

Buondelmonte

BY MAURICE HEWLETT

PART II

I

THE year had turned to the spring; March was in, but Buondelmonte had not been to the Amidei house for three weeks, nor more than twice in all that time to see Schiatta degli Uberti. He had been in the country, it was known; but Mosca de' Lamberti said he had seen him in the city with his friends. He understood that a large table was held in the Buondelmonte house. Schiatta asked him if he had been a guest at it; but Mosca only grinned and grated his teeth together. Schiatta, however, advised Lambertuccio to go to see Buondelmonte. "It is time something was settled," he said. "I hear of movements over the mountains which may spread into our plain one of these fine days. They will wait for the snows, yet it is quite as well to have your musters ready. I certainly think you should see Buondelmonte." So Lambertuccio went.

The two men greeted each other, and Lambertuccio said that he had not seen much of his new kinsman lately. It was time that preparations should be made. The year was getting on. Would Buondelmonte be ready for the wedding before Lent? Or what had he to propose?

Buondelmonte sat quiet for a little; presently he said: "I think frankness is a good thing, Lambertuccio, and I will be frank with you. I should have spoken to you before this if opportunity had served me. But I have been in the country, as you know, and troubled with family matters. Now I must tell you that not only shall I not be prepared to go to church with you before Lent, but after Lent I don't think I shall be ready."

"What is the meaning of this, Buondelmonte?" said Lambertuccio, raising his eyebrows.

Buondelmonte said: "I think that I

was perhaps hasty in my determination. I don't feel myself inclined to marry just yet. I hope I don't set more store by my youth than other men, but I feel that I cannot yet awhile give up those pleasures which young men have a right to. Maybe I do more honor to Cunizza by not marrying her than I should by fulfilling my bargain. I hope you understand me."

"I hope I do not," said Lambertuccio. "This is a very unpleasant story you have been keeping for me, Buondelmonte. I am not prepared with my answer just yet. Nor will my cousins Schiatta degli Uberti and Mosca de' Lamberti be prepared, if they are the prudent men I think them to be."

"Ah!" said Buondelmonte; "since you have named them, I will add that when I agreed to take Cunizza, it was after I had declined an offer of Mosca's and been declined by Schiatta. There I think that I was right, and Schiatta right. My politics and his don't agree, and are never likely to agree; there will be grief over that sooner or later. It is wiser to forestall grief than to engross it."

"You seem a poor tradesman to me," said Lambertuccio. "Lucky for you that Farinata degli Uberti is safely out of the way. I have known a quarrel picked on much less ground than this, and by him, for instance, on no ground at all, save that the color of a man's hair displeased him."

"Ah, if you come to the color of hair," Buondelmonte said, thinking, "I have known a bride left in the lurch for some such reason. But I hope you are not supposing that I shall decline a quarrel with Farinata. I did decline one with Mosca the other day (though before that he had found me ready enough) because he is short of an eye; and I should decline one with you, because you are

father of a lady whom I esteem and respect. But the long and short of it is, Lambertuccio, that I dislike Schiatta's politics, and that your cousin Mosca is to me an abhorrence and occasion of nausea. You will find me liberal, I hope. I am prepared to pay the forfeit provided by the bond, and to hand over my fifty florins in addition."

"That is a reasonable offer, I must allow," said Lambertuccio, after a while; "but I have to think of my girl's honor. Will you give me your word not to marry until she is married?"

"No; that I certainly decline to do," said Buondelmonte, "though it is a very probable course of affairs."

"Well," said Lambertuccio, "you must give me time to talk over this with my friends."

"I cannot prevent it: it is your right. But I hope you will not compel me to take the bond before the Gonfalonier to have it abated. Since you speak of friends, it had much better be done quietly, as between friends."

Lambertuccio thought so too, though he made no such answer. "Friends," he said, "are those who act friendly." He did not know what to say, since he was not sure what he ought to do. He was a slow, deliberate, rather stately man, not soon put into a rage, but long there when once there. If Buondelmonte thought the troublesome business over because Lambertuccio's tongue was at the end of its tether, he was greatly mistaken. But the fact is, he thought very little about it, save to be glad it was done with, the ground cleared. The moment Lambertuccio was gone, he put a cloak over his face and made haste to reach the Donati house.

He told Forese his news, which Forese received with many shakes of the head. "It is but just begun, the trouble," he said. "I should like to hear Schiatta and the whole brood upon it as they sit at meat. Remember, it was you that approached them in the first place; for they are not likely to forget it. There will be high talk, I'm thinking. You must be wary of your steps, Buondelmonte, and wear chain mail. They are a dangerous nest to meddle with."

"I shall take my life in my hands when I go to pay the forfeit," said Buon-

delmonte; "but a man does that when he walks across the street. You understand that you are not an ingredient of this broth of mine."

"There's not much in that," said Forese. "I shall be bobbing about with the best, the roundest pippin there, so soon as the murder's out."

Buondelmonte told him that nothing would be done until his bond was returned to him, and the affair a little blown over. Lambertuccio had wanted a promise out of him, he said, but he would not bind himself to the Uberti a second time.

Forese put a hand on his arm, saying: "Never mind what you promise, Buondelmonte; but see to it that you hold off until Cunizza is settled. She is of full age—sixteen if she's a day; they will marry her in a hurry, to save her face. Wait for that, my good friend, wait for that."

Buondelmonte was in a hurry himself, but said he would talk to Gualdrada about it. So he did; but Piccarda was there too. Gualdrada made very light of the whole story. "My husband is a born croaker," she said. "Have you not yet found him out? If there comes a shower—there is to be a flood. If the sun shines—we must prepare for a drought. You will see: the very first thing the Amidei do will be to marry off that girl to one of the house. There are plenty of them to be had; money was never a want of theirs, nor big-boned young men either. And when that is done, or as good as done, what is to prevent your marrying when you choose? Nothing at all. I consider you free as air. I consider the thing done now, and done with." Buondelmonte looked at Piccarda, who returned his gaze steadily, but as if she was troubled at something. Her eyes searched his in pursuit of his secret thought, then turned away; she sighed ever so lightly.

"Why do you sigh, sweetheart?"

"Because I am in love."

"Will you sigh when I wed you?"

"Ah, no."

"Why not, if now you sigh?"

"Because then I shall know that you are in love also."

He took her on his knee, and caressed her. She spoke no more until he urged her very closely. Then she said: "I want

you. I have no rest because of you. Before you came I had long nights and days. But now day and night I think of you. I am wretched, in sore need." Buondelmonte kissed her. Such talk was very pleasant to hear, and made him wild for the girl.

Gualdrada, looking at these two, one caught up on the knees of the other, laughed, as rich people laugh. And when Buondelmonte asked her, "How soon will you give her to me, Gualdrada?" she knew that her wages were in her hand, and said: "You are so near together that I care not greatly to delay you. To-morrow you shall plight her with your ring at San Giovanni. Thereafter do what you will, each of you with the other."

Buondelmonte looked at Piccarda. "If I do what I will with thee, Piccarda?" he said, asking.

"That will be what I will," said Piccarda. So he kissed her again.

II

On the morning after Buondelmonte had broken his news to Lambertuccio, Oderigo Fifanti happened to be passing San Giovanni about the hour of terce when people were coming out from the mass. He waited to watch them for a little, and saw Gualdrada Donati with two unwedded girls. He had always thought her to have but one daughter, whom he knew quite well by sight; but this other he had never seen before. She appeared to him of extraordinary beauty, dangerous to men. He was so much taken with her that when she had passed with her mother and sister he went into the church to consider whether, at his age, with grown-up sons of his own, he might venture upon a second marriage. It would be that girl or none, he thought, and turned it over and over in his mind. In the church he saw a young man offering candles to the Virgin, whose make and shape seemed familiar. Puzzling idly over this, but more concerned with his late encounter, presently the worshipper turned to go out, and Oderigo saw that it was Buondelmonte. There was nothing surprising about this, since San Giovanni was the church where all the factions of his way of thinking heard mass when they could; and on the great

feasts made a point of taking the Communion. There had been a Communion this morning, he saw, and afterwards remembered. Oderigo greeted Buondelmonte and received his greeting; but they said nothing.

When he came out, not having fully made up his mind what to do about the girl of the Donati, he went down to his own house, and heard the news about the Amidei marriage. Instantly he connected it in some way with the visit of Buondelmonte to San Giovanni that morning and his offer of candles to the Virgin. "He has had a vision or a warning," he told himself; "that is about the size of it. He has been expiating a vow, or sealing a new one; or he was giving thanks for a danger averted. Now what will Lambertuccio do? And our kindreds? I must go down to Schiatta's and find out." And away he went.

He found all the kindreds assembled in the hall, Schiatta in the high seat, and Lambertuccio finishing an oration amid murmurs and muttering from the others.

"The sum of the matter, Schiatta," Lambertuccio was saying, "is that I cannot feel offended. I believe Buondelmonte spoke the truth when he owned that he would rather keep his kindred separate. Either he thinks himself strong enough without the Uberti, or he fears to make the Uberti too strong. We know very well that he is wrong in the first, and as for the second, doubt if he would count for very much. But a man must have his opinions. Another reason of his seems to be that Mosca here tried to pick up an old settled quarrel again, one night last winter. I will not say whether Mosca did well to blow upon dead embers; but it was not a friendly act to me, and Buondelmonte was reasonable in resenting it. He came to us of his own accord, peace upon his tongue; then says Mosca, there shall be no peace between you and me. Well, he would say, then there can be none betwixt me and your kinsfolk. You cannot have it both ways. He has reason on his side, I say. Now Buondelmonte will pay forfeit on his bond, and may have it back when he chooses for all I shall say against it. My Cunizza will wed with Malviso Giantruffetti here, a good man and of

our kindred; so her honor will be saved; all the city will believe that we broke off the match. This is all I have to say, Schiatta, about the affair."

Mosca de' Lamberti jumped up the moment he had done. "By your leave, Schiatta," said he, "I will answer Lambertuccio in your presence. I say that it is well for Buondelmonte that Farinata is tied to the chair at Certaldo; for if he had been here, there would have been wild work in the street. And, for my part, I am not sure that all of us Uberti will sleep in our beds this night, as I gather Lambertuccio intends to sleep in his. Better had it been for all of us if I had settled accounts with my Lord Picker-and-Chooser on that winter night. He had not lived then, perhaps, to toss another of the Uberti aside after a little trial. Shall I tell you now why I had my words with Buondelmonte? You think that I bore him a grudge for a very old affair. You wrong me there; it was just the opposite of that was the case. You should remember the day he came into this hall on his wife-buying errand, asking, 'I'll trouble you for one of the chief's daughters. 'I come for a wife, not a grandmother,' says my young lord. That of Schiatta's lady, look you. A wife he needs, not a grandmother. I know very well what he needs. Well, then, I made an offer on my own account; and Schiatta upheld it, and was right, since I am his next in degree. Did that have the look of a grudge? No, indeed. But what says my lord? 'I cannot hope to satisfy Mosca,' are his words. Great courtesy to me! Oh, the finest! Who bears the grudge, do you say? He is pleased to condescend to Lambertuccio's proposals, however, and will look at the bride, as he might look at a horse on sale. Vastly pleasant dealing, signori, as things have turned out. Now that is why I picked a quarrel with this Butterfly Squire, who thinks that all our maidens' lips are at his disposal. And I am ready for another when and how you please. Lambertuccio's reasonings and reasonableness are nothing to me. Buondelmonte sought us out, offering himself: now he throws us over. Can we bear that, we who are lords of the city? I say dishonor is done to our name and blood."

There was a good deal of shouting at this, and some of the young men leaped to their feet. One raised a cry of "Death to him!" But Schiatta stopped all this with his hand. "Let no man stir till I give him leave," said he. "There must be no bloodshed nor house-burning yet awhile. This quarrel is Lambertuccio's, who, if he is satisfied, may be an easy man to satisfy; I say nothing about that. But I say that Mosca did wrong to offend Buondelmonte when he was in a state of becoming my kinsman, and is chiefly to blame in this which has followed. Had I been Buondelmonte I know not how I could have acted otherwise. Now I forbid you, Mosca, to move sword or tongue against Lambertuccio's enemy without his sanction. Let this be a warning to you to be civil, and not to take more upon yourself than your friends are disposed to award you. Has any man else anything to say in this foolish affair?"

Oderigo Fifanti got up. "I say, Schiatta, that Lambertuccio is right in his surmises, and will tell you why. This morning, happening to be by, I went into San Giovanni, and saw Buondelmonte there, offering candles at the altar of the Virgin. Fine candles, too, seven pounds apiece at the least. Now this is no great feast-day, as we all know; therefore he must have gone there with design, and offered his candles with intention. It is clear as day to me that he offered either because of a vow he had made, which no man makes except necessity drive him, or as thanksgiving for a danger escaped. In either case, it seems, he is to be excused, as a man is who thinks himself warned by God. And after the words of Mosca de' Lamberti it is not hard to see what sort of danger a quiet man has escaped." All the kinsmen shouted their laughter at this, and Oderigo sat himself down. Malviso Giantruffetti also said something, modestly and becomingly for so young a man; and then Buondelmonte walked into the hall, alone and unarmed, and courteously saluted Schiatta, Lambertuccio, and the company at large. There was a great hush; but all could see that he bore himself like a gentleman, and a noble gentleman. His witnesses came after him, three young men—his brother Ranieri,

Alberto Giandonati, and one of the Gualterotti, a mere lad,—none of them at his ease in the stronghold of the Uberti.

Schiatta, who sincerely admired him, returned his salutation, and said: "Buondelmonte, I guess your errand and am sorry for it. I would have seen you here more gladly on any other; or if this is the end of it, could wish that you had not come at all."

"I can well believe that," said Buondelmonte; "but when a man is told that he must lose his leg, he does not say, 'We will talk about it next week'; but rather, 'Talk then, and have done with it.' So I, being forced into a narrow way, make haste to get out even at the price of things which may be dear to me. You say that you know why I have come. I have given reasons to Lambertuccio, which I hope he understands. No doubt he has told them to you. Now, in the presence of you all, his kindred, I pay the forfeit in which I stand engaged, and will take my bond again. Further satisfaction I offer him for the honor of Monna Cunizza, namely, the fifty florins which I should have laid down for Morgengabe. This seems to be justly her due, since I believe from my soul every good thing of her. So I pay it now in your sight."

"It is greatly done," said Schiatta; "I own that." And so all confessed to one another that it was.

Lambertuccio said: "Noble offer should have noble response. I shall not accept from Buondelmonte more than is my due, nor money for that which he has not had. This Morgengabe will undoubtedly be paid by the satisfied man, and it must not be supposed that it is due from Buondelmonte. That is Malviso's business here, to whom my girl is betrothed."

"That alters the case," said Buondelmonte. "I should be doing Malviso a great offence." So he took back his purse of fifty florins, and shortly after withdrew, he and his witnesses.

The assembly broke up; the kindreds left the hall upon their several affairs; but Oderigo Fifanti stayed behind for a talk with Schiatta about his own affair of the girl of the Donati. Schiatta advised him against it. "This is an idle itch of yours," he said, "tending neither

to good husbandry nor good comfort. How will you get a young wife to settle down with your sons, who are themselves old enough to marry her? Remember the grief of Obizzo of Este, whose son fell in love with his stepmother, and both perished, and caused her to perish miserably. Yet you are not to blame Obizzo for maintaining his rights, since he had chosen to make them so, with a strong hand. Again, the Donati are a good house, I'll not deny, though not so good as they have been, and no friends of mine. But mark you this, when the hour comes, the Donati will be on one side of the ramparts and the Uberti on the other. This must infallibly be."

"The same would have been true of the Buondelmonti, in my opinion," said Oderigo.

"Buondelmonte is a young man," replied Schiatta, "and more supple than the Donati. And his is a growing tree, where the other is rotting at the heart. I warn you off this quest of yours, kinsman."

"Well," said Oderigo, "maybe I shall not take your advice."

"Oh, if you confess yourself an old fool, I have nothing more to say," Schiatta answered. To which Oderigo replied with heat that if everybody was a fool who did not hold Schiatta's opinions, Florence held a goodly number of fools.

"I think it does," said Schiatta, "but that is no reason why you should add to the number."

"He is a fool," said Oderigo, "who follows blindly where another leads him. Knowledge of this, and not profundity of wisdom, makes a shepherd master of sheep."

"Go your ways, Oderigo," said Schiatta, "go your ways. Let January wed young May if he can. But let not January quarrel with the nature of things if he freeze May to death, or May fritter him to water with her awakened fires."

"I shall certainly try my fortune," said Oderigo, "and thank you for your friendly warnings."

III

Buondelmonte, who had a journey to make, laid out his fifty florins in a gold crown, the finest that money could buy in Florence or the world. It was made of two hoops of gold, one above another,

joined together by flowers in red and white enamel; above was a garland of lilies in the same work, with a star in the midst, to be over the forehead, and in the midst of that again an emerald of large size. He took it to the house of the Donati, and before he left her that night set it upon Piccarda's head. "Let this speak to thee of my love while I am away. I shall come soon, my dear heart," said he, and departed in a torment of love by no means allayed. Gualdrada embraced her beautiful daughter. "He is bound to you, my child, hand and foot. Think not that by giving you have nothing left to give. A fine skein is in your hand, to be wound as you please. Though it be of thin silk, it will drag this man to heaven or hell." Piccarda had nothing to say, or did not choose to speak of Buondelmonte.

Gualdrada heard steps upon the stair, which she thought were those of Forese coming in. "Stay you there, Piccarda," she said, "and let your father see what a lordly husband you have won." So she sat still where she was, looking like a queen.

Forese came into the chamber with Oderigo Fifanti, who, when he saw Piccarda with the crown upon her head, stayed by the door as one dazed. Forese said: "Wife, here is Messer Oderigo come a-wooing, wanting our Gualdrada. What have you to say to that?"

Gualdrada made a little demur; her head was turned by the happy conduct of Piccarda's affair, and she had never set much store by her elder daughter. It would have to be considered, she said; there was much to be said for and against such a match; and then to Piccarda: "Go into your closet and put off that ornament you have on. Your father shall see it another time." Piccarda got up to go; whereupon Oderigo recovered his senses. "Hold," he said; "you have my story wrong, Forese. This is the damsel I seek for a wife."

"Bad Easter to me," says Forese, "I am sorry for that."

Gualdrada said: "You choose your words strangely, husband. Messer Oderigo, you are too late. This girl of mine is betrothed; the crown she wears now is a wedding-gift from her affianced. Not every damsel hath so rich an offering as

that. But the bridegroom is a young man, of an age with herself or near it, and well found in goods, as you see."

"It is evident," said Oderigo, putting the best face he could upon it. "There cannot be many of his sort in Florence. Might a man know his name?"

Forese looked at his wife, doubtful what she would have him do. Gualdrada made haste to answer.

"Indeed, there would be every reason why you should know, and sooner than most," she said. "But this is the true state of the case: The bridegroom has gone to Siena on business of some moment for himself and the state. Lest any shame should fall upon our daughter by failure of his, or accident, or any such thing—which God mercifully avert!—he has charged me to withhold his name and the betrothal itself until he is happily back. But you have surprised us out of one of these, through no fault of your own or of mine."

"Your secret is safe with me," said Oderigo; "but indeed you have found a tender bridegroom, singular in Florence on every account."

"You may be sure that he is," said Gualdrada.

After a few courteous speeches Oderigo, having no further errand with the Donati, departed. He owned himself for a fool; but for all that he was greatly puzzled at the mystery. Meeting by chance with Mosca de' Lamberti as he crossed the New Market, he clean forgot his assurance of secrecy, and told him the whole of the story, except the part he himself had played in it. Mosca said at once: "I met Buondelmonte on the bridge even now, on the Siena road. What if he were your man? What then, my friend?"

At once it jumped into Oderigo's mind that he had seen Buondelmonte that morning in San Giovanni, offering candles to the Virgin, and that in the same church had been Gualdrada Donati and her daughter. The remembrance of this, and the thought of what it involved, flushed him all over; but knowing Mosca for a pickstrife, a mischievous man, he said nothing about it. It might have been an accident, and the offering made for safety on his journey. So also there might have been the Communion

there and yet neither Buondelmonte nor Piccarda have communicated. But if there were no accidents at all, and everything had been as it looked, then the Uberti were very much offended. Lambertuccio must then be told, and Schiatta. While he thought of all this, Mosca clapped him on the shoulder. "We are two fools," he said. "There is but one man can make such a gold crown as that. He is Lapo of Lucca. We will soon have the Donati secret in our hands."

Lapo the garland-maker, who lived by the bridge, made no secret of his part in the traffic. It had been Buondelmonte who had bought the crown this very morning. Mosca and Oderigo looked at each other without saying anything. By the Piazza of San Stefano they were about to separate, when Oderigo took Mosca by the arm, and held him fast, saying nothing.

"Let me go, cousin," said Mosca, struggling; "I have business."

Oderigo was no coward, to shrink from a quarrel or many quarrels; but he was a serious man, who considered fighting a serious business; and he saw that such fighting as might now be on hand would be no ordinary scuffle. So he held on to Mosca by his gown. "By Jesus Christ, Mosca," he said, "you shall tell me to whom is your business. For I see that it lies in a different direction from that in which it lay when I first met you."

"Let me go, Oderigo," he said again. "I am not bound to tell you of my affairs."

"But this affair is mine as well as yours; so I mean to have it out of you."

Mosca looked this way and that with his one quick eye—up at Oderigo, who was looking at the men in the river drawing their nets below the weir; down at his feet; about and about. "Well," he said at last, "there is no reason why I should not tell you. I am going to Schiatta's."

"Then you may go," said Oderigo. If he had said "To Lambertuccio's," Oderigo would have forced him to silence; but he cared little what he said to Schiatta, because he knew nothing positive, and Schiatta would see that it amounted to nothing. A man is at liberty to plight himself with a woman when he has broken his plight to another, but not until. Now Oderigo knew very well, but Mosca did not, that Buondelmonte must have been

with this girl long before. Therefore he had insulted the Amidei. But whether Lambertuccio would choose to avenge his own injuries or to share his rights with the Uberti, he was not yet sure.

He went to the Amidei house and told Lambertuccio the whole case, not concealing from him his own share in it. Lambertuccio listened without movement or sign, save that his face took a darker tinge, and that this tinge was darkest at his neck. At the end he said:

"If this is true, as fate seems to have it, he must die. No doubt of that."

"If you are for that work," said Oderigo, "I shall stand in with you. For you are not the only man offended."

"As you please," said Lambertuccio. "I need no help from any man. You brought your trouble on yourself. At your time of life, he who goes running after maids unwed deserves what he gets. My case is very different. I shall kill Buondelmonte."

Oderigo said: "He will be in Siena by to-morrow night; it could be done very handsomely there. Any of the Tolomei would do it. Or Farinata could arrange it easily for you from Certaldo."

"It will be done very handsomely here, you will find," said Lambertuccio, quietly. "There is plenty of time. But I have just supped, and this is the hour at which I usually sleep. Forgive me, and many thanks."

"You will let me know when you are ready?" said Oderigo.

"Certainly. There is plenty of time."

"Good repose to you, Lambertuccio."

"Many thanks."

Schiatta heard Mosca's story, and put his finger on the weak spot at once. "A man freed is a free man," he said, "and not less free for being that moment free. Buondelmonte may have known the Donati girl before, or he may not. He has acted within the letter of his rights. You cannot prove anything against him, and you cannot touch him."

"Your son Farinata would touch him," said Mosca.

"My son Farinata would do nothing of the kind," Schiatta replied. "You know very little about it."

But afterwards, when Lambertuccio came with his new story, Schiatta saw

differently. "If this is the state of the case," he said, "the family is grievously offended—no less with the Donati than with Buondelmonte, except in this, that the Donati have always been open enemies. But the other came to us unasked, professing the need of alliance. Black treachery. Our name cannot endure this, Lambertuccio. I must certainly interfere. And it is a good occasion, after all, for what we have in the back of our minds. For if we go sagely to work, I don't know why we should have an enemy left in Florence."

Lambertuccio said: "You are head of the house. Do as you think proper. The quarrel is certainly mine first of all—but do as you think proper."

"I shall call a council of the kindreds," said Schiatta; "that is what I shall do."

They all came together in the hall of the Uberti: Lambertuccio and Oderigo, the Infangati, Mosca de' Lamberti, the Caponsacchi and Gangalandi, and Ruggerio Giantruffetti with his son Malviso, who was to marry Cunizza.

Oderigo Fifanti, when called upon, confirmed his story. He said that he agreed with Lambertuccio that the Amidei were chiefly concerned in the quarrel; but he considered that he came next on account of his private intentions towards the girl. He should stand by Lambertuccio in whatever he chose to do.

There were cries for Lambertuccio degli Amidei. He rose unwillingly and said little. "It is distasteful to me to speak of my private affairs, and by your leave I shall not. I have made up my mind what I ought to do; if possible, and Heaven on my side, I shall perform it. I speak as a man, father of a maiden wronged, not as kinsman of any other. If, however, you push your claims upon me, as being of my blood or intimacy or some such, I shall not refuse you. Forgive me: I am little of a speaker at these times."

Mosca de' Lamberti spoke next, not fiercely, but moderately and with show of reason. "There are two things to do," he said, "which equally become us. Firstly, we must stand by our offended kinsman; secondly, we must seek the benefit of the whole name and blood. Now, as to the first, it is plain what we

ought to do; but the second, to my thinking, is no less easy. It is, To do the first. I am not the only man to say what I say now, that a thing done is done with. Buondelmonte said those very words to me upon a time. But I tell you now, a thing done is done with. If we act with Lambertuccio in his quarrel, we act justly, paying our debts. If anything follows upon that, it will have been begun by those who have thought themselves injured by what we may have done. We can be ready to meet them, and more than half-way. Therefore, by doing what is in your right you bring that to be done which is within your desire; and it will be done in the course of nature, without any seeking of ours or show of design. Do you wish the Florentines to say to each other, 'These Uberti use a private grudge to make a tyranny over us?' That will breed a maggot of discontent and turn the whole city into fermentation. No, no. But if the friends of the Buondelmonti, all the kindreds in the Borgo and San Pancrazio, and all the Donati and their likes, draw sword upon us and seek publicly to requite what we have privately and most justly performed, they put themselves in the wrong, signori; they themselves pick the quarrel. We defend ourselves; we are in the right from the beginning; our advantage flows naturally, like Arno from Falterona. This is my sentence, kinsmen. A thing done is done with. Let them begin a new thing if they choose."

Schiatta said at once: "Upon my soul and conscience, I am in a case I never was in before, to agree with Mosca here. My first counsel would have been for war on all these houses; but he is right. Now let us send the lads away and settle matters between us. Let Malviso, however, remain, since he is a party to the quarrel." This was done. Lambertuccio and Mosca, Oderigo Fifanti, Leone Gangalandi, Malviso Giantruffetti, kept their places beside Schiatta. Lambertuccio would not talk, and Oderigo said nothing new; Malviso was timid; Schiatta and Mosca settled everything. Farinata was to be written to at Certaldo. He was to watch for Buondelmonte upon the road home from Siena, at Poggibonsi where the fork begins, and send a messenger with word of his coming. If the man

went over the hills, by Torre in Val di Pesa, he would gain three hours on Buondelmonte. The six Uberti would wait for him in the church of San Stefano and go out to the bridge-end and meet him. He would probably be unarmed, at least without mail, because he would be going to the Donati. Mosca said that this was certain, because a man does not give his betrothed a gold crown unless she has something to give him in return. No doubt that he was mad for her. When they were all agreed and on the point of going away, young Malviso, with a very troubled face, said that he could have no part in it. Schiatta stared up at the rafters. "What does this mean?" he said. "Treachery," said Mosca.

Malviso stammered out his meaning as well as he could. Here was an unarmed man, lightly accompanied, upon whom were to set six with weapons in their hands, and counsel in their heads, and half the city at their backs.

"Well," said Mosca, "how many more do you want to help you?" Malviso took no notice, but looked at Schiatta.

"I am concerned in this, sir," he said, "since I am to marry the offended lady. But certainly I could not have married her if she had not been offended by Buondelmonte. So it seems that he has by no means offended me, but served me rather."

"What!" cried Mosca, twitching his arms; "by insulting your lady?"

"No, no," said Lambertuccio; "you are too sharp with the lad. It is easy to see what he means. So long as this is my quarrel, it is not his. He has my consent to stand out."

"And mine also," Schiatta said. "I consider his feelings only right and proper, though they are far from being mine."

"Or mine, either," said Mosca, "luckily for us."

They all went their ways.

IV

Buondelmonte settled the affairs of the commune with which he had been entrusted, and his own; then he sent word to his friends that he should be in Florence on the morning of Easter, and started on Good-Friday night. He reached Poggibonsi and slept there.

Next morning, as he came out of Poggibonsi, Farinata degli Uberti saw him

from a good way off, and said immediately to a young man with him, "Off you go." The young man departed at once on foot, more fleetly than any horse could have fared in such a country, and as long in the wind. Farinata himself waited to see how Buondelmonte was accompanied, and saw to his great surprise that he was alone. It came into his heart for a moment to warn him of his danger, so that he might at least make a show of fight. Two grooms would have been something, with his own long sword. While he was turning it over, thinking it a shame that a fine man should be killed like a pig in a sty, and, on the other hand, that it was no business of his, he saw that Buondelmonte had observed him. It would not do to make off now. So he stayed.

Buondelmonte greeted him, wishing him a good Easter. Farinata smiled.

"You too look for a good Easter, I expect, Buondelmonte," he said.

Yes, Buondelmonte said, he thought it might prove the best in his life.

Farinata, looking at him, said, "I should hope that the more heartily if you had not put a hitch in our affairs."

"I am sorry to confess that I did," said Buondelmonte. "I did not behave well, but I behaved as well as I could. Look, Farinata, you and I are nearly of an age, so that I can expect you to understand me when I tell you this. I saw Monna Piccarda by chance, and her extraordinary beauty troubled me not a little. Also I admit that the dowry she brought with her was a very fine thing, much better than Cunizza would have had. But both of these advantages would have been got over. I have had my share of them, and still have. Do you know what inflamed me to such a pitch that I knew I could not live without Piccarda? It was this, that when I kissed her for the first time, she kissed me back. Ah, and earnestly. Do you not see, my friend, that she gave me her heart there on her mouth? I have no words ready to exhibit my thought or understanding, but I was touched very nearly by that, and on a quick spot. I could not tell Lambertuccio all this, still less your father Schiatta: but I may tell you."

"I understand you," said Farinata. Then sighed: "It is a pity."

"Yes," Buondelmonte said, "it is a pity; but I can see a greater pity avoided. For say that I had been wedded to Cunizza before I had met Piccarda, it would have made no difference. What is was bound to be. And, to my thinking, that would have been more shameful in me than what I have done."

"Maybe," said Farinata. "Who knows?"

"I have mentioned this to nobody," Buondelmonte said; "and shall rely upon your confidence."

"You have it. Rest assured of that," said Farinata. "But I am keeping you from your way."

"I have a good horse," Buondelmonte said, "which will take me to the Impruneta by nightfall. I shall find my servants and baggage, and sleep there. It will not do to go to see my beloved in a suit of sweat and mire."

Buondelmonte rode on his way. He felt much more at ease since he had unburdened himself to Farinata, and began to sing a song he had learned in Siena. Folgore of San Gimignano had made it. It was a good song.

V

Farinata's messenger reached Schiatta very late on the eve of Easter, but Schiatta judged that there was no chance of Buondelmonte's coming in that night. He put men on the lookout, one by the Certosa and another at Porta Romana; and then he went to bed. The kindreds were informed; bidden to assemble, those who were concerned, in the church of San Stefano in time for the first mass.

In the morning twilight Malviso Giantruffetti's heart misgave him. He had not slept much all night for thinking of the work on hand and wondering what he ought to do. "He has done me a service, he has done me a service," were the words running in his head; and then he thought: "What harm will there be if I do him a service in my turn? Let him at least make a fight of it." With the earliest light, unable to endure himself any longer, he put on his clothes and a cloak, and went out of the house without disturbing any one in it. The streets were empty; but he knew the gates would be open by the time he reached them. He crossed by the Rubaconte bridge for

fear of being seen by Schiatta's outposts, and picked up the Siena road at a point below the Certosa. Not knowing where Buondelmonte had lain that night, he went too far and overshot him; but he found out his mistake before he got to San Casciano, stole a horse there, and pelted back the way he had come. Such good pace did he get out of the horse that he was again on the Rubaconte before the bell of the Badia had struck for terce. But he had not caught Buondelmonte for all that, and now dared not go to look for him, for he knew he must be in or near the city. So he held his horse by the rein, and leaned upon the one bridge, in the angle of one of the little chapels which used to be there, looking over to the other. It was a fine morning, with very clear air and sunlight. At first he saw peasants coming in, by twos and threes, to the mass of the Resurrection; but by-and-by a horseman at a foot-pace, and he came from Over-Arno. He looked immediately to the foot of the bridge and all about the old Por' Santa Maria, which stood there in those days, but could see no men there. "If that is Buondelmonte, he will get over yet," he said to himself. But then he saw that it was not Buondelmonte, but a much older man. The Badia bell rang, and the sound was taken up by Santa Reparata and San Piero Maggiore, by San Frediano Over-Arno and other towers; and then he saw two men come at a trot through the gateway and pass over the bridge, going to Over-Arno. One was in green and bareheaded; the other wore a hood. He heard the green rider laugh and the other reprove him, the air was so still. "That is a boy," he said. "That will be Gualtiero Gualterotti going to meet his cousin. The other has the air of Ranieri Buondelmonte, but I can't be sure. So they expect him."

Not long after the riders had gone by he saw a party of men come slowly round the buttress of the old gateway. He counted them: there were four, two in cloaks and two without. If they were the Uberti, there should be a fifth man: where was he? He soon saw that they were the Uberti. He knew Lambertuccio by his height, and Mosca by his stooping shoulders, and head incessantly on the move; and Leone Gangalandi by a white

eagle's tail-feather he was fond of wearing. The fourth must be Oderigo Fifi, because he seemed to feel the wind; kept his cloak high up round his ears. He saw them turn: then Schiatta degli Uberti joined them. His head was bare, as usual with him. They all talked together. He saw Mosca drive away a cripple who came whining about, with his hands held out over his crutches. Various people passed in one direction or the other over the bridge. Presently Leone Gangalandi went through the gate at a brisk run, and the others waited about. Ten minutes or more passed in this way, Oderigo taking sharp turns up and down the bridge, Mosca leaning over to look at the water, Lambertuccio quite motionless, and Schiatta looking up at the sculptures on the gate. Malviso wondered what was going on. Leone Gangalandi came back with half a dozen men on horseback, who went over the bridge, while he himself stayed with his friends. "I see the game now," said Malviso to himself; "these will go to detach Gualtiero and Ranieri, so that Buondelmonte can be dealt with separately. This is a bad business."

As the day wore, so increased the number of those coming and going over the bridge; but it was still easy to observe the riders. Malviso saw one such come leading a pack-horse, and then two others, also leading horses. They wore green jackets. He guessed that they might be Buondelmonte's servants; but whoever they were, they passed over unmolested and seemed to suspect nothing. When the last of them was through the gate, Oderigo Fifi took off his cloak, and Lambertuccio followed his example. They folded the two cloaks together and put them into the empty gate-house. There was shadow on the east side of the bridge where they were standing. Malviso saw Oderigo Fifi cross over and stand in the sun. He hated the cold.

A drove of pigs appeared on the bridge, from Over-Arno. Their herd ran backwards and forwards, beating with his stick to get them together. Malviso saw that the pigs were all over the bridge, and was wondering what would happen if Buondelmonte should come up behind them, when the herd stopped, looked round, then threw up his hand for a

signal, and began beating the pigs to one side. A white horse, having a rider all in white, came at a quick trot on to the bridge, followed by a party of seven or eight at least. "Here is their man," said Malviso to himself. "Ser Martino drives pigs to the shambles, and these horsemen drive Buondelmonte. If I could stop him even now, I would do it." He stood up on the balustrade of the bridge and waved his hand, shouting, "Back, Buondelmonte, back!" Three or four times he shouted thus, and at the fourth time Buondelmonte, who was riding very fast, turned his head. Malviso went on shouting and signalling; then Buondelmonte called out clearly over the water, "Buona Pasqua," and lifted his hand. He rode on, his companions about ten yards behind. Malviso saw that the waiting men had come out and were standing in the gateway at the end of the bridge, blocking the passage. Buondelmonte reined up for fear of being into them; and Lambertuccio walked out slowly to meet him.

To return to Buondelmonte. He had started betimes from the Impruneta, and made such good pace that he met his friends well on this side of the Certosa. He had on clothes to suit the feast-day, a long tunic of white velvet, with white hose and boots of red leather, a white bonnet on his head, and a short cloak. He had no arms but his dagger. Very glad he was to see his brother Ranieri, and still more that Gualtiero Gualterotti had come, for he loved that boy; but he would not stop or slow down, though he was all agog for news. They had to talk as best they could. He said he should go directly to the house of the Donati. "It is full six weeks since I have seen my beloved Wonder of the World," he said, "and I am on fire to see what new beauties she has grown by now." They told him that Cunizza was to wed with Malviso Giantruffetti the next day. "The gentle Cunizza!" said he. "It is only proper she should have the start of me. She has a worthy youth for her husband. I have a good deal of friendship for Malviso." Talking of this, that, and the other, they came into the Via Romana by the gate, and there the young men whom Malviso had seen met them, as if coming round by the steep road which

leads from San Miniato al Monte by the Porta San Giorgio. Two of these were Uberti, one a Gangalandi, one of the Greci. Buondelmonte and his friends greeted them and would have gone on their way; but Tacuino degli Uberti called out that he had a message. "For me?" asked Buondelmonte. "No," said Tacuino, "for your brother." So Ranieri stopped, and was overtaken by two or three of these men, who held him in talk while the rest of them pushed forward and got in between Gualtiero and Buondelmonte, talking and laughing among themselves. Buondelmonte kept up his pace. Thus they came to the bridge and into the sun, and crossed it, just as Malviso had seen them.

The sun was full in Buondelmonte's eyes; but as he neared the Stone of Mars and the old gateway he could see that there were people in the road, not to distinguish them. He reined in his horse and put his hand up as a warning to the others; and just then Lambertuccio came out to meet him, with a hand to take hold of his bridle; and he saw who it was. Now he began to suspect something. "Stay me not now, Lambertuccio," he said, and turned quickly to see where his friends were. They seemed to be in some difficulty, he thought. The horses were all huddled together. He heard Ranieri talking in a rage and the others laughing at him. Then Schiatta came up behind him as he sat half turned, and jumped for him, and pulled him suddenly from his horse to the ground; and Mosca leaped forward from behind Schiatta and stuck his knife in deep. He stabbed between the collar-bone and the neck. Buondelmonte cried out, "Rescue! Rescue!" and felt himself losing blood very fast. "One at a time," he said, pleasantly; but had no more words, for Mosca stabbed him again, and Lambertuccio came up in his deliberate way, pulled off Mosca, and put his knee on Buondelmonte's neck and drove at him twice in the heart. He never spoke again; but Oderigo Fifanti did his part for all that.

A crowd of onlookers had gathered, but no one interfered; and as for Ranieri and Gualtiero, they were prisoners and could do nothing. When the Uberti saw

that their work was done, they wiped their daggers and walked away. Oderigo went for his cloak; but Lambertuccio had to be reminded of his, and went back for it. Going off, Schiatta held up his hand for a signal, and the six horsemen parted to allow the Buondelmonti passage-room. No harm had been done to them.

Ranieri spurred directly into the city up the Via Por' Santa Maria, shouting as he went, "The bells! the bells! Treason! Buondelmonti!" but young Gualtiero went and sat beside Buondelmonte and put his head on his knees, and covered his face with his cloak, or what was left of it. The moment the Uberti had left the bridge all the bystanders ran in various directions, and almost immediately the great bell of the SS. Apostoli began to toll. Others followed in no long time.

Ranieri, riding full gallop up the Calimala, met Buonaccorso Donati coming down to see what the crying was about. He was buckling his sword-belt as he came. Ranieri told him the news, and Buonaccorso ran back to fetch his father. Ranieri hastened on to find, if possible, one of the Uberti who should not have been warned. As luck would have it, in the Via Condotta, he did meet with Malviso Giantruffetti returning from the Rubaconte bridge. "Treason! Treason!" he cried, and, "Death to the Uberti!" and rode him down. The fighting began within a few hours; but by that time they had taken Buondelmonte to his house and laid him on a bier.

Gualdrada came with her daughter soon after they had got him home. They let her in through the chains which had been put up at the head of the Borgo. Fires were burning in the Quarter of San Piero Scheraggio and all the bridges were held; but Gualdrada said, "There will be place made for the dead." She chose that Piccarda should sit upon the bier, with Buondelmonte's head on her knees; and Piccarda had nothing to say. She only stared at the window. Even while they were making ready, the Gonfalon was being brought down the Borgo. Men heard the roar of the fight in the north parts. The Donati were driving the Uberti down towards the river.

THE END.

A PEOPLE FROM THE EAST

BY NORMAN DUNCAN

"TRADE will lead a man far," as the Arabic proverb runs; and the roads of this land know the truth of it, for the feet of the refugees have stirred the hot dust of them all. Trade has been no magnet to fetch the Syrian from under blue skies to our gray ones; but, once here, it has set him wandering—has provided him, indeed, with a back-porch introduction to the villages of every quarter, even to the uttermost, where he slips like a shadow from door to door. Wherever he goes he spreads wonder and an unreasoning perturbation, nor will the gold rings in his ears and the sash about his middle let him soon be forgotten. "Oh dear!" the children gasp, when he comes down the hill, with a great pack on his back. "Here's a gypsy. Let's run!" So they take to their heels, and, as they scamper to the sanctuary of the front yard, great is the patter of feet, and voluminous the cloud of dust in their wake. "Oh my," says the young girl, at the peddler's approach, "he has rings in his ears! Perhaps he's a forty-thief, or something. Oh dear, what *shall* I do?" She hurries, her little heart all aflutter, and makes an untimely visit to her nearest neighbor, where the excitement of her escape sinks all formality out of mind. "A-ha!" says the town-constable, marking the slinking gait and shifty eyes of the man. "That there A-rab

'll stand watchin', er I ain't no detective. They say they carry knives in them sashes." Whereupon a profoundly suspicious, if distant, surveillance is upon the Syrian.

The Syrian would smile did he know it.

It was Officer MacNamara, of a dim-lit beat, who first took me through the city street where these swarthy fellows, and their betters, have forgathered to live. The night was dark and gusty, and the rain had at last swept the swarm of hags and squalling children and silent, glowering men from the pavements and shadowy doorways. The tops of the tenements on either side were lost in the night, and the street was broken and littered—glistening here and there, where an occasional lamp cast a circle of light upon it. The silence and vast shadows; the time of night and driving wind; the filth and dilapidation; solitary figures flitting darkly from cellar-



"HERE'S A GYPSY. LET'S RUN!"

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