SUSPENSE

A NAPOLEONIC NOVEL By **Joseph Conrad**

Cosmo Latham, a young Englishman of wealth on a tour of Europe, in his rambles about Genoa yields to impulse and follows a seafaring man to a tower overlooking the harbor of Genoa where an Elban ship rides at anchor. Before he leaves his uncouth and mysterious companion he has become aware that the man is engaged in secret intercourse with Elba, where Napoleon is in exile. The scene then shifts to England, and to the home of Cosmo's father in which some years previously shelter had been given to a family of French refugees. It is to visit this family, now resident in Italy, that the son has come to Genoa. After a visit with the Countess of Montevesso, in which he gains a glimpse of the conditions of her life and the political background of her circle, and is startled by the queer half savage niece of her husband, who is sheltered under his roof, Cosmo meets the Countess's father. Later at a reception at the home of the Countess he is introduced to some of the members of her circle, and at the end of the evening makes the acquaintance of her husband. After his interview with Count Helion he has a long talk with the Countess during which she recounts to him the experiences of her married life. While he is engaged in this conversation Count Helion has attempted with the aid of a priest to overcome the sullen fury of his half-savage niece, who confides to him that she desires Cosmo for herself. Cosmo, however, leaves the house without seeing either the Count or the girl. After a night's rest he rises refreshed to write letters until at noon he descends to the dining room.

BY that time the murmur of voices in the piazza had died out. The good Genoese had gone indoors to eat. Coming out of his light-filled room Cosmo found the corridors cold and dark like subterranean passages cut in rock, and the hall downstairs gloomy like a burial vault. In contrast with it the long dining room had a festive air, a brilliancy that was almost crude. In a corner where the man who called himself Doctor Martel had his table this glare was toned down by half-closed shutters and Cosmo made his way there. Cantelucci's benefactor, seated sideways with one arm thrown over the chair's back, took Cosmo's arrival as a matter of course, greeted him with an amiable growl, and declared himself very sharp set. Presently laying down his knife and fork he enquired what Cosmo had been doing that morning. Writing? Really? Thought that perhaps he had been doing the churches. One could see very pretty girls in the morning, waiting for their turn at the confessional.

Cosmo, raising suddenly his eyes from his plate, caught his companion examining him keenly. The doctor burst into a loud laugh till Cosmo's grave face recalled him to himself.

"I beg your pardon. I remembered suddenly a very funny thing that happened to me last night. I am afraid you think me very impolite. It was extremely funny."

"Won't you tell me of it?" asked Cosmo coldly.

"No, my dear sir. You are not in the mood. I prefer to apologize. There is a secret in it which is not mine. But as to the girls I was perfectly serious. If you seek female beauty you must look to the people for it and in Genoa you will not look in vain. The women of the upper classes are alike everywhere. You must have remarked that."

"I have hardly had time to look about me as yet," said Cosmo. He was no longer annoyed with the doctor, not even after he heard him say:

"Surely yesterday evening you must have had an opportunity. You came home late."

"I wonder who takes the trouble to watch my movements?" remarked Cosmo carelessly.

"Town-police spies, of course," said the doctor grimly; "and perhaps one or two of the most enterprising thieves. You must make up your mind to that. After all, why should you care?"

"Yes, why should I?" repeated Cosmo nonchalantly. "Do they report to you?"

The doctor laughed again. "I see you haven't forgiven me my untimely merriment; but I will answer your question. No doubt I could hear a lot if I wanted to, both from the police and the thieves. But as a matter of fact it was my courier who told me. He was talking with some friends outside this inn when you came home. You know, you are a noticeable figure."

"Oh, your courier. I suppose he hasn't got much else to do!"

"I see you are bent on quarrelling, Mr. Latham," said the other, while two unexpected dimples appeared on his round cheeks. "All right. Only hadn't we better wait for some other opportunity? Don't you allow your man to talk while he is assisting you to dress? I must confess I let my fellow run on while he is shaving me in the morning. But then I am an easy-going sort of tramp. For I am just a tramp. I have no Latham Hall to go back to."

He pushed his chair away from the table, stretched his legs, plunged his hands in his pockets complacently. How long was it he had been a tramp? he mused aloud. Twenty years? Or a little more. From one end of Europe to the other. From Madrid to Moscow, as one might say. Exactly like that Corsican fellow. Only he hadn't dragged a tail of two hundred thousand men behind him, and had done no more blood-letting than his lancet was equal to.

He looked up at Cosmo suddenly.

"The lancet's my weapon, you know. Not bayonet or sabre. Cold steel anyhow. Of course I found occasion to fire off my pistols more than once, in the course of my travels, and I must say for myself that whenever I fired them it settled the business. One evening, I remember, in Transylvania, stepping out of a wretched inn to take a look round, I ran against a coalition of three powerful Haiduks in tarry breeches, with moustaches a foot long. The moonlight was bright as day. I took in the situation at a glance and I assure you two of them never made a sound as they fell, while the third just grunted once. I fancy they had designs on my poor horse. He was inside the inn, you know. A custom of the country. Men and animals under the same roof. I used to be sorry for the animals. When I came in again the Jew had just finished frying the eggs. He had been very surly before but when he served me I noticed that he was shaking like a leaf. He tried to propitiate me by the offer of a sausage. I was simply ravenous. It made me ill for two days. That's why I haven't forgotten the occurrence. He nearly managed to avenge those bandits. Luckily I had the right kind of drugs in my valise, and my iron constitution helped me to pull through. But I should like to have seen Bonaparte in that predicament. He wouldn't have known what to do. And, anyhow, the sausage would have finished him. His constitution is not like mine. He's unhealthy, sir, unhealthy."

"You had occasion to observe him often?" asked Cosmo, simply because he was reluctant to go back to his writing.

"Our paths seldom crossed," stated the other simply. "But some time after the abdication I was passing through Valence—it's a tramp's business, you know, to keep moving—and I just had a good look at him outside the post-house. You may take it from me, he won't reach the term of the Psalmist. Well, Mr. Latham, when I take a survey of the past, here we are, the Corsican and I, within, say, a hundred miles of each other, at the end of twenty years of tramping, and, frankly, which of us is the better off when all's said and done?"

"That's a point of view," murmured Cosmo wearily. He added, however, that there were various ways of appreciating the careers of the world's great men.

"There are," assented the other. "For instance, you would say that nothing short of the whole of Europe was needed to crush that fellow. But Pozzo di Borgo thinks that he has done it all by himself."

AT the name of the Emperor's Corsican enemy Cosmo raised his head. He had caught sight in Paris of that personage at one or other of those great receptions from which he used to come away disgusted with the world and dissatisfied with himself. The doctor seemed inwardly amused by his recollection of Pozzo di Borgo.

"He said to me," he continued, " 'Ah! If Bonaparte had had the sense not to quarrel with me he wouldn't be in Elba now.' What do you think of that, Mr. Latham? Is that a point of view?"

"I should call it mad egotism."

"Yes. But the most amusing thing is that there is some truth in it. The private enmity of one man may be more dangerous and more effective than the hatred of millions on public grounds. Pozzo has the ear of the Russian Emperor. The fate of the Bourbons hung on a hair. Alexander's word was law—and who knows!"

Cosmo, plunged in abstraction, was repeating to himself mechanically, "The fate of the Bourbons hung on a hair—the fate of the Bourbons." . . . Those words seemed meaningless. He tried to rouse himself. "Yes, Alexander," he murmured vaguely. The doctor raised his voice suddenly in a peevish tone.

"I am not talking of Alexander of Macedon, Mr. Latham." His vanity had been hurt by Cosmo's attitude. The young man's faint smile placated him, and the incongruous dimples reappeared on the doctor's cheeks while he continued: "Here you are. For Pozzo, Napoleon has always been a starveling squireen. For the Prince, he has been principally the born enemy of good taste. . . ."

"THE Prince?" repeated Cosmo, struggling to keep his head above the black waters of melancholia which seemed to lap about his lips. "You have said the Prince, haven't you? What Prince?"

"Why, Talleyrand, of course. He did once tell him so, too. Pretty audacious! What? . . . Well, I don't know. Suppose you were master of the world, and somebody were to tell you something of the sort to your face—what could you do? Nothing. You would have to gulp it, feeling pretty small. A private gentleman of good position could resent such a remark from an equal, but a master of the world couldn't. A master of the world, Mr. Latham, is very small potatoes; and I will tell you why: it's because he is alone of his kind, stuck up like a thief in the pillory, for dead cats and cabbage stalks to be thrown at him. A devil of a position to be in unless for a moment. But no man born of woman is a monster. There never was such a thing. A man who would really be a monster would arouse nothing but loathing and hatred. But this man has been loved by an army, by a people. For years his soldiers died for him with joy. Now, didn't they?"

Cosmo perceived that he had managed to forget himself. "Yes," he said, "that cannot be denied."

"No," continued the doctor. "And now, within twenty yards of us, on the other side of the wall there are millions of people who still love him. Hey! Cantelucci!" he called across the now empty length of the room. "Come here."

The innkeeper, who had been noiselessly busy about a distant sideboard, approached with deference, in his shirt-sleeves, girt with a long apron of which one corner was turned up, and with a white cap on his head. Being asked whether it was true that Italians loved Napoleon, he answered by a bow and "Excellency."

"You think yourself that he is a great man, don't you?" pursued the doctor, and obtained another bow and another murmured "Excellency."

The doctor turned to Cosmo triumphantly. "You see! And Bonaparte has been stealing from them all he could lay his hands on for years. All their works of art. I am surprised he didn't take away the wall on which *The Last Supper* is painted. It makes my blood boil. I love Italy, you know." He addressed again the motionless Cantelucci.

"But what is it that makes you people love this man?"

This time Cantelucci did not bow. He seemed to make an effort: "Signore, it is the idea."

The doctor directed his eyes again to Cosmo in silence. At last the innkeeper stepped back three paces before turning away from his English clients. The dimples had vanished from the doctor's full cheeks. There was something contemptuous in the peevishness of his thin lips and the extreme hardness of his eyes. They softened somewhat before he addressed Cosmo.

"Here is another point of view for you. Devil only knows what that idea is, but I suspect it's vague enough to include every illusion that ever fooled mankind. There must be some charm in that gray coat and that old three-cornered hat of his, for the

man himself has betrayed every hatred and every hope that have helped him on his way."

"What I am wondering at," Cosmo said at last, "is whether you have ever talked like this to anybody before."

The doctor seemed taken aback a little.

"Oh. You mean about Bonaparte," he said. "If you had gone to that other inn, Pollegrini's, more suitable to your nationality and social position, you would have heard nothing of that kind. I am not very communicative really, but to sit at meals like two mutes would have been impossible. What could we have conversed about? One must have some subject other than the weather and, frankly, what other subject would we have had here in Genoa, or for that matter in any other spot of the civilized world? I know there are amongst us in England a good many young men who call themselves revolutionists and even republicans. Charming young men, generous and all that. Friends of Boney. You might be one of them."

AS he paused markedly Cosmo murmured that he was hardly prepared to state what he was. That other inn, the Pollegrini, was full when he arrived.

"Well, there had been three departures this morning," the doctor informed him. "You can have your things packed up this afternoon and carried across the Place. You know, by staying here you make yourself conspicuous to the spies, not to speak of the theives; they ask themselves: 'What sort of inferior Englishman is that?' With me it is different. I am known for a man who has his own work to do. People are curious. And as my work is confidential I prefer to keep out of the way rather than have to be rude. But for you it would be more amusing to live over there. New faces all the time; endless gossip about all sorts of people."

"I do not think it is worth while to change now," said Cosmo coldly.

"Of course not, if you are going to prolong your stay. If you project a visit to Elba, Livorno is the port for that. And if you are anxious to hear about Napoleon you will hear plenty of gossip about him there. Here you have nothing but my talk."

"I have found it very interesting," said Cosmo, rising to go away. The doctor smiled without amiability. He was determined never to let Cosmo guess that he knew of his acquaintance with the people occupying the palace guarded by the symbolic griffins. Of that fact he had been made aware by the Count de Montevesso who, once he had got the doctor into Clelia's room, decided to take him into his confidence—on the ground that one must be frank with a medical man. The real reason was, however, that knowing Doctor Martel to be employed on secret political work by the statesmen of the Alliance, and having a very great idea of his occult influences in all sorts of spheres, he hoped to get from him another sort of assistance. His last words were, "You see yourself the state the child is in. I want that popinjay moved out of Genoa."

The only answer of the doctor to this, and the last sound during that professional visit that Count de Montevesso heard from him, was a short wooden laugh. That man of political intrigues, confidential missions (often he had more than one at a time on his hands), inordinately vain of his backstairs importance, was not mercenary. He had always preserved a most independent attitude towards his employers. To him the Count de Montevesso was but a common stupid soldier of fortune of no importance and of no position except as the son-in-law of the Marquis d'Armand. He had never seen him before, but his marital life was known to him as it was known to the rest of the world. To be waylaid by a strange priest just as he was leaving the Marquis's room was annoying enough, but he could not very well refuse the request since it seemed to be a case of sudden illness. He was soon enlightened as to its nature by Clelia, who had treated him and the Count to another of her indescribable performances. Characteristically enough the doctor had never been for a moment irritated with the girl. He behaved by her tempestuous bedside like a man of science, calm, attentive, impenetrable. But it was afterwards, when he had been drawn aside by the Count for a confidential talk, that he had asked himself whether he were dreaming or awake. His scorn for the man helped him to preserve his self-command, and to the end the Count was not intelligent enough to perceive its character.

The doctor left the Palazzo about an hour after Cosmo (but not by the same staircase) and on his way to his inn gave rein to his indignation. Did the stupid brute imagine that he had any sort of claim on his services? Ah, he wanted that popinjay removed from Genoa! Indeed! And what the devil did he care for it? Was he expected to arrange a neat little assassination to please that solemn wooden imbecile? The doctor's sense of self-importance was grievously hurt. Even in the morning after a good night's rest he had not shaken off the impression. However, he was reasonable enough not to make Cosmo in any way responsible for what he defined to himself as the most incredibly offensive experience of his life. He only looked at him when he came to lunch with a sort of acid amusement as the being who had had the power to arouse a passion of love in the primitive soul of that curious little savage. As the meal proceeded, the doctor seemed to notice that his young countryman was somehow changed. He watched him covertly. What had happened to him since last evening? Surely he hadn't been smitten himself by the little savage that under no circumstances could have been made fit to be a housemaid in an English family.

After he had been left by Cosmo alone in the dining room, the doctor's body continued to loll in the chair while his thoughts continued to circle around that funny affair, of which you couldn't say whether it was love at first sight or a manifestation of some inherited lunacy. Quite a good-looking young man. Out of the common too, in a distinguished way. Altogether a specimen of one's countrymen one could well be proud of, mused further the doctor, whose tastes had been formed by much intercourse with all kinds of people. Characteristically enough, too, he felt for a moment sorry in his grumpy contemptuous way for the little dishevelled savage with a hooked nose and burning cheeks and her thin sticks of bare arms. The doctor was humane. The origin of his reputation sprang from his humanity. But his thought, as soon as it left Clelia, stopped short as it were before another image that replaced it in his mind. He had remembered the Countess of Montevesso. He knew her of old, by sight and reputation. He had seen her no further back than last night by the side of the old Marquis's chair. Now he had seen the Count de Montevesso himself, he could well believe all the stories of a lifelong jealousy. The doctor's hard, active eyes stared fixedly at the truth. It was not because of that little savage that that gloomy self-tormenting ass of a drill sergeant to an Indian prince wanted young Latham removed from Genoa. Oh, dear no. That wasn't it at all. It was much more serious.

Before he walked out of the empty dining room Doctor Martel concluded that it would be perhaps just as well for young Latham not to linger too long in Genoa.

II

COSMO, having returned to his room, sat down again at the writing table: for was not this day to be devoted to correspondence? Long after the shade had invaded the greater part of the square below he went on, while the faint shuffle of footsteps and the faint murmur of voices reached him from the pavement like the composite sound of agitated insect life that can be heard in the depths of a forest. It required all his courage to keep on, piling up words which dealt exclusively with towns, roads, rivers, mountains, the colours of the sky. It was like labouring the description of the scenery of a stage after a great play had come to an end. A vain thing. And still he travelled on. Having at last descended into the Italian plain (for the benefit of Henrietta), he dropped his pen and thought: "At this rate I will never arrive in Genoa." He fell back in his chair like a weary traveller. He was suddenly overcome by that weary distaste a frank nature feels after an effort at concealing an overpowering sentiment.

But had he really anything to conceal? he asked himself.

Suddenly the door flew open and Spire marched in with four lighted candles on a tray. It was only then that Cosmo became aware how late it was. "Had I not better tear all this up?" he thought, looking down at the sheets before him.

Spire put two candlesticks on the table, disposed the two others, one each side of the mantlepiece, and was going out.

"Wait!" cried Cosmo.

It was like a cry of distress. Spire shut the door quietly and turned about, betraying no emotion. Cosmo seized the pen again and concluded hastily:

"I have been in Genoa for the last two days. I have seen Adèle and the Marquis. They send their love. You shall have lots about them in my next. I have no time now to tell you what a wonderful person she has become. But perhaps you would not think so."

AFTER he had signed it the thought struck him that there was nothing about Napoleon in his letter. He must put in something about Napoleon. He added a P. S.:

"You can form no idea of the state of suspense in which all classes live here from the highest to the lowest, as to what may happen next. All their thoughts are concentrated on Bonaparte. Rumours are flying about of some sort of violence that may be offered to him, assassination, kidnapping. It's difficult to credit it all, though I do believe that the Congress in Vienna is capable of any atrocity. A person I met here suggested that I should go to Livorno. Perhaps I will. But I have lost, I don't know why, all desire to travel. Should I find a ship ready to sail for England in Livorno, I may take passage in her and come home at once by sea."

Cosmo collected the pages, and while closing the packet asked himself whether he ought to tell her that. Was it the fact that he had lost all wish to travel? However, he let Spire take the packet to the post and during the man's absence took a turn or two in the room. He had got through the day. Now there was the evening to get through somehow. But when it occurred to him that the evening would be followed by the hours of an endless night, filled by the conflict of shadowy thoughts that haunt the birth of a passion, the desolation of the prospect was so overpowering that he could only meet it with a bitter laugh. Spire, returning, stood thunderstruck at the door.

"What's the matter with you? Have you seen a ghost?" asked Cosmo, who ceased laughing suddenly and fixed the valet with distracted eyes.

"No, sir, certainly not. I was wondering whether you hadn't better dine in your room."

"What do you mean? Am I not fit to be seen?" asked Cosmo captiously, glancing at himself in the mirror as though the crisis through which he had passed in the last three or four minutes could have distorted his face. Spire made no answer. The sound of that laugh had made him lose his conventional bearing; while Cosmo wondered what had happened to that imbecile and glared at him suspiciously.

"Give me my coat," he said at last. "I am going downstairs."

This broke the spell and Spire, getting into motion, regained his composure.

"Noisy company down there, sir. I thought you might not like it."

Cosmo felt a sudden longing to hear noise, lots of it, senseless, loud, common, absurd noise; noise loud enough to prevent one from thinking, the sort of noise that would cause one to become, as it were, insensible.

"What do you want?" he asked savagely of Spire, who was hovering at his back.

"I am ready to help you with your coat, sir," said Spire, in an apathetic voice. He had been profoundly shocked. After his master had gone out, slamming the door behind him, he busied himself with a stony face in putting the room to rights, before he blew out the candles and left it to get his supper.

"Didn't you advise me this morning to go to Livorno?" asked Cosmo, falling heavily into the chair. Doctor Martel was already at table, and, except that he had changed his boots for silk stockings and shoes, he might not have moved from there all the afternoon.

"Livorno," repeated that strange man. "Did I? Yes. The road along the Riviera di Levante is delightful for any person sensible to the beauties of Italian landscapes." He paused with a sour expression in the noise of voices filling the room, and muttered that no doubt Cantelucci found that sort of thing pay but that the place was becoming impossible.

Cosmo was just thinking that there was not half

enough uproar there. The naval officers seemed strangely subdued that evening. The same old lieutenant with sunken cheeks and a sharp nose, in the same shabby uniform, was at the head of the table. Cantelucci, wearing a long-skirted maroon coat, now glided about the room, unobtrusive and vigilant. His benefactor beckoned to him.

"You would know where to find a man with four good horses for the signore's carriage?" he asked; and accepting Cantelucci's low bow as an affirmative, addressed himself to Cosmo. "The road's perfectly safe. The country's full of Austrian troops."

"I think I would prefer to go by sea," said Cosmo, who had not thought of making any arrangements for the journey. Instantly Cantelucci glided away, while the doctor emitted a grunt and applied himself to his dinner. Cosmo thought desperately, "Oh, yes, the sea, why not by sea, away from everybody?" He had been rolling and bumping on the roads, good, bad, and indifferent, in dust or mud, meeting in inns ladies and gentlemen for days and days between Paris and Genoa, and for a moment he was fascinated by the notion of a steady gliding progress in company of three or four bronzed sailors over a blue sea in sight of a picturesque coast of rocks and hills crowded with pines, with opening valleys, with white villages, and purple promontories of lovely shape. It was like a dream which lasted till the doctor was heard suddenly saying, "I think I could find somebody that would take your travelling carriage off your hands"—and the awakening came with an inward recoil of all Cosmo's being, as if before a vision of irrevocable consequences.

The doctor lowered his eyelids. "He is changed," he said to himself. "Oh yes, he is changed." This, however, did not prevent him from feeling irritated by Cosmo's lack of response to the offer to dispose of his travelling carriage.

"There are many people that would consider themselves lucky to have such an offer made to them," he remarked, after a period of silence. "It is not so easy at this time to get rid of a travelling carriage. Nor yet to have an opportunity to hire a dependable man with four good horses if you want to go by land. I mean at a time like this when anything may happen any day."

"I am sure I am very much obliged to you," said Cosmo, "but I am really in no hurry."

The doctor took notice of Cosmo's languid attitude and the untouched plate before him.

"The trouble is that you don't seem to have any aim at all. Isn't that it?"

"Yes. I confess," said Cosmo carelessly. "I think I want a rest."

"Well, Mr. Latham, you had better see that you get it, then. This place isn't restful, it is merely dull. And then suppose you were suddenly to perceive an aim, such for instance as a visit to Elba—you may be too late if you linger unduly. You know, you are not likely to see a specimen like that one over there again in your lifetime. And even he may not be with us very long."

"YOU seem very positive about that," said Cosmo, looking at his interlocutor searchingly. "This is the third or fourth time that I hear that sort of allusion from you. Have you any special information?"

"Yes, of a sort. It has been my lot to hear much of what is said in high places, and the nature of my occupation has given me much practice in appreciating what is said."

"In high places!" interjected Cosmo.

"And in low, too," retorted the doctor a little impatiently, "if that is the distinction you have in your mind, Mr. Latham. However, I told you I have been in Vienna quite recently, and I have heard something there."

"From Prince Talleyrand?" was Cosmo's stolid suggestion.

The doctor smiled acidly. "Not a bad guess. I did hear something at Prince Talleyrand's. I heard it from Montrond. You know whom I mean?"

"Never heard of him. Who is he?"

"Never heard of Montrond? Oh, I forgot, you have been shut up in that tight island of ours. Monsieur Montrond has the advantage to live near the rose. You understand me? He is the intimate companion to the Prince. Has been for many years. The Prince told somebody once that he liked Montrond because he was not 'excessively' scrupulous. That just paints the man for you. I was talking with Monsieur Montrond about Bonaparte's future—and I was not trying to be unkind, either. I pointed out that one could hardly expect him to settle down if the French Government were not made to pay him the money guaranteed under the Treaty. He could see the moment when he would find himself without a penny. That's enough to make any human being restive. He was bound to try and do something. A man must live, I said. And Montrond looks at me, sideways, and says deliberately: 'Oh, here we don't see the necessity.' You understand that after a hint like this I dropped the subject. It's a point of view like another, eh, Mr. Latham?"

COSMO was impressed. "I heard last night," he said, "that he is taking precautions for his personal safety."

"He remembered perhaps what happened to a certain Duc d'Enghien, a young man who obviously didn't take precautions. So you heard that story? Well, in Livorno you will hear many sorts of stories. Livorno is an exciting place, and an excellent point to start from for a visit to Elba, which would be a great memory for your old age. And if you happen to observe anything remarkable there I would thank you to drop me a line, care of Cantelucci. You see, I have put some money into a deal of oil, and I don't know how it is, everything in the world, even a little twopenny affair like that, is affected by this feeling of suspense that man's presence gives rise to: hopes, plans, affections, love affairs. If I were you, Mr. Latham, I would certainly go to Livorno." He waited a little before he got up, muttering something about having a lot of pen work to do, and went out, Cantelucci hastening to open the door for him.

Cosmo remained passive in his chair. The room emptied itself gradually, and there was not even a servant left in it when Cosmo rose in his turn. He went back to his room, threw a few pieces of wood on the fire, and sat down. He felt as if lost in a strange world.

He doubted whether he ought not to have called that day at the Palace, if only to say good-bye. And suddenly all the occurrences and even words of the day before assailed his memory. The morning call, the mulatto girl, the sunshine in Madame de Montevesso's boudoir, the seduction of her voice, the emotional appeal of her story, had stirred him to the depths of his soul. Where was the man who could have imagined the existence of a being of such splendid humanity, with such a voice, with such amazing harmony of aspect, expression, gesture—with such a face in this gross world of mortals in which Lady Jane and Mrs. R.'s daughters counted for the most exquisite products offered to the love of men? And yet Cosmo remembered now that even while all his senses had been thrown into confusion by the first sight of Madame de Montevesso he had felt dimly that she was no stranger, that he had seen her glory before: the presence, the glance, the lips. He did not connect that dim recognition with the child Adèle. No child could have promised a woman like this. It was rather like the awed recollection of a prophetic vision. And it had been in Latham Hall—but not in a dream; he was certain no man ever found the premonition of such a marvel in the obscure promptings of slumbering flesh. And it was not in a vision of his own; such visions were for artists, for inspired seers. She must have been fortetold to him in some picture he had seen in Latham Hall, where one came on pictures (mostly of the Italian school) in unexpected places, on landings, at the end of dark corridors, in spare bedrooms. A luminous oval face on the dark background—the noble full-length woman, stepping out of the narrow frame with long draperies held by jewelled clasps and girdle, with pearls on head and bosom, carrying a book and a pen (or was it a palm?) and—yes! he saw it plainly with terror—with her left breast pierced by a dagger. He saw it there plainly as if the blow had been struck before his eyes. The released hilt seemed to vibrate yet, while the eyes looked straight at him, profound, unconcious in miraculous tranquillity.

Terror-struck as if at the discovery of a crime, he jumped up, trembling in every limb. He had a horror of the room, of being alone within its four bare walls on which there were no pictures except that awful one which seemed to hang in the air before his eyes. Cosmo felt that he must get away from it. He snatched up his cloak and hat and fled into the corridor. The hour was late and everything was very still. He did not see as much as a flitting shadow on the bare rough walls of the unfinished palace awaiting the decoration of marbles and bronzes that would never cover its nakedness now. The dwelling of the Grazianis stood as dumb and cold in all its lofty depths as at that desolate hour of the dreadful siege, when its owner lay dead of hunger at the foot of the great flight of stairs. It was only in the hall below that Cosmo caught from behind one of the closed doors faint, almost ghostly, murmurs of disputing voices. The two hanging lanterns could not light up that grandly planned cavern in all its extent, but Cosmo made out a dim shape of the elderly lieutenant sitting all alone and perfectly still against the wall, with a bottle of wine before him. By the time he had reached the pavement Cosmo had mastered his trembling and had steadied his thoughts. He wanted to keep away from that house for hours, for hours. He glanced right and left, hesitating. In the whole town he knew only the way to the Palazzo and the way to the port. He took the latter direction. He walked by the faint starlight falling into the narrow streets resembling lofty unroofed corridors as if the whole town had been one palace, recognizing on his way the massive shape of one or two jutting balconies he remembered seeing before, and also a remarkable doorway, the arch of which was held up by bowed giants with flowing beards, like two captive sons of the god of the sea.

AT the moment when Cosmo was leaving his room to escape the haunting vision of an old picture representing a beautiful martyr with a dagger in her breast, Doctor Martel was at work finishing what he called a confidential memorandum which he proposed to hand over to the Marquis d'Armand. The doctor applied very high standards of honour and fidelity to his appreciation of men's character. He had a very great respect for the old Marquis. He was anxious to make him the recipient of that crop of valuable out-of-the-way information interesting to the French Bourbons which he had gathered lately.

Having sat up half the night, he slept late and was just finishing shaving when, a little before eleven o'clock, there was a knock at his door and Cantelucci entered. The innkeeper offered no apology for this intrusion, but announced without preliminaries that the young English gentleman had vanished during the night from the inn. The woman who took the chocolate in the morning upstairs found no servant ready to receive it as usual. The bedroom door was ajar. After much hesitation she had ventured to put her head through. The shutters being open, she had seen that the bed had not been slept in. . . . The doctor left off dabbing his cheeks with eau de cologne and turned to stare at the innkeeper. At last he shrugged his shoulders slightly.

Cantelucci took the point immediately. Yes. But in this case it was impossible to dismiss the affair lightly. The young English signore had not been much more than forty-eight hours in Genoa. He had no time to make many acquaintances. And in any case, Cantelucci thought, he ought to have been back by this time.

The doctor picked up his wig and adjusted it on his head thoughtfully, like a considering cap. That simple action altered his physiognomy so completely that Cantelucci was secretly affected. He made one of his austerely deferential bows, which seemed to put the whole matter into the doctor's hands at once.

"You seem very much upset," said the doctor. "Have you seen his servant? He must know something."

"I doubt it, Excellency. He has been upstairs to open the shutters, of course. He is now at the front door, looking out. I did speak to him. He had too much wine last evening and fell asleep with his head on the table. I saw him myself before I retired."

The doctor preserving a sort of watchful silence, Cantelucci added that he, himself, had retired early on account of one of those periodical headaches he had suffered from since the days of his youth when he had been chained up in the dungeons of St. Elmo for months.

The doctor thought the fellow did look as though he had had a bad night. "Why didn't you come to see me? You know I can cure worse ailments."

The innkeeper raised his hands in horror at the mere idea. He would never have dared to disturb His Excellency for such a trifle as a headache. But the cause of his trouble was quite other. A partisan of the revolutionary French from his early youth, Cantelucci had been an active conspirator against the old order of things. Now that kings and priests were raising their heads out of the dust he had again become very busy. The latest matter in hand had been the sending of some important documents to the conspirators in the South. He had found the messenger, had taken steps for getting him away secretly, had given him full instructions the last thing before going to bed. The young fellow was brave, intelligent, and resourceful, beyond the common. But somehow the very perfection of his arrangements kept the old conspirator awake. He reviewed them again and again. He could not have done better. At last he fell asleep, but almost immediately, it seemed to him, he was roused by the old crone whose task it was to light the fires in the morning. Sordid and witchlike, she conveyed to him in a toothless mumble the intelligence that Checca was in the kitchen, all in tears and demanding to see him at once.

This Checca was primarily and principally a pretty girl, an orphan left to his care by his late sister. She was not consulted when her uncle, of whom she stood in awe, married her to the middle-aged owner of a wineshop in the low quarter of the town extending along the shore near the harbour. He was good-natured, slow-witted, and heavy-handed at times. But Checca was much less afraid of him than of her austere uncle. It amused her to be the padrona of an osteria which in the days of Empire was a notable resort for the officers of French privateers. But on the peace that clientèle had disappeared and Checca's husband, leaving the wine-casks to her management, employed his leisure in petty smuggling operations which kept him away from home.

Cantelucci connected his niece's irruption with some trouble that men might have got into. He was vexed. He had other matters to think of. He was astonished by the violence of her grief. When she could speak at last her tale turned out to be more in the nature of a confession. The old conspirator could hardly believe his ears when he heard that the man whom he had trusted had committed the crime of betraying the secrecy of his mission by going to the osteria late at night to say good-bye to Checca. She assured him that he had been there only a very few moments.

"What, in a wine-shop! Before all the people! With spies swarming everywhere!"

"No," she said. It was much later. Everybody was gone. He had scratched at the barred door.

"And you were on the other side waiting to let him in—miserable girl," Cantelucci hissed ferociously.

She stared at her terrible uncle with streaming eyes. "Yes, I was." She had not the heart to refuse him. He stayed only a little moment. . . . (Cantelucci ground his teeth with rage. It was the first he had heard of this affair. Here was a most promising plot endangered by this *bestialita.*) . . . Only one little hug, and then she pushed him out herself. Before she had finished putting up the bar she heard a tumult in the street. Shots, too. Perhaps she would have rushed out but her husband was home for a few days. He came down to the wine-shop very cross and boxed her ears, she did not know why. Perhaps for being in the shop at that late hour. That did not matter; but he drove her before him up the stairs and she had to sham sleep for hours till he began to snore regularly. She had grown so desperate that she took the risk of running out and telling her uncle all about it. She thought he ought to know. What brought her to the inn really was a faint hope that Attilio, having eluded the assassins (she was sure they were assassins), had taken refuge there unscathed—or wounded perhaps. She said nothing of this, however. Before Cantelucci's stony bearing she broke down. "He is dead—*poverino.* My own hands pushed him to his death," she moaned to herself crazily, standing in front of her silent uncle before the blazing kitchen fire in the yet slumbering house.

Rage kept Cantelucci dumb. He was as shocked by what he had heard as the most rigid moralist could desire. But he was a conspirator, and all he could see in this was the criminal conduct of those young people who ought to have thought of nothing but the liberation of Italy. For Attilio had taken the oath of the Carbonari; and Checca belonged to the women's organization of that secret society. She was an *ortolana,* as they called themselves. He had initiated her and was responsible for her conduct. The baseness—the stupidity—the frivolity—the selfishness!

By severe exercise of self-restraint he refrained from throwing her out into the street all in tears as she was. He only muttered awfully at her, "Get out of my sight, you little fool," with a menacing gesture; but she stood her ground; she never flinched before his raised hand. And as it fell harmless by his side she seized it in both her own, pressing it to her lips and breast in turn, whispering the while all sorts of endearing names at the infuriated Cantelucci. He heard the sounds of his staff beginning the work of the day, their voices, their footsteps. They would wonder—but his niece did not care. She clung to his hand, and he did not get rid of her till he had actually promised to send her news directly he had heard something himself. And she even thought of the means. There was that fine sailor with black whiskers in attendance on the English officers frequenting the hotel. He was a good-natured man. He knew the way to the wine-shop.

This reminded her of her husband. What if he should wake in her absence? And still distracted, she ran off at last, leaving Cantelucci to face the situation.

He was dismayed. He did not really know what had happened—not to his messenger but to the documents. The old conspirator, battling with his thoughts, moved so silent and stern amongst his people that nobody dared approach him for a couple of hours. And when they did at last come to him with the news of the young "milord's" disappearance he simply swore at them. But for various reasons it would be best for him to seek his old benefactor. He did so with a harassed face which caused the doctor to believe in the story of a sleepless night. Of course he spoke only of Cosmo's absence. The doctor, leaning back against the edge of his dressing table, gazed silently at the innkeeper. He was profoundly disturbed by the intelligence. "Got your snuffbox on you?" he asked.

The alacrity of Cantelucci in producing his snuffbox was equalled by the deferential flourish with which he held it out to his benefactor.

"The young English signore," he remarked, "visited the Palazzo of the Griffins the evening before."

The doctor helped himself to a pinch. "He didn't spend the night there, though," he observed. "You know who lives in the Palazzo, don't you, Cantelucci?"

"Some Piedmontese general, I understand, Your Excellency," said Cantelucci, who had been in touch with Count Helion ever since the Austrian occupation, and had even forwarded secretly one or two letters for the Count to Elba. But these were addressed to a grain merchant in Porto Ferraio. "I will open all my mind to Your Excellency," continued Cantelucci. "An English milord is a person of consequence. If I were to report his disappearance the police would be coming here to make investigation. I don't want any police in my house."

The doctor lost his meditative air. "I daresay you don't" he said grimly.

"I recommend myself to Your Excellency's protective influence," murmured Cantelucci insinuatingly.

The doctor let drop the pinch of snuff between his thumb and finger. "And he may have come back while we are talking here," he said hopefully. "Go down, Cantelucci, and send me my courier."

But the doctor's man was already at the door, bringing the brushed clothes over his arm. While dressing, the doctor speculated on the mystery. It baffled all his conjectures. A man may go out in the evening for a breath of fresh air and get knocked on the head. But how unlikely! He spoke casually to his man who was ministering to him in gloomy silence.

"You will have to step over to the police presently and find out whether anything has happened last night. Do it quietly."

"I understand," said the courier surlily. The thought that the fellow had been drunk recently crossed the doctor's mind.

"Whom were you drinking with last night?" he asked sharply.

"The English servant," confessed the courier-valet grumpily. "His master let him off his services last night."

"Yes. And you made him pay the shot." With these words the doctor left the room. While crossing the great hall downstairs he had the view of Spire's back framed in the entrance doorway. The valet had not apparently budged from there since seven. So Mr. Latham had not returned. In the dining room there were only two naval officers at the table reserved for them: the elderly gentleman in his usual place at the head, and a round-faced florid person in a bobbed wig, who might have been the ship's surgeon. During their meal the doctor did not hear them exchange a single remark. They went away together, and after the last of the town customers had left the room, too, the doctor sat alone before his table, toying with a half-empty glass thoughtfully. His grave face was startlingly at variance with the short abrupt laugh which he emitted as he rose, pushing his chair back. It was provoked by the thought that only last evening he had been urging half jestingly his young countryman to leave Genoa in one of the conventional ways, by road or sea, and now he was gone with a vengeance—spirited away, by Jove! The doctor was startled at the profound change of his own feelings. Count Helion's venomous, "I don't want that popinjay here" did not sound so funny in his recollection now. Very extraordinary things could and did happen under the run of everyday life. Was it possible that the word of the riddle could be found there? he asked himself.

(*To be continued in the next issue*)

Rules of the Conrad Contest

1. Five cash prizes will be paid by *The Saturday Review of Literature,* as follows:

First Prize	$500
Second Prize	250
Third Prize	50
Fourth Prize	50
Fifth Prize	25

Fifty prizes consisting each of any one volume of the limp leather edition of Conrad's works which the winners may choose.

2. Beginning in the June 27th issue and continuing until September *The Saturday Review* will publish serially Joseph Conrad's last, unfinished novel, "Suspense." For the best essays on the probable ending of "Suspense" *The Saturday Review* offers $1,000.00 in prizes as specified in Rule No. 1.

3. Do not submit any essays until after the last instalment has appeared in September. At the conclusion of the contest all manuscripts should be sent to *The Saturday Review* Contest Editor, 236 East 39th Street, New York, N. Y. Your full name and complete address must appear on the manuscript.

4. It is not necessary to be a subscriber to or purchaser of *The Saturday Review* in order to enter the contest. Copies of *The Saturday Review* may be examined at the Public Libraries. The contest is open to anyone except employees of the paper. Reviewers and contributors to the pages of the *Review* are eligible for all except the second prize, which is open only to non-professional writers.

5. The essays should be about 500 words in length, although they may run to 2,000 words.

Decision as to the merits of the essays will be made not only on the basis of the plausibility of the suggested ending, but also its plausibility as the ending of a characteristic Conrad novel. In awarding the prizes the literary quality of the essay will be taken into consideration as well as the ingenuity of the solution.

It must be clearly understood that the article submitted cannot be an actual conclusion to "Suspense," but must take the form of a discussion of what that conclusion might have been. Mrs. Conrad has emphatically refused to permit the publication of any end to the novel.

6. The judges will be Captain David W. Bone, Joseph Hergesheimer, and Professor William Lyon Phelps. Their decision will be final.

7. The contest will close on October 1, 1925. Manuscript must be in the office of *The Saturday Review* before midnight of that date.