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BLOOMSBURG, PA., FRIDAY, JANUARY 8, 1886.

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May 4-tf

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Mathias Sandorf.

—BY—

JULES VERNE.

AUTHOR OF "JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH," "TRIP TO THE MOON," "AROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHTY DAYS," "MICHAEL STROGOFF," "TWENTY THOUSAND LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA," ETC., ETC.

[TRANSLATION COPYRIGHTED, 1885.]

CHAPTER I.

THE CARRIER PIGEON.

Trieste, the capital of Illyria, consists of two towns of widely dissimilar aspect. One of them—Theresienstadt—is modern and well-to-do, and squarely built along the shore of the bay from which the land it occupies has been reclaimed; the other is old and poor and irregular, straggling from the Corso, up the slopes of the Karst, whose summit is crowded by the picturesque citadel.

The harbor is guarded by the mole of San Carlo, with the merchant shipping berthed along side. On this mole there may at most times be seen—and very often in somewhat disquieting numbers—many a group of those houseless and and homeless Bohemians whose clothes might well be destitute of pockets, considering that their owners never had, and to all appearance never, will have the wherewithal to put into them.

To-day, however—it is the 18th of May, 1867—two personages slightly better dressed than the rest are noticeable among the crowd. That they have ever suffered from a superabundance of florins or kreutzers is improbable, unless some lucky chance has favored them—and they certainly look as though they would stick at nothing that might induce that chance to come.

One of them calls himself Sarcany, and says he hails from Tripoli. The other is a Sicilian, Zirone by name. Together they have strolled up and down the mole at least a dozen times, and now they have halted at its farthest end and are gazing away to the horizon, to the west of the Gulf of Trieste, as if they hoped to sight the ship which is bringing from home their fortune.

"What time is it?" asked Zirone in Italian, which his comrade spoke as he did all the other tongues of the Mediterranean.

Sarcany made no reply.

"What a fool I am!" exclaimed the Sicilian. "It is the time you are hungry after you have had no breakfast!"

There is such a mixture of races in this part of Austria-Hungary that the presence of these two men, although they were obviously strangers to the place, provoked no attention. And besides, if their pockets were empty, no one had reason to think so, thanks to their long brown capes, which reached even to their boots.

Sarcany, the youngest of the two, was about five and twenty, and of middle height, well set up, and of elegant manners and address. Sarcany, however, was not his baptismal name, and probably he had never been baptized, being of Tripolitan or Tunisian origin; but though his complexion was very dark his regular features proclaimed him to be more of the white than the negro.

If ever physiognomy was deceptive, it was so in Sarcany's case. It required a singularly keen observer to discover his consummate astuteness in that handsome, plausible face, with its large dark eyes, fine straight nose, and well-cut mouth shaded by the slight moustache. That almost impassible face betrayed none of the signs of contempt and hatred engendered by a constant state of revolt against society. If, as physiognomists pretend—and they are not unfrequently right—every rascal bears witness against himself in spite of all his cleverness, Sarcany could give the assertation the lie direct. To look at him one would suspect what he was and what he had been. He provoked none of that irresistiable aversion we feel towards cheats and scoundrels; and, in consequence, he was all the more dangerous.

Where had Sarcany spent his childhood? No one knew. How had he been brought up and by whom? In what corner of Tripoli had he nestled during his early years? To what protection did he owe his escape from the many chances of destruction in that terrible climate? No one could say—maybe not even himself; born by chance, helped on by chance, destined to live by chance! Nevertheless, during his boyhood he had picked up a certain amount of practical instruction, thanks to his having to knock about the world, mixing with people of all kinds, trusting to expedient after expedient to secure his daily bread. It was owing to this and other circumstances that he had come to have business relations with one of the richest houses in Trieste, that of the banker, Silas Toronthal, whose name is intimately connected with the development of this history.

Sarcany's companion, the Italian, Zirone, was a man faithless and lawless—a thorough-paced adventurer, ever ready at the call of him who could pay him well, until he met with him who could pay him better, to undertake any task whatever. Of Sicilian birth and in his thirtieth year, he was capable of suggesting a villany as of carrying it into effect. He might have told people where he had been born had he known; but he never willingly said where he lived or if he lived anywhere. It was in Sicily that the chances of Bohemian life had made him acquainted with Sarcany. And henceforth they had gone through the world, trying *per fas et nefas* to make a living by their wits. Zirone was a large, bearded man, brown in complexion and black of hair, taking much pains to hide the look of the scoundrel which would persist in revealing itself in spite of all his efforts. In vain he tried to conceal his real character beneath his exuberant volubility, and, being of rather a cheerful temperament, he was just as talkative about himself as his younger companion was reserved.

To-day, however, Zirone was very moderate in what he had to say. He was obviously anxious about his dinner. The night before fortune had been unkind to them at the gaming table, and the resources of Sarcany had been exhausted. What they were to do next neither knew. They could only reckon on chance, and as that Providence of the Beggars did not seek them out on the mole of San Carlo, they decided to go in search of it along the streets of the new town.

There, up and down the squares, quays and promenades on both sides of the harbor leading to the grand canal which runs through Trieste, there goes, comes, throngs, hastens and tears along in the fury of business a population of some 70,000 inhabitants of Italian origin, whose mother tongue is lost in a cosmopolitan concert of all the sailors, traders, workmen and officials, who shout and chatter in English, German, French or Sclave. Although this new town is rich, it by no means follows that all who tread its streets are fortunate. No! Even the wealthiest could hardly compete with the foreign merchants—English, Armenian, Greeks and Jews—who lord it at Trieste, and whose sumptuous establishments would do no discredit to the capital of Austria-Hungary. But, beyond these, how many are the poorer folks wandering from morning to night along the busy streets, bordered with lofty buildings closed like strong rooms, where lie the goods of all descriptions attracted to this free port, so happily placed at the farthest corner of the Adriatic! How many there are, breakfastless and dinnerless, loitering on the quays where the vessels of the wealthiest shipping firm of the Continent—the Austrian Lloyds—are unloading the treasures brought from every part of the world! How many outcasts there are, such as are found in London, Liverpool, Marseilles, Havre, Antwerp and Leghorn, who elbow the opulent shipowners, thronging around the warehouses, where admittance is forbidden them, around the Exchange, whose doors will never open for them, and everywhere around the Tergesteum, where the merchant has planted his office and counting-house and lives in perfect accord with the Chamber of Commerce!

It is admitted that in all the great maritime towns of the old and new world there exists a class of unfortunates peculiar to these important centres, whence they come we know not; whither they go we are equally ignorant. Among them the number of unclassed is considerable. Many of them are foreigners. The railroads and the steamers have thrown them in, as it were, on to a dust-heap, and there they lie crowding the thoroughfares, with the police striving in vain to clear them away.

Sarcany and Zirone, after a farewell look across the gulf to the lighthouse on St. Theresa Point, left the mole, passed between the Teatro Communale and the square, and reached the Piazza Grande, where they talked for a quarter of an hour in front of the fountain which is built of the stone from the neighboring Karst Hill, and stands by the statue to Charles VI.

Then they turned to the left and came back. To tell the truth, Zirone eyed the passers by as if he had an irresistable desire to feed on them. Then they turned towards the large square of Tergesteum, just as the hour struck to close the Exchange.

"There it is, empty—like we are!" said the Sicilian with a laugh, but without any wish to laugh.

But the indifferent Sarcany seemed to take not the slightest notice of his companion's mistimed pleasantry as he indulged in a hungry yawn.

Then they crossed the triangle past the bronze statue of the Emperor Leopold I. A shrill whistle from Zirone—quite a street boy's whistle—put to flight the flock of blue pigeons that were cooing on the portico of the old Exchange, like the gray pigeons in the square of St. Mark at Venice.

Then they reached the Corso which divides new from old Trieste. A wide street destitute of elegance, with well patronized shops destitute of taste, and more like the Regent street of London or the Broadway of New York than the Boulevard des Italiens of Paris. In the street a great number of people, but of vehicles only a few, and these going between the Piazza Grande and the Piazza della Legna—names sufficiently indicating the town's Italian origin.

Sarcany appeared insensible to all temptation, but Zirone as he passed the shops could not help giving an envious glance into those he had not the means to enter. And there was much there that looked inviting, particularly in the provision shops and chiefly in the "bierceries," where the beer flows more freely than in any other town in Austria-Hungary.

"There is rather more hunger and thirst about in this Corso," said the Sicilian, whose tongue rattled against his parched lips with the click of a castanet.

Sarcany's only reply to this observation was a shrug of the shoulders.

They then took the first turning to the left, and reached the bank of the canal near the Ponte Rosso—a swing bridge. This they crossed and went along the quays, where vessels of light draught were busy unloading. Here the shops and stalls looked much less tempting. When he reached the church of San Antonio, Sarcany turned sharply to the right. His companion followed him in silence. Then they went back along the Corso and crossed the old town whose narrow streets, impracticable for vehicles as they begin to climb the slopes of the Karst, are so laid out as to prevent their being enfiladed by that terrible wind, the bora, which blows icily from the northeast. In this old town of Trieste, Zirone and Sarcany, the moneyless, found themselves more at home than among the richer quarters of the new.

It was, in fact, in the basement of a modest hotel not far from the church of Santa Maria Maggiore that they had lodged since their arrival in the Illyrian Capital. But as the landlord, who remained unpaid, might become pressing as to this little bill, which grew larger from day to day, they sheered off from this dangerous shoal, crossed the square and loitered for a few minutes near the Arco di Riccardo.

The study of Roman architecture did not prove very satisfying, and as nothing had turned up in the almost deserted streets, they began the ascent of the rough footpaths leading almost to the top of the Karst, to the terrace of the cathedral.

"Curious idea to climd up here!" muttered Zirone, as he tightened his cape around his waist.

But he did not abandon his young companion, and away he went along the line of steps, called by courtesy roads, which led up the slopes of the Karst. Ten minutes afterwards, hungrier and thirstier than ever, they reached the terrace.

From this elevated spot there is a magnificant view extending across the Gulf of Trieste to the open seas, including the port with its fishing boats passing and repassing, and its steamers and trading ships outward and homeward bound, and the whole of the town with its suburbs and farthest houses clustering along the hills. The view had no charm for them! They were thinking of something very different, of the many times they had come here already to ponder on their misery! Zirone would have preferred a stroll along the rich slopes of the Corso. Perhaps the luck might reach them here which they were so impatiently waiting for!

At the end of the steps leading on to the terrace near the Byzantine Cathedral of Saint Just there was an enclosure, formerly a cemetary and now a museum of antiquities. There were no tombs, but odds and ends of sepulcharal stones lying in disorder under the lower branches of the trees—Roman stelæ, mediæval cippi, pieces of trigylphs and metopes of different ages of the Renaissance, vitrified cubes with traces of cinders, all thrown anyhow among the grass.

The gate of the enclosure was open. Sarcany had only to push it. He entered, followed by Zirone, who contented himself with this melancholy reflection—

"If we wanted to committ suicide this is just the place!"

"And if some one proposes it?" asked Sarcany ironically.

"I should decline, my friend! Give me one happy day in ten and I ask no more."

"It shall be given you—and something else."

"May all the saints of Italy hear you, and Heaven knows they are counted in hundreds."

"Come along!" said Sarcany.

They went along a semicircular path between a double range of urns and sat themselves down on a large Roman rose window which had fallen flat on the ground.

At first they remained silent. This suited Sarcany, but it did not suit his companion. And after one or two half-stifled yawns Zirone broke out with—

"This something that we have been fools enough to wait for is a long time coming."

Sarcany made no reply.

"What an idea," continued Zirone, "to come and look for it among these ruins! I am afraid we are on the wrong track, my friend. What are we likely to find in this old graveyard? The spirits do not want it when they have left their mortal carcasses behind them. When I join them I shall not worry about a dinner that is late or a supper that never comes! Let us get away."

Sarcany, deep in thought, with his looks lost in vacancy, never moved.

Zirone waited a few moments without saying anything. Then this habitual loquacity urged him to say:

"Sarcany," he said, "do you know in what form I should like this something to appear? In the form of one of those cashier people from Toronthal's with a pocketbook stuffed full of bank notes which he could hand over to us on behalf of the said banker with a thousand apologies for keeping us waiting so long."

"Listen, Zirone," answered Sarcany, knitting his brows; "for the last time I tell you that there is nothing to be hoped for from Silas Toronthal."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Yes, all the credit I have with him is exhausted, and to my last demands he gave me a definite refusal."

"That is bad."

"Very bad, but it is so."

"Good, if your credit is exhausted," continued Zirone, "it is because you have had the credit! And to what is that due? To your having many times placed your intelligence and zeal at the service of his firm in certain matters of delicacy. Now, during the first months of our stay in Trieste, Toronthal did not show himself too stingy in money matters. But it is impossible that there is not some way in which you have a hold over him, and by threatening him—"

"What was to be done has already been done," replied Sarcany, with a shrug of his shoulders; "and you cannot go to him for a meal! No! I have no hold over him now; but I may have and shall have, and when that day comes he shall pay me capital and compound interest for what he has refused me to-day! I fancy his business is under a cloud, and that he is mixed up in several doubtful things. Several of those failures in Germany, at Berlin and Munich have had their effect in Trieste, and Silas Toronthal seemed rather upset when I saw him last. Let the water get troubled, and when it is troubled—"

"Quite so," exclaimed Zirone; "but meanwhile we have only water to drink! Look here, Sarcany, I think you might try one more shot at Toronthal! You might tap his cash box once more, and get enough out of it to pay our passage to Sicily by way of Malta."

"And what should we do in Sicily?" asked Sarcany. "I know the country, and I can introduce you to a few Maltese, who are a very tough lot, and with them we might do something. If there is nothing to be done here we might as well clear out and let this wretched banker pay the cost. If you know anything about him he would rather see you out of Trieste."

Sarcany shook his head.

"You will see it cannot last much longer. We have come to the end now," added Zirone.

He rose and stamped on the ground with his foot, as if it were a stepmother unwilling to help him. At the instant he did so he caught sight of a pigeon feebly fluttering down just outside the enclosure. The pigeon's tired wings could hardly move as slowly it sank to the ground.

Zirone, without asking himself to which of the 177 species of pigeons now known to ornithological nomenclature the bird belonged, saw only one thing—that the species it belonged to was edible.

The bird was evidently exhausted. It had tried to settle on the cornice of the cathedral. Not being able to reach it, it had dropped on to the roof of the small niche which gave shelter to the statue of St. Just; but its feeble feet could not support it there, and it had slipped on to the capital of a ruined column.

Sarcany, silent and still, hardly followed the pigeon in its flight, but Zirone never lost sight of it. The bird came from the north. A long journey had reduced it to this state of exhaustion. Evidently it was bound for some more distant spot; for it immediately started to fly again, and the trajectory curve it traced in the air compelled it to make a fresh halt on one of the lower branches of the trees in the old cemetery.

Zirone resolved to catch it, and quietly ran off to the tree. He soon reached the gnarled trunk, climbed up it to the fork, and there waited motionless and mute like a dog pointing at the game perched above his head.

The pigeon did not see him and made another start; but its strength again failed it, and a few paces from the tree it fell into the grass.

To jump to the ground, stretch out his hands and sieze the bird was the work of an instant for the Sicilian. And quite naturally he was about to wring its neck, when he stopped, gave a shout of surprise, and ran back to Sarcany.

"A carrier pigeon!" he said

"Well, it is a carrier that has done its carrying," replied Sarcany.

"Perhaps so," said Zirone, "and all the worse for those who are waiting for the message."

"A message!" exclaimed Sarcany, "Wait, Zirone wait! Give him a reprieve!"

And he stopped his companion, who had again caught hold of the neck. Then he took the tiny packet, opened it and drew forth—a cryptogram.

The message contained only eighteen words, arranged in three vertical columns, and this is what it said:

ihnalz	zaeinen	ruiopn
arnuro	trvree	mtqsl
odxhnp	estley	ecuart
aeeeil	ennics	noupvg
spesdr	ersaur	ouitse
eedgno	toeedt	artuee

CHAPTER II.

THE PIGEON'S HOME.

There was nothing to show whence the message came or whither it was being sent. Only these eighteen words, each composed of an equal number of letters. Could they be made into sense without the key? It was not very likely, at least unless it was by some very clever decipherer! And yet the cryptogram could not be indecipherable!

The characters told him nothing, and Sarcany, who was at first much disappointed, stood perplexed. Did the letter contain any important news, and above all, was it of a compromising nature? Evidently these precautions had been taken to prevent its being read if it fell into other hands than those for whom it was intended. To make use of neither the post nor the telegraph, but the extraordinary means of the carrier pigeon, showed that it must be some curious affair that it was desired to keep quite secret.

"Perhaps," said Sarcany, "there lies in these lines a mystery that will make our fortune."

"And then," answered Zirone. "This pigeon will represent the luck we have been running after all the morning. And I was going to strangle it! After all it is important to keep the message, and we can cook the messenger."

"Not so fast, Zirone," interrupted Sarcany, who again saved the bird's life. "Perhaps the pigeon may tell us whither it was bound, providing, of course, that the person who ought to have the message lives in Trieste."

"And then? That will not tell you how to read the message, Sarcany."

"No, Zirone."

"Nor to know where it came from."

"Exactly. But of two correspondents I shall know one, and that may tell me how I am to find the other. So, instead of killing this bird, we will feed it and recruit its strength and help it to reach its destination."

"With the letter?" asked Zirone.

"With the letter—of which I am going to make an exact copy; and that I shall keep until the time comes to use it."

And Sarcany took a notebook from his pocket, and in pencil he made a careful fac-simile of the message. Knowing that in most cryptograms it was important not to alter in the least the form and arrangement, he took great care to keep the words in exactly the same order and position and at the same distances as in the document. Then he put the fac-simile in his pocket, the message in its case, and the case in its place under the pigeon's wing.

Zirone looked on. He did not share the hopes of fortune founded on this incident.

"And now?" he asked.

"Now," answered Sarcany, "do what you can for the messenger."

The pigeon was more exhausted by hunger than fatigue. Its wings were intact without strain or breakage, and showed that his temporary weakness was due neither to a shot from a sportsman nor a stone from a street boy. It was hungry—it was thirsty; that was all.

Zirone looked around and found on the ground a few grains of corn which the bird ate greedily. Then he quenched his thirst with a few drops of water which the last shower had left in a piece of ancient pottery. So well did he do his work that in half an hour the pigeon was refreshed and restored and quite able to resume his interrupted journey.

"If it is going far," said Sarcany, "if its destination is beyond Trieste, it does not matter to us if it falls on the way, for we shall have lost sight of it, and it will be impossible for us to follow it. But if it is going to one of the houses in Trieste, its strength is sufficient to take it there, for it will only have to fly for a couple of minutes or so."

"Right you are," replied the Sicilian; "but how are we to see where it drops even if it is in Trieste?"

"We can manage that, I think," answered Sarcany. And this is what they did.

The cathedral consists of two old Roman churches, one dedicated to the Virgin, one to St. Just, the patron saint of Trieste, and it is flanked by a very high tower which rises from the angle of the front, pierced with a large rose window, beneath which is the chief door. This tower commands a view over the plateau of Karst Hill, and over the whole city, which lies spread as on a map below. From this lofty standpoint they could see down on the roofs of all the houses, even on to those clustering on the earlier slopes of the hill away to the shore of the