get it today.

ROOSEVELT WILL NOT TAKE IT BACK

He Reiterates What He Said About Moyer and Haywood.

NEW YORK, April 26—It is announced that the committee which was appointed by the Central Federated Union last Sunday to go to Washington and ask President Roosevelt to retract his statement that Moyer and Haywood were "undesirable citizens" had decided not to go. This decision, it was added, was the result partly of the letter of the president to the chairman of the Moyer-Haywood conference of Chicago confirming instead of retracting his original statement.

NOMGREL DOG IS HEIR TO ESTATE OF \$20,000

INDIANAPOLIS, April 26—Bill, a mongrel dog, which is forced to live in Chicago, lives better and has a better time and a larger income than half the people in Indianapolis, according to the provisions of a will filed here. The will of George C. Watts, formerly a prominent Chicagoan, leaves to the dog the interest on \$20,000. Watts also provides for his horse, King, which is to be fed \$300 worth of feed every year.

SHOT IN AN ACCIDENT

PUEBLA, Mich., April 26—A revolver falling from the pocket of Hilario Hernandez, a priest, today, sent a bullet through the heart of N. Joaquin Casarato, a young millionaire of this city, while the two men, in company with A. Guevara, a rich hacienda owner, were riding in Guevara's automobile. Guevara and the priest were immediately arrested and are being held pending an investigation.

Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Robertson were registered at the Canadian office, Paris, the week ended April 13.



A smile of sunshine breaking on the earth;
A touch of green along the grassy slope;
All nature thrilled, expectant of the birth
Of bloom and verdure; in the heart of
That somewhere summer lingers up the way—
And this is May.

Across the dawn the singing of a bird;
A limpid blue over all the sky above;
A something deep within the bosom stirred
That at a smile would blossom into love;
A readiness to bow to Cupid's sway—
And this is May.

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Palpitation of the Heart, Irregular or Skipped Beats, Dizzy Spells, Sneezing, Feeling, Shortness of Breath, Bluish Color of the Lips, Pain in the Region of the Heart, Thin Watery Blood, Cold Hands and Feet, Nervousness, Sleeplessness, etc., etc.

If you have any of these symptoms

MILBURN'S HEART AND NERVE PILLS

will bring the whole system into healthy action, and give power, force and vigor to every organ of the body thereby strengthening the weak heart and restoring nerves. Mrs. Harrison Daybell, Welland, Ont., writes: "I write to let you know what good Milburn's Heart and Nerve Pills have done for me."

For over three years I suffered with pains under my left breast and my nerves were completely unstrung. I purchased two boxes of your pills and before I had the first box finished I felt much better and now I am cured."

Price 50 cents per box or three boxes for \$1.25 at all dealers or will be mailed direct on receipt of price by The T. Milburn Co., Limited, Toronto, Ont.