

And here was one of these "lamp-posts," at seven o'clock in the morning in a convent chapel. Of course it was edifying, but when I turned round again (purely on account of my figs), and saw him sitting there smelling of morocco leather, and the best cigars and heliotrope scent, with his arms folded in the most lordly manner, as if the place belonged to him, I hated him. Why, pray, was he not in the passes fighting with the others? Of course he had taken care to find himself a "soft billet," as our men call it! What would anyone so foppish and effeminate be doing in the firing line?

And for the matter of that, what was he doing here? That I was soon to discover.

The *Domine, non sum dignus* bell rang once more, and the old Sister rose and brushed behind me. There were more whisperings, more scrapings of chairs—and then I understood.

Slowly she led him up the aisle.

He had one leg and two crutches.

With difficulty, and evidently with pain, he reached the altar rails, and paused to wipe the beads of perspiration from his forehead. He remained standing, and the Sister fussed gently round him, putting the altar-card in his hands, and almost supporting him. Then, also standing, she said the *Confiteor* for him in her loud deliberate old voice.

The sun came glowing through a half-open window, and a flowering shrub with an aromatic perfume thrust its blossoms almost into the sanctuary. A little brown bird came and perched itself on the window-sill, turning its head inquisitively, and chirping loudly.

Then the priest came down the altar steps and I could just hear the low-spoken words.

*Corpus Domini nostri Jesu Christi custodiat animam tuam in vitam aeternam. Amen.*

You will understand, perhaps, why I did not see any more?

When I got back I found Diana leaning out of the window in a Japanese wrapper, and whistling.

## II.

No, it is not distinguished to lean out of windows—especially convent windows—and whistle, and Diana knows that as well as you and I do, but she insists on doing in Italy all the things she cannot do at home, because she has discovered that the Italians excuse anything the *forestieri* do. Poor things, they are often so dependent on us for funds, and they put up so patiently with all our whims and fancies.

"Carina," called out Diana (this is just a nice name she has found for me), "Carina, do come here and tell me what this old man is saying! He looks as if he wanted to murder me, but one never knows. Perhaps he is making love. It would be most awfully exciting. Do come quick!"

I came quick, and looked out of the window. In the courtyard below, there was a wine chariot, drawn by two oxen exactly like the ones which had nearly caught me on their horns when I fled into the chapel. Standing by was a little old man in a violent temper.

"Ah, you!" he called out at sight of me. "Ah, you! have the kindness, please to tell that good-for-nothing woman (*donnaccia* was his word) not to throw stones at my beasts. They are of great price, and very nervous. If she throws stones at them, she will pay for it."

"Diana!" I exclaimed, "did you throw stones? He says you musn't. The oxen are very valuable and easily frightened."

"Of course I didn't throw stones," cried Diana, indignantly. "As if I should! He's making it up. He wants money. He's trying to frighten me. You horrid old thing," she added, leaning out of the window to shake her fist at him.

"Diana, do stop," I said. "This lady says she hasn't thrown any stones," I said to the man.

"Perhaps not, but she will, the minute my back is turned, and how can I be here all the time, when I have to carry all this wine into the cellar? I can't be in two places at once, can I? And women like that who lean out of windows and whistle and jeer are capable of the worst things. Tell her I will make her pay—"

"What rot!" cried Diana, in response to my translation. "I wasn't jeering. I was only admiring the oxen,

and telling them what beauties they were. I didn't see the horrid old thing."

"This lady says she was only talking to the oxen, and admiring them," I repeated, rather meekly.

"Talking to the oxen? What childishness! Is the woman of sound mind?"

"Quite," I assured him. "But she is English, you know."

"English!" His face cleared. "Ah, if the Signora is English that is a different matter. Speaking with the respect, the English are crazy, but not malicious. Ask the lady if she would like to photograph my oxen. So many times when the English meet me, they stop and ask permission to photograph them. Two francs, Signora, and me included."

"You included?"

"Yes, Signora, in the photograph."

"He forgives you," I told Diana, "because you are English, and therefore mad, but not badly-intentioned. And would you like to take a photograph of him and the oxen. His price is two francs?"

"Good egg!" cried Diana, in her deplorable slang. "Tell him to wait two minutes, Carina. Just let me prepare my camera."

"And just let me have my breakfast," I said. "Here is Sister with the coffee."

"Good-morning," said Suora Giacinta, severely. "And you are forty minutes late this morning, Signorina."

"I know, Sister, but it is the Day of the Dead. One hears an extra Mass."

"Then one gets up half an hour earlier," said the Sister, who barks often and has never been known to bite.

"Any letters, Sister?" asked Diana, in French.

"No, none at all," replied Suora Giacinta, in the same language. All Italians are splendid linguists.

"I believe you eat them," teased Diana.

"*Per carita!*" replied the Sister, permitting herself to smile. "Now I come to think of it, some came last night. Wait a little moment," and diving under her apron she produced a packet, and Diana fell on them.

"Mademoiselle, so long as you have this impatience for news you will never learn detachment from the world," was Sister's last shot.

"Why should I be?" asked Diana, innocently. (Did I tell you she was a Protestant, poor child?)

Suora Giacinta withdrew, and Diana waited impatiently while I finished breakfast.

"Your eyes are red," she said, presently.

"It is the *tramontana*—the east wind," I replied.

Diana threw her arm round me.

"Carina," she teased. "I always say you Papists have no regard for the truth! Lend me two francs at once, and come and help me with the photographs."

## III.

A *tramontana* was really blowing that afternoon and Diana said she was not going out.

"Oh yes, you are," I said, "you are coming with me to the cemetery."

"It's true I haven't seen it. But why to-day?"

"Because it is the Day of the Dead. Everybody goes. I want you to see how they care for the dead in Italy."

Diana still objected that her Italian mistress was coming to give her a lesson. (Everyone should learn Italian in Siena, where the purest Italian is spoken.) I suggested that we should call for her, and that she should give the lesson on the way to the cemetery.

"Top hole!" cried Diana. (A few lessons in English wouldn't be a waste of her time, would it?)

So we called at the Hotel Rimini and asked for the lady who was the daughter of the proprietor. We were shown into what was evidently the family sitting-room, and found many long candles lit before portraits draped in black. I was explaining this to Diana when a high thin excited voice interrupted us.

"You see?" asked one invisible lady of someone, behind the half-open door into the corridor. "Actually! Such childish superstition! And apparently they are quite intelligent people, otherwise. It is deplorable."

"It" was the candles, of course.

"Do you consider it deplorable, Diana?" I had the curiosity to ask.

"I—I'm not sure," said Diana simply. Since the war,