

D'ANNUNZIO, ONCE WORLD'S GREATEST LOVER, NOW BALD AND ONE-EYED, IS SCORNEDED BY CUPID

Spouse Poet-Soldier Won by Fiery Wooing Tosses Him From Window and Broken Leg Keeps Him in Seclusion and From Limelight

STORMY PETREL OF FIUME BESIEGED AND WON HEARTS OF DUSE AND RUBENSTEIN

Prediction of "Glorious Passing" Failed to Materialize, but Bad Luck Followed Sensational Defiance of Allies' Peace Terms

The little man of fuss and fury is at it again! Heartbreaker without peer, he takes the count for another little love tragedy.

Once on a time, young and debonaire, he wrecked the heart and life of one of the world's greatest tragediennes.

Later a famous Russian dancer worshipped him at a love altar she is said to have built in her luxurious boudoir.

Six years ago, with the amazing fire of his oratory, this maker of novels, poems and plays of the erotic, led his country to war and victory, and held a principality against the entire world.

Today Gabriele D'Annunzio, fifty-eight years old, bald-headed, one-eyed, lies on his couch at Gardone Riviera, Italy, with a fractured skull and a bruised leg.

It is rumored that his young wife, who left her parents and a musical career to live with him during his stormy dictatorship at Fiume and who married him after he performed a King Henry VIII with the divorce laws of that State, pitched him out of the second-story window.

The rumor may be a false one. Rumors run to that sort of thing. But any rumor is interesting when it concerns a man whose only answer to a reproach that he makes too free with the conventions of the world is a sturdy "I am D'Annunzio!"

As inevitably as with war, there will be D'Annunzio and rumors of D'Annunzio. This strange man is fashioned that way. He believes he is immortal. He is now bald-headed, who once was red-headed. Up in the Apennines, near the source of the Pescara River, he has already built a monumental tomb for himself. Not many years ago his pet was a salamander. For three years he loved the salamander, and when it died he shed tears and placed it in a vault in his mantelpiece with the golden device, "Bene salmandrae sacrum." Once his favorite pet was a goldfish, which he called Lon-Pel-Tel, and of which he declared "it possesses two qualities most rare in life—it is clean and silent."

At Vareggio, it is said, he used to ride into the sea naked on a great white horse, Fiametta, and when he came out a beautiful woman met him and robed him in a purple mantle.

"The only creatures for whom I have eternal affection are not women, but dogs," he has been heard to remark.

Poetic Personality
Thrives Upon Rumors

Is there any wonder there are rumors about a man so colorful as he? Certainly not. And if his dramatic personality is any indication of the man who lives underneath D'Annunzio's deadly pallor, underneath his sparse satanic whiskers, then he welcomes rumors; he thrives on them.

Louisa Bacara, a twenty-year-old pianist, abandoned her home and parents to live with the poet-warrior when he looked himself in Fiume in 1919—when he defied the treaty at Versailles and the whole world. D'Annunzio had been unable to get a divorce from the wife of his youth. But when he controlled the situation in Fiume he took advantage of the opportunity to add a few more lenient provisions, it is reported, to the Fiumian divorce laws, and got his divorce. Then, it was announced, he had married Louisa. On August 13 he fell out of the window at the home to which the couple had returned. On August 17 the Naples Matino, a daily newspaper hostile to the poet, informed its readers that in a fit of anger, during a quarrel, Louisa had pushed him headlong out of the window.

The world, with more or less bated breath, still waits to learn what that quarrel was about. In the meantime D'Annunzio is in a serious condition as a result of his fall.

Most recent reports would have it that his skull is fractured, but that his injury is to be compared with that of Dr. Murri, Italian surgeon, calls it an earthquake of the brain.

The accident tore tissues which heal slowly. The surgeon declared the poet should abandon politics and literature, live his life nearest approaching mental health in a quiet, unexciting home. This is asking for much of the dramatic Italian. Soon or late he will be up and doing—a little earthquake again.

Meanwhile, as it was stated before, the world waits, and it is only repeating history by waiting. It has waited more than once to hear the inside story of this strange man's personal life.

Satanic Sweetness
Toward Women Manifested

As far back as 1864 Gabriele d'Annunzio was born, tradition states, on a bark in the Adriatic. His name might be translated "the messenger," and his poems indicate that he has always believed himself to be endowed with a penetrating insight into the mysteries of life and the mysteries of his own soul.

At fifteen he was admitted to a convent. In 1880 he began to write his first verse. Not long after-

ice of Siberia for 50,000 years, was served. He had his own private laboratory, where he distilled rare perfumes.

It was in Italy during this period of his life that he met glorious La Duse—Eleanora Duse, Italy's greatest tragedienne, and perhaps the world's. She was six years older than D'Annunzio, but she fell deeply in love with him. Her life had not been an easy one, her road to success was beset with trials and temptations. Married when very young, she had a daughter, but was separated from her husband.

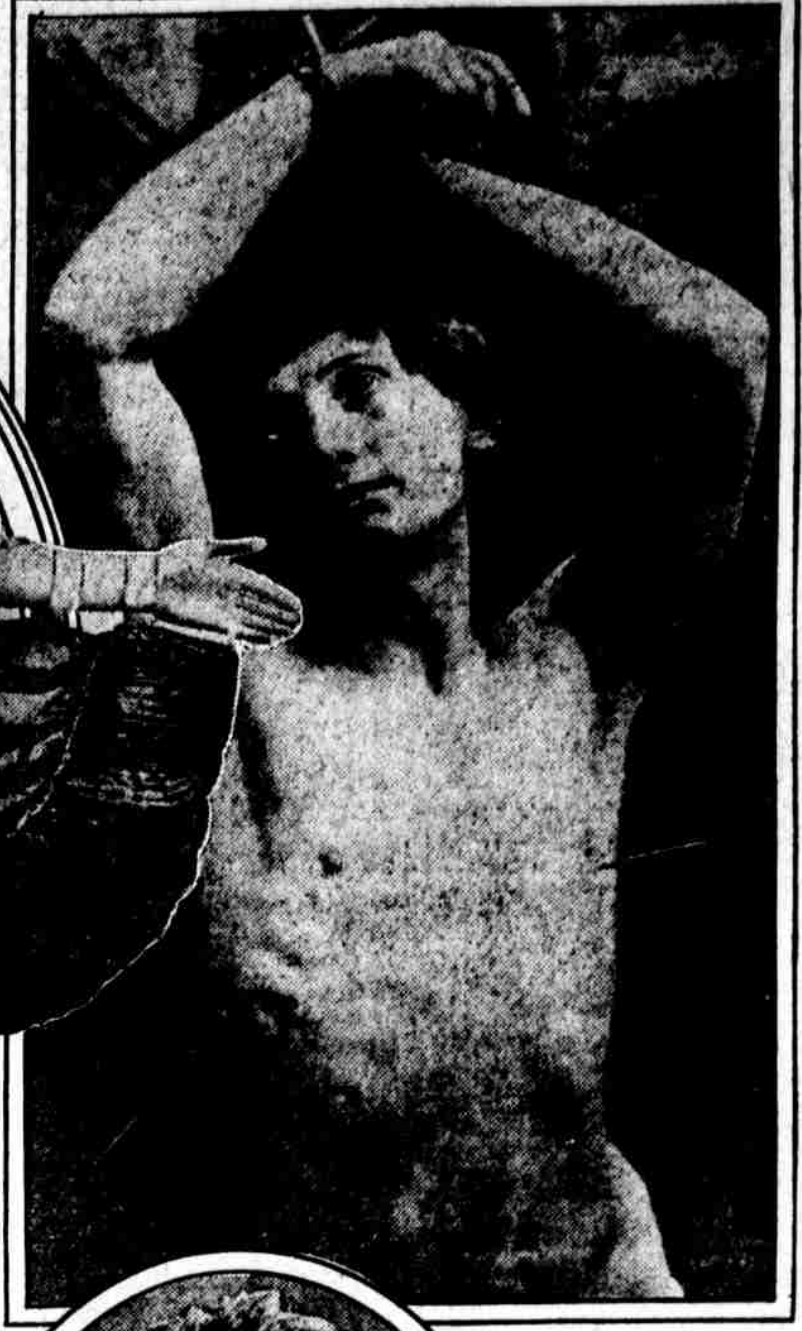
This noble woman with the tragic face devoted herself to the younger and jaunter D'Annunzio. He called her "the lady of the beautiful hands." He was inspired by her, in 1894, to write his best novel, "The Triumph of Death." In order to push his career further she refused to play in any dramas save those written by the poet-lover.

Behind the life of the strangely beautiful Duse, one feels always the intimation of disaster. Because she would act only in D'Annunzio's plays, her audiences fell off. Audiences which used to pack theaters to see her diminished to deplorable numbers. It is said that on her tour to America in the nineties she played one night before an audience that contained not one ticket-paid-for spectator. And the cause of it all lay not in any inability to act, but in the sort of plays the poet wrote for her.

It was D'Annunzio's opportunity. She saw that. But she went further, she fell in love with the author, as the author had already with her. It is reported that she erected a love shrine in her boudoir, at which she made daily offerings of love to Gabriele. They were mad about each other. The play itself was put under a papal ban, interdicted by the Archbishop of Paris. It was a role to bring out the soul, said Ida.

Wrote Great Dramas for Rubenstein

He had written "The Gioconda" to Duse's slim white hands. He had writ-



Poet's son as St. Sebastian in father's play



Eleanora Duse



Portrait Study of D'Annunzio



Ida Rubenstein as Joan d'Arc

ward—small but quite handsome, esthetically pale, with eyes that burned like points of blue fire—his satanic sweetness toward women became manifest.

He wooed the elderly Duchesse of Galess. At twenty, or thereabouts, he appeared ready to marry her, and then suddenly, with an abruptness which seemed of itself a peculiar mark of genius, he eloped with the Duchesse's daughter, Maria, and married her. But Maria did not hold him long. The Church prevented divorce, and D'Annunzio is said to have launched immediately upon his private love boat, destined for many and uncertain seas.

All this while he was writing tremendous things. He had a command of words that brought new life to Italian literature. He hurled words about as Thor hurled thunderbolts, and his readers gasped in amazement and applause, succumbing utterly to his genius.

His affairs of the heart counted up like the sands of the everlasting sea. He wooed ballet dancers, poetesses and humble beauties—this languishing poet of love. There is said to be in Italy an old and broken woman—Countess

the blue paradise of their love Duse had made many confidences to the poet. She had told him most intimate details of her early life, meant only for a lover's ears, to be kept sacred within the heart.

And D'Annunzio published "Il Fuoco," which might be translated "Fire" or "The Flame." It revealed all these secrets of La Duse's youth, it revealed her love for the poet, and it revealed his increasing coldness. Two main characters in the book, a poet and a great actress, were apparently patterned after the lives of herself and D'Annunzio.

The humiliation of this revelation broke her heart.

"He has sold the secrets of our love!" she cried. "He has put our passion in his book! I shall kill him."

But she didn't. Perhaps her love for him was too lofty. Perhaps her enthusiasm was entirely snuffed out by this last bitterness of her own life, so that she hadn't even enough interest left to try to kill him. D'Annunzio, apologized, said that the book was intended to disclose no secrets of their lives—that it was entirely fiction.

Duse, it is believed, never survived this crisis. She fell desperately ill. Her acting became listless, her inspiration seemed to be gone. She had become the symbol of her decadent's dream. "Be beautiful, but be sad," she is still alive, at the age of sixty-three. She retired from the stage shortly after her break with the poet, and save for an uninspired revival once or twice, has never returned.

With a charm of character that is poetry itself, this magnificent woman of grief and disillusionment, forgave her lover. Though stunned and sore by the blow, she has been moved to say:

"We must bow before the poet even when it seems to us he does wrong. He is a poet; he has seen something; he has seen it in that way. One must accept his vision because it is a vision."

Duse Nurses Old Lover Struck by Flying Shell

In 1918, when the poet, then a colonel in Italian aviation, was wounded by a piece of flying shell, losing his right eye. La Duse rushed to his side and nursed him until he was well enough to return to the front. And it bespeaks the inexplicable fascination of the man, that he could hold the affection of women so—and of men too.

Like the character she created in "The Gioconda," who crushes her beautiful hands for the sake of her lover, La Duse crushed her very life, and then D'Annunzio, the electric, turned to another, and another. In the meantime, he got himself up in his own debt. His play failed, his ex-

perience buried him under, he sold his splendid villa, and finally had to flee his creditors in Italy. He went to France, an exile.

Matters went wrong with him there. "The red of blood and the yellow of gold," could at this time make little gold. His thoughts turned to blood. He consulted a seeress, who told him that within two years he would be strangled by a woman. Nothing daunted, the poet, with his sense for the dramatic, made his famous pronouncement:

"I shall live two more years, then I shall perish. I shall die in a way that will make the whole world wonder. I shall be D'Annunzio the superb. In the full strength of my mind and body up to that last instant of my earthly existence, I shall change into a sweet vapor and mingle with the whole universe. I shall be volatilized into infinite molecules without leaving a trace of myself behind. I shall never rot in a common grave."

Determined in that manner, he built his tomb in the Apennines. But the poet did not die within two years.

Instead, he met Ida Rubenstein, a former member of the Imperial Russian ballet at St. Petersburg. In 1909, in Russia, this darkly beautiful Russian married Victor Gorowitz, a millionaire. For a time she was content, but when Gorowitz demanded that she give up her career, she decamped and went to Paris alone. D'Annunzio met her for

the first time, when she played a Christian martyr in a tableau vivant. The poet of temperament and infinite variety fell in love with her. As she was not then renowned, he determined to make her so. He wrote a play about her—she was to shine as a martyr. He wrote "The Martyrdom of St. Sebastian." Ida Rubenstein to portray the role of St. Sebastian.

It was Ida's opportunity. She saw that. But she went further, she fell in love with the author, as the author had already with her. It is reported that she erected a love shrine in her boudoir, at which she made daily offerings of love to Gabriele. They were mad about each other. The play itself was put under a papal ban, interdicted by the Archbishop of Paris. It was a role to bring out the soul, said Ida.

Paris, Recalling Duse, Unfriendly to D'Annunzio

Paris, at the time, remembering Duse, was unfriendly to D'Annunzio. It whispered that soon enough Ida Rubenstein would be thoroughly fed up with the poet's exactions, his tyrannical demands. And D'Annunzio, in spite of his grand passion, was jittered. Ida met George Baklanoff, the Russian baritone, and an old love for him revived, some persons said. Others denied this, and declared she gave up the poet for Leo Bakst, who did settings for the St. Sebastian play.

Anyway, D'Annunzio was abandoned and Paris chortled.

Miss Rubenstein is reported to have explained her position after this fashion:

"We Russians are at one and the same time the most sensual and the most spiritual of people. We riot in sense pleasures, dress and feasting and love, and we wallow in soul depths after the things of sense have grown tame.

"I care no longer for the things of the sense, and long only for the eternal things of the spirit. I would retire to some remote convent and think only of the soul. I have expressed all this to D'Annunzio, and he, too, is now feeling the call of the spirit. I have taught him these things. I have preached to him and he feels the influence, and Saint Sebastian is doing its work for him as well as for me."

So, you see a poet defeated by his own play, and soul gave flesh the upper part for ten full counts.

Even then D'Annunzio was scarcely satisfied. Paris laughed again in 1914 at another of his escapades. At a gorgeous masquerade ball one night he spied a beautiful masked woman in a Venetian costume. Somebody told him she was a real princess, and the poet pursued her. So much that the princess was heard to remark that "that horrid little Italian" annoyed her. D'Annunzio was astounded and disgusted in the end to learn that his princess was none other than a humble, popular music hall star.

Things went from bad to worse for him mentally and physically. His life was created for thrills, for sensations. And one day he announced that if life



Poet-Soldier at Fiume

at their attitude. He saw the possibility of getting back at Italy's ancient enemy, Austria. The love he so easily gave to women concentrated in an almost greater love for his country.

And the inspiration gave wings to his words, and fire to his conviction. He made speeches everywhere, advocating immediate war. Over the heads of the Government he pictured to his countrymen what seemed to him to be their only duty. And in May, 1915, he delivered his blazing speech to the students of the University of Genoa in front of the statue of Garibaldi. D'Annunzio was hailed as the second Garibaldi. Maddened students bore him on their shoulders and paraded him about the streets.

On the 23d of May, 1915, Italy declared war. D'Annunzio wired a friend in Paris:

"The battle is won. I have just harnessed a feverish crowd from world's most beautiful sky. I am drunk with joy. You are going to see the capital (Vienna)."

The poet first entered the cavalry, but it failed to bring him close enough to the war. He tried the navy, with no better results. Then he went into aviation. And within a few months he was rousing the world with his spectacular tricks. He bombarded Austria's capital with bombs, pronouncements heartening the Italian people interested there. He was wounded a number of times. Austria set a price of \$4000 upon his head.

After the armistice he declared that he intended to devote himself to the business of peace again—which doubtless summed up would be once more love—but he heard that the treaty-makers were not going to give Italy what she wanted. He was determined to come to that country as a legitimate spoils of war. With thousands of followers who loved him as perhaps no other leader was ever loved, he marched on Fiume and held it for months in defiance of all the countries represented at Paris. He even declared war on his own country, because its officials proved unwilling to abide by the decisions at Versailles. In the end he was persuaded to leave the troubled little state.

Before he left, however, he was determined to marry Louisa, who had come to lighten the burden of his military government at Fiume. And, according to reports, he was able to secure his divorce, from Maria, bride of his youth, and he married the fair pianist in March, 1921.

But only the other day he is said to have thrown him out of the window! That may be true or it may not—as many reports are in this spirit—but he has never been heard of since. He has even gone so far as to say he is stark, staring mad. Perhaps he is, we are all more or less mad, many philosophers have told us.

All of us, however, do not have that intriguing madness which forces us to live dangerously. And that's the sort of thing which the burden of words, war, I am sure, is not a part of our nature. I am an Italian critic's future admirer.

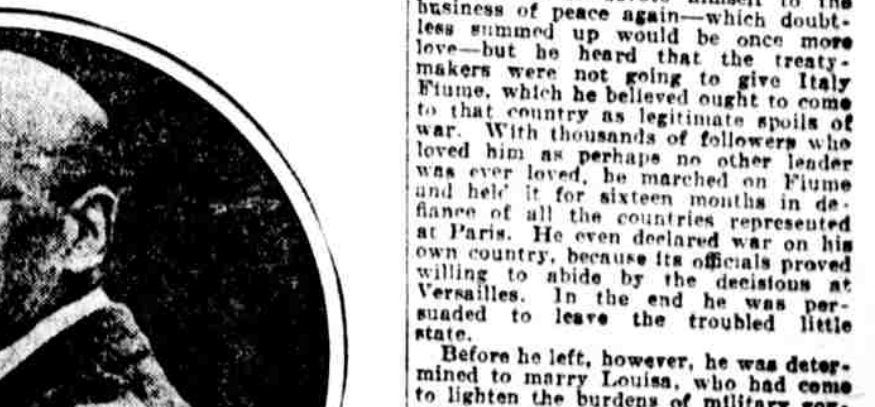
"I am D'Annunzio!" shouts the poet. It is his explanation and his excuse for himself and his vagaries—many reports of his words, war, I am sure, is not a part of our nature. I am an Italian critic's future admirer.

Byron, Shelley, D'Annunzio, whom the intellectual love because, among other reasons, he risks and renounces what he might be might a piece of them; whom women measure and want over against honor, career, everything for whatever unpardonable reason; whom the illiterate of his own country are willing to die for.

Was there ever a man like him?

Thrilled at Chance to Plunge Into Strife

He found the Government apathetic about entering the war. He was apath-



D'Annunzio

didn't soon present him with another thrill he planned to kill himself—not in any ordinary way, but in a way the world would marvel at.

But life did offer him another thrill. The war broke out. Germans tore across Belgium, England and France tried to stem the tide. It was the nervous little man's opportunity. Although fifty-one years old, tired, myopic, bald-headed, sparsely whiskered, small and thin, he rushed back to Italy.

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