



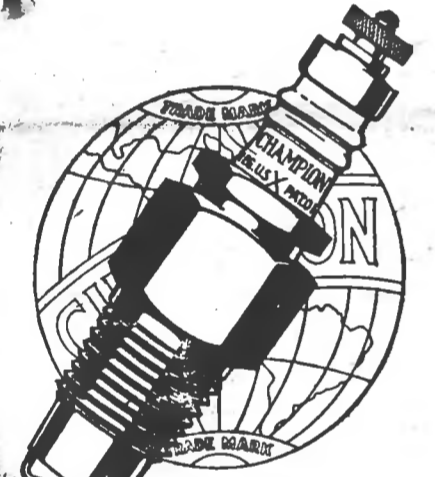
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Love or Death

by Rafael Sabatini

CHAPTER IV—Continued

And now the fire in his eyes was not simulated. "It is impossible that you should not scorn my love," said he.

Thereafter, Messer Lorenzo was cared for as become a man of his position. A bath was prepared for him; fresh garments were found to fit him.

In all Italy there was no happier man in that hour than Lorenzo Castrocario, who, from the very edge of death, saw himself suddenly thrust up to the highest and best that he could have dared to ask of life.

With a startled cry his mistress leaned over him. "Enzo! Are you ill?" He rose precipitately.

It crossed her mind that perhaps the effect of the magician's philter was beginning to wane.

"Why, it is this," he cried, and there was real chagrin in his voice as there was in his heart. "In my hot madness to come hither, I never paused to count the cost.

"What way?" he asked. "I fear it is the only way," she said never so wistfully.

And then he guessed what was in her mind and repudiated the suggestion. "Ah! Not that," he protested.

But on the word she looked up at him and her dark eye kindled anew with loving enthusiasm.

save you—you whom I have brought into this pass—" "What are you saying, sweet?" he cried.

"Listen!" she pursued. "You shall do as I bid you. You shall go as my envoy to Cesare Borgia, and you shall offer him the surrender of San Leo in my name, stipulating only for the honors of war and the safe-conduct of my garrison."

"No, no!" he protested still, and honestly, his villainy grown repugnant. "Besides, how shall that serve me?"

"You shall say that you knew a way to win into San Leo and accomplish this—which," she added, smiling wistfully, "is, after all, the truth. The duke will be too well content with the result to quarrel with the means employed."

He considered. Indeed, it was the only way. And, after all, he was robbing her of nothing that she must not yield in time—of nothing, after all, that it might not be his to restore her very soon, in part at least.

They fell apart for very decency, and then the lady, rosily confused, presented Messer Lorenzo to the castellan as her future lord, and explained to him in confidence—and as she understood it—the true reason of that gentleman's visit to San Leo.

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CHAPTER V

That evening, with letters appointing him her plenipotentiary, he rode out of San Leo alone, and made his way down into the valley by the bride path.

When Della Volpe beheld him the warrior's single eye expressed at once suspicion and satisfaction.

"Where have you been?" he demanded harshly. "In San Leo, younder," answered Castrocario simply.

"We had accounted you dead. My men have been searching for your body all day at the foot of the rock." "I deplore your disappointment and the wasted labor," said Lorenzo, smiling; and Della Volpe swore again.

"How came you to fall, and, having fallen, how come you out alive?" "I have not fallen," was the answer. "I am riding to the duke with the garrison's terms of capitulation."

Della Volpe very rudely refused to believe him, whereupon Messer Lorenzo thrust under the condottiero's single eye Madonna Bianca's letters. At that the veteran sneered unpleasantly.

posal of surrender, and the articles of capitulation. If your highness will sign them, I shall take possession of San Leo in your name tomorrow." "The duke's fine eyes scanned the confident young face very searchingly. He smiled quietly.

"You will take possession?" he said. "As the governor appointed by your highness," Messer Lorenzo blandly explained. He laid his letters before the Duke, who scanned them with a swift eye, then tossed them to Agabito that the latter might con them more minutely.

"There is a provision that the Lady Bianca de Fioravanti is to remain in San Leo," said the secretary, marveling. "Why that?" quoth Cesare of Messer Lorenzo. "Why, indeed, any conditions?"

"Matters have put on a curious complexion," the condottiero expounded. "Things went not so smoothly with me as I had hoped. I will spare your highness the details; but, in short, I was caught within the castle walls, and—and I had to make the best terms I could under such circumstances."

"You do not, I trust, account them disadvantageous to yourself?" said Cesare. "It would distress me that it should be so. But I cannot think it; for Madonna Bianca is accounted very beautiful."

Castrocario crimsoned in his sudden and extreme confusion. For once he was entirely out of countenance.

"You are informed of the circumstances, highness?" was all that he could say. Cesare's laugh was short and almost contemptuous.

"I am something of a seer," he replied. "I could have foretold this end ere you set out. You have done well," he added, "and the governorship is yours. See to it at once, Agabito. Ser Lorenzo will be in haste to return to Madonna Bianca."

A half-hour later, after the bewildered yet happy Castrocario had departed to ride north again, Cesare rose from his writing table, yawned, and smiled at the secretary, who had his confidence and affection.

"And so, San Leo, that might have held out for a year, is won," he said, and softly rubbed his hands in satisfaction. "This Castrocario thinks it is all his own achievement. The lady imagines that it is all her own—by the aid of that charlatan Trismegistus. Neither dreams that all has fallen out as I had intended, and by my contriving." He made philosophy for the benefit of Messer Agabito: "Who would achieve greatness must learn not only to use men, but to use them in such a manner that they never suspect they are being used. Had I not chanced to overhear what I overheard that night at the house of Corvinus Trismegistus, and knowing what I knew, set the human pieces in this game in motion to yield me this result, matters might have been different indeed, and lives would have been lost ere San Leo threw up its gates. And I have seen for it that the wizard's elixir of love should do precisely as he promised for it: Madonna Bianca, at least, believes in that impostor."

"You had foreseen this, highness, when you sent Castrocario on that dangerous errand?" Agabito ventured to inquire. "What else? Where should I have found a man for whom the matter was less dangerous? He did not know that Madonna Bianca was there. I had the foresight to keep that matter secret. I sent him, confident that, should he fall to open the gates to Della Volpe and be taken, he was crafty enough not to betray himself, and Madonna must, of course, assume that it was her love-philter had brought him to her irresistibly. Could she have hanged him, knowing that? Could she have done other than she has done?" "Indeed, Corvinus has served you well."

"So well that he shall have his life. The precious poison has failed to kill him, and this is the sixteenth day." The duke laughed shortly, and thrust his thumbs into the girdle of his robe, which was of cloth of gold, reversed with ermine. "Give the order for his release tomorrow, Agabito. But bid them keep me his tongue and his right hand as remembrances. Thus he will never write or speak another lie."

San Leo capitulated on the morrow. Tolentino and his men rode out with the honors of war, lance on thigh, the captain very surly at the affair, which he contemptuously admitted passed his understanding. Into the fortress came then Messer Lorenzo Castrocario at the head of a troop of his own men, to lay his governorship at the feet of Madonna Bianca.

They were married that very day in the chapel of the fortress, and although it was some years before each made to the other the confession of the deceit which each had practiced, the surviving evidence all shows—and to the moralists this may seem deplorable—that they were none the less happy in the meantime. [THE END.]

Diillusioned Barber Sir Oliver Lodge, illustrating the light esteem in which scientists are held in some quarters, tells a story of an experience he had while visiting in this country. He arrived at a small town, where he was to address the members of a well-known scientific association. While the hotel barber was cutting his hair, he made several futile attempts to open a conversation with the great scientist. Finally he said, "What exactly is this association that's meeting here today?" The professor explained that it was a society of learned scientists. "Oh," said the barber, in tones of evident disgust, "I thought it was a football team."

Improved Uniform International Sunday School Lesson

(By REV. F. E. FITZWATER, D.D., Dean of Day and Evening Schools, Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1212 Western Newspaper Union.)

Lesson for September 26 REVIEW—EARLY LEADERS OF ISRAEL

GOLDEN TEXT—Let us run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith—Heb. 12:1, 2.

PRIMARY TOPIC—Favorite Stories of the Quarter.

JUNIOR TOPIC—Stories of the Leaders of Israel.

INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—Striking Incidents of the Quarter.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—The Main Teachings of the Quarter.

It is strange that the lesson committee should have selected the title "Early Leaders of Israel" when only Moses appears. A better title would have been "Moses, the Leader of Israel." In such a case consideration should be given to Moses' life, character and teaching.

When the time drew nigh for God to deliver His chosen people He caused them to multiply greatly. Envy and alarm incited the new king to institute measures to check Israel's increase. The attempt to carry these measures out not only displayed their futility but brought to be sheltered and nurtured in the king's palace the very one who later upset Pharaoh's throne.

Lesson for July 4. When Moses was born, his mother perceived that he was a child of destiny. The king's edict was that every male child should be destroyed, but the faith of his mother moved her to hide him. When no longer able to hide him he was preserved in an ark of bulrushes and taken in charge by Pharaoh's daughter.

Lesson for July 11. While Moses was keeping Jethro's sheep, God appeared to him in a burning bush and commissioned him a deliverer of His people. Moses flattered but God patiently heard and met his difficulties.

Lesson for July 18. In memory of the great deliverance of Israel from bondage, the passover was instituted. All who were under the blood were saved from the destroying angel.

Lesson for July 25. Before going far into the wilderness the people fasted for the feshpots of Egypt. God answered their murmurings by giving them quails and manna to eat. Christ is the true manna sent down from God to man.

Lesson for August 1. Jethro, seeing Moses completely occupied with the judging of Israel, advised that Moses should be to the people Godward and that all the weightier matters should be cared for by him and that suitable men should be appointed to judge the smaller matters. God's work should be carefully organized so as to relieve his ministers of unnecessary burdens.

Lesson for August 8. To love God with all the heart, soul, strength and mind is the fulfillment of the first four commandments of the Decalogue. Loving our neighbor as we love ourselves is the fulfillment of the last six commandments of the Decalogue. Supreme love to God and love to our fellowman as we love ourselves is the sum total of human duty.

Lesson for August 15. God through Christ dwells in the midst of His people—just as He did in the midst of Israel in the tabernacle.

Lesson for August 22. In carrying on of God's work all should offer willingly such gifts, as they have.

Lesson for August 29. Disobedience to God's laws always brings calamities, while obedience to God's law is always accompanied with blessings.

Our Assignments God never gave man anything to do, concerning which it were irreverent to ponder how the Son of God would have done it.—G. Macdonald.

A Prayer Father, we thank Thee for Thy tender mercy and Thy loving kindness shown us in so many ways.

The Humble Saint A humble saint looks most like a citizen of heaven.—Echobea.

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Sea Lion Cries Broadcast Many curious programs are being broadcast from the radio stations everywhere, but the London Zoological gardens contributed one of the most unusual when it recently broadcast the cries and noises made by the sea lions in the zoo. A specially designed transmitter had to be used for the program that lasted 45 minutes.

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