ASPECTS OF ELBA

AVERIL MACKENZIE GRIEVE


Isola d'Elba
Spezia
Firenze
Pescara
Livorno
GORGONA
CAPRAIA
Piombino
Grosseto
Bastia
ELBA
Orbetello
CORSICA
MONTECRISTO
GIGLIO
GIANNUTRI
Tramontana
Maestrale
Grecale
Ponente W.
E. Levante
Libeccio
Scirocco
S.
Mezzogiorno
Capo S. Andrea
MARCIANA MARINA
pta della Zanca
Zanca
S. Andrea
Patresi
Marciana
M. Giove
Poggio
Mad.na del Buon Consiglio
Mad.na Serrapinella
G. di PROCCHIO
Procchio
M. Perone
M. Capanne
Punta Nera
Chiessi
Pomonte
S. Ilario in Campo
Pila
CAMPO NELL'ELBA
S. Piero in Campo
S. Mamiliano
MARINA DI CAMPO
G. di CAMPO
Secchetto
pta dei Cavoli
P. di Fetovaia
MAR TIRRENO
C. d'En
G. VITI
G. della BIODOL
M. Tas
Capo Vit
Capo Castello
Cavo
M. Grosso
Capo Pero
pta dei Manganil
Pietre Rosse
pta di Nisporto
M. Serra
S. Caterina
Spiaggia di Ripabianca
M. Strega
pta Capo Bianco
PORTOFERRAIO
Rio nell'Elba
RIO MARINA
Spiaggia di Bagnaia
M. Capannello
Carpani
Spiaggia dell'Ottone
Volterraio
Le Foci
Magazzini
Capo Ortano
Spiaggia d'Ortano
Villa Napoleone
S. Martino
M. Castello
M. Orello
M. Mar Capanna
M. Barbatoia
Villa Teghini (Santuario di Monserrato)
P. delle Cannelle
Mad.na di Lacona
Capo Bianco
Spiaggia di Barbarossa
PORTO AZZURRO (LONGONE)
Lacona
Spiaggia di Mola
Spiaggia del Lido
Mola
Spiaggia di Naregno
G. di LACONA
G. della STELLA
Capoliveri
Mad.na d. Grazie
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(*edited, translated and annotated*)

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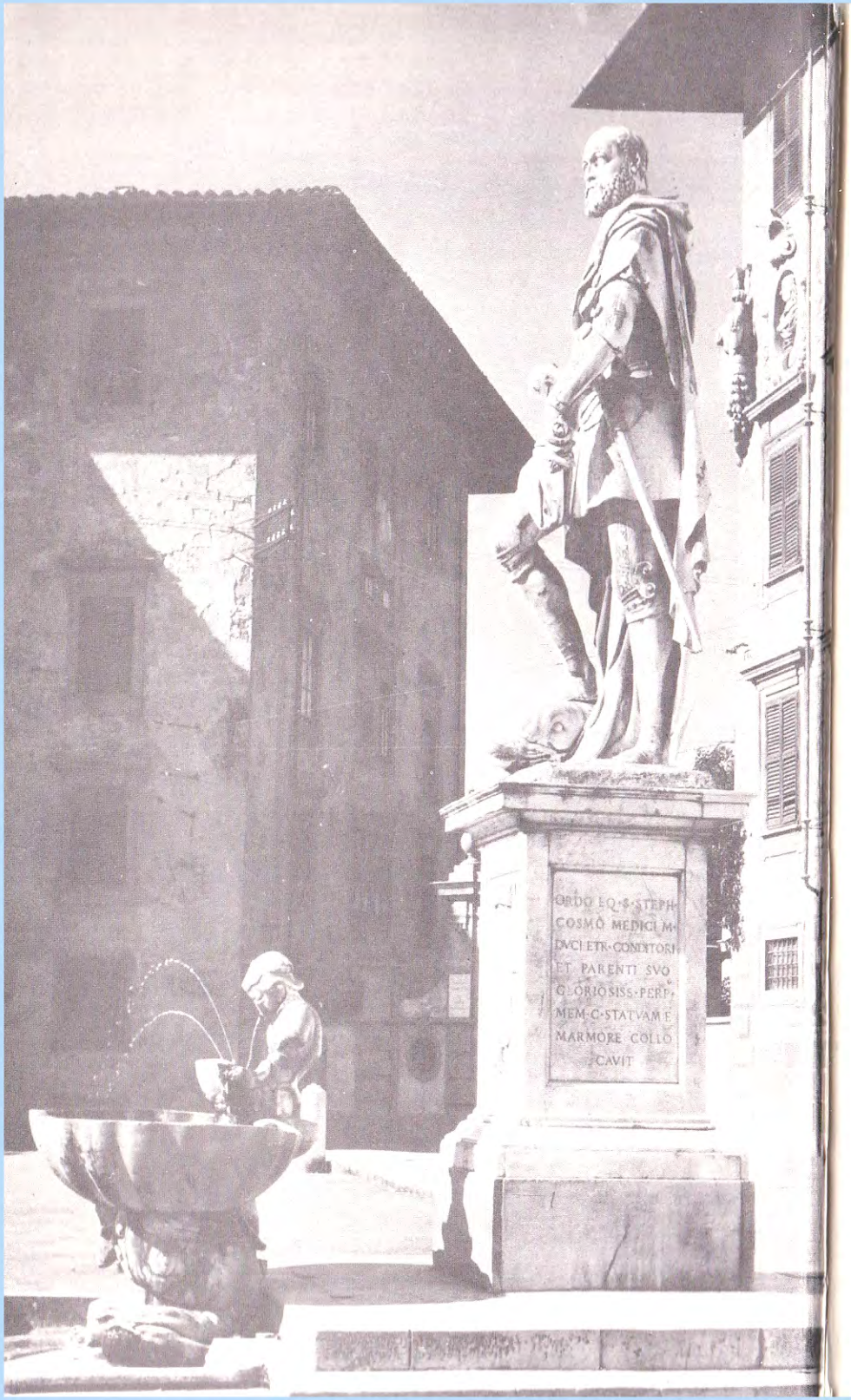

AVERIL MACKENZIE-GRIEVE

ASPECTS OF ELBA

and the other islands of the Tuscan Archipelago

JONATHAN CAPE
THIRTY BEDFORD SQUARE
LONDON

Frontis: The statue of Cosimo I in Pisa

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CONTENTS

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ILLUSTRATIONS

(E.V.E. = Ente per Valorizzazione Elba)

ILLUSTRATIONS

MY GRATITUDE

To Franca Birindelli-Teghini for lending me her *petit royaume* beneath the iron cross, where I first fell in love with Elba, and became passionately curious about the object of my affection.

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Porto Azzurro, 1958 AVERIL MACKENZIE-GRIEVE
Robertsbridge, 1963

To

FRANCA BIRINDELLI-TEGHINI

ASPECTS OF ELBA

I

PREAMBLE: THE TUSCAN ARCHIPELAGO

IT WAS the fifteenth-century Venetian envoys and ambassadors who started off the Italians on their *Relazioni*, which were not only political reports and news-sheets, but descriptions of the places and people to which they were accredited. They set a pattern for all envoys which, in spite of the growth of printed histories, remained popular until well into the nineteenth century. Of inquiring and tireless curiosity, the Italians revealed a passion both for writing and reading these Descriptions. More often than not they combined with their enthusiasm a talent for composition and a fairly high standard of education. I refer now, not to the Venetians, from whom one expects it, and whose classics were actually sold to an eager public in the streets of Rome, but to their minor imitators, reporting on smaller and more remote places: minor in talent and subject, but nevertheless invaluable to us of today. The men who were charged by their masters to provide data about Elba and the rest of the Tuscan archipelago were usually sent over on some special mission, like Ranieri Sardo, who in 1370 was sent by the elders of the Pisan Republic to deal with certain Customs difficulties and to 'modulare il doganiere'.

Later, usually filling some military or civil post in Elba, they were economically chosen as relator in a secondary capacity. This was fortunate, for they saw and told of much first-hand, were less fallible than the old-fashioned myth-fed classical scholars, less gullible than the new Renaissance scientist, out for marvels. But as one reads through Description after Description one finds the surmise of one author becoming the statement of the next, right up to the present day. Unfortunately, there were few with the empirical approach of Major Giovannelli who, in the preamble to his *Relazione* on Elba for the Grand Duke of Tuscany in 1771,

declared: 'I have no intention of letting myself become engulfed in certain long and ill-authenticated accounts ... such as some I have read,' and by that time he had the considerable production of two centuries to study, as well as the 'old parchments' he found, left lying about in the little communal capitals of Rio and Capoliveri. His is the first hint that I, with another two hundred years of them and the run of the State archives, can find of the objective criticism which led Thiébaud de Berneaud, in 1818, to challenge the mass of misstatements and bogus etymology of place-names that were being sedulously copied by each new hand and which are still perpetuated today.

On the whole, the seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century *Relazioni* are the most objective. The soldiers who wrote them usually copy briefly the same well-worn myths, historical facts and quotations, mentioning 'Ilva' from Virgil,* Livy† and Silius Italicus, and then, since war in the Mediterranean was almost constant, and the treasuries of Spain, Piombino and Tuscany ever in need of more revenue, got down to the hard facts of fortresses and food, water and wood, iron and minerals, agriculture and aptitude of the Elbans, and, of course, any attack or battles they experienced. Just occasionally a tough matter-of-fact man reins up the reader with one of those calm statements that seem, to his mind, to need no explanation or qualification. Thus you have Coresi del Bruno, Governor of Portoferraio, giving details and statistics of each village in the islands, and adding to his account of Marciana, where the house-walls formed a fortress and Marciana church an inner keep: 'Inside the church the walls smell of violets.' I like Coresi del Bruno: he has graphic touches by which he brings us to share his experiences. Since his master was Gian Gastone, the last of the Medicean Grand Dukes, with the family passion for collecting, he also reported on any antiquities discovered.

From the very beginning of their connection with Elba, the Medici required marvels as well as money. Cosimo I ordered any 'antiquities' discovered during the digging of the fortress foundations to be carefully handled and sent to Florence. Del Bruno's men were frequently turning up the remains of Roman villas. Making a

* See Notes, Chapter II.

† The passage simply says that the consul, after being wind-bound in Populonia, crossed to the island of Ilva, from Ilva to Corsica, and from Corsica to Sardinia.

cistern, the workmen found mosaic pavements and walls 'with a colour-wash very smooth and brilliant as if it had only been put on a few years, and so shiny that it appeared to have been mixed with white of egg'. I am also grateful to Inocenzo Fazzi, a captain of the garrison, and one of Coresi del Bruno's contemporaries. He wrote a description of Elba which I have found most useful. So it was with satisfaction that I read in the Portoferraio Guard-house orders that he was the only man of the garrison who needed no special permit to take his servant, dog and arquebus outside the fort to hunt game in the surrounding woods.

With Napoleon's banishment to Elba, every gentleman-traveller, every hack writer saw an easy opportunity to exploit the island's news value. In hundreds of publications in the main European languages, all the old stories were rehashed or blatantly copied, while the ingenious inventions of a bogus 'historian' calling himself Celeteuso Goto found much favour, even with Ninci and Lambardi, the most respected and painstaking of Elba's eighteenth-century historians.

One must always bear in mind that the family archives and letters by which today one can check the various Descriptions were then widely dispersed, and in any case not available to public inspection. It is always a miracle to me how these abundant muniments survived the constant international warfare, and the internecine wars and feuds which ravished Italy, whose classic pattern was sacking, looting, burning. Survive they did, and it is by the bulky records and correspondence of the Appiano, the State papers of the Republic of Pisa, the archives of the Medici, the Strozzi, the papers, diaries and memoranda of lesser individuals, notably Cosimo I's personal aide Riccio and his commander Cuppano, and the diaries of campaigners like Squarcialupi that the history of the Tuscan archipelago emerges and comes to life. But the first-hand reports themselves are neither unquestionable nor infallible; the predecessors upon which the nineteenth-century writers relied were nearly all writing for interested patrons, often saying what their masters wanted to hear, and certainly biased. Criticism or comment was only safe when there had been a change of government—or overlord. 'Si les depences ont esté bien emploies c'est ancor une discussion dans la quelle je me garderai bien d'entrer', wrote de Villeneuve, Governor of Portoferraio, to the Grand Duke of the house of Lorraine, who had succeeded the

last of the Medici rulers of Tuscany. 'Ce memoire n'avra donc pour objet que ce qui est et d'en tirer le meilleur parti possible.'

* * *

I am fortunately free from restraint: I have no patron to please, my pleasure is my own to record. Though I, too, shall presently write of wood and water, of fortresses and fisheries and the 'nature and character of the people', I shall garland my Relation with the whole gamut of early summer flowers, scent it headily with blossoming vines, hot pine trees, purple iris spiced with sunbaked maquis, sing the island's praises with an obbligato of nightingales. I shall deliver myself headlong to pleasure, with a cursory pity for those conscientious men who inventoried fortresses, counted populations, examined rocks, toiled up and down the mule-tracks and through the vanished chestnut woods, always on the alert for Saracen sails, struggled with Customs dues, fines, tributes and taxes, and tried to make the Capoliveresi pay theirs. Falcons or cash in lieu, it was always the same: 'pro multis temporibus longe retro discursis' when the thirteenth-century Pisans were the duns, and 'four hundred Polish and Corsican soldiers sent in the night to reinforce the gendarmes and stay there until the taxes are paid', when Napoleon tried. Intransigent Capoliveri, whose lights, high over there opposite me as I write in this old Spanish villa, add to the immense, confused sparkle of the stars.

Let me add: I am no novice to beautiful islands. I have not lost head and heart to the Tuscan ones without knowing Ceylon, and Bali, Sicily, Ischia and our Isle of Wight. I have landed on Talang-Talang in the South China Sea among the turtles and eaten their ping-pong-ball eggs on the white sand; as a child, I watched birds with the white-bearded King of Lundy Island whose name was, appropriately, I thought, Heaven; I have lived on Kulangsu off the South China coast, and on islands too big to put a rim round experience (as true islands do) like Borneo, Java and our own. I am, in a word, an experienced islander. But for me none—except Giglio—can compare with Elba as I first found it one May.

* * *

Behind Franca's great-grandfather's villa above Porto Azzurro, which she has lent me, the slopes steepen through the last vine

terraces, the little rose-set shrine where the lemons are planted, the high pineta,* the maquis where the thread of a path zigzags among the waist-high cystus, the sweet broom and the myrtle, to the sheer rocks beneath the little mountain top. The peak, with its iron cross, is a thousand feet above the sea, and its presence broods over the villa and the farm: not moody brooding, but like a bird: sheltering.

The mountain slopes, of the other neighbouring peaks as well as of Franca's, seem to me—trying to keep to the path up to the cross—a mere amorphous tangle of shrubs, but to Angiolino, the *mezzadro*,† Nino his son and Lidia his wife, explaining to me where I go wrong (as I still do), each rock, each tree and myrtle bush, almost every shrub, is individual, idiosyncratic.

'You know the almond tree above the Madonnina—'

'Yes, indeed I do,' and love that enchanting spot where above the shrine it rises from flower-starred grass and a golden conflagration of broom. 'Take the right-hand path to the pineta.' 'Path' is a euphemism: to my eyes it might be one of half a dozen bare patches in the giant dark-purple lavender. I learn fairly soon how to reach the pineta.

'Yes, but above the pineta?' And I recall the repelling riot of yellow-eyed rock-roses, the juniper prickles, the whippy green genista lashes closed and serried against me.

'But it is quite clear: it's to the right of the cork tree that's been seared by lightning.' They are infinitely patient with me. I go time and again, conscious of them keeping an eye on me down there below, only to miss some vital stone, some particular shrub, and come slithering shamefacedly back down the red, shale slope to the mimosa grove with its guarding aloes, whose flower shoots are like gargantuan asparagus. And down the slope behind me pours the great scented wave of wild flowers, parting round Lidia's geranium beds, mixing their scent with the rich purple irises flanking the path to the cow-sheds, flowing on down the vineyard verges, invading the cornfields. Blue periwinkles, lupins, darker-blue anchusa, magenta gladioli, the great vivid pink stars of the mesembryanthemum, silky pale-pink poppies and their red

* Pine plantations.

† Since there is no English word for the system of land-tenure whereby owner and farmer divide the yield in varying proportion with stock and seed provided by the owner, I prefer to use the Italian *mezzadro* and *mezzadria* rather than the French *métayer* and *métayage*, which we have adopted in our dictionaries.

relatives, pale yellow-fringed daisies whose name I do not know, and, every year down by Mondello, scented white dog-roses completely enamel a ten-foot bank. The whole island is decked out with flowers. The gravid cows chew great bouquets, the asses peer out of toppling bundles of flowery fodder.

On the villa balcony at night all the scents rise like a gigantic offering to heaven. The fire-flies flash like gold sequins tossed on black velvet, and it is utterly quiet except for the nightingales. But each night the spectacle from the balcony is different. I am presented with infinite variety in lighting, in contour: the lines flow and change. Capoliveri's constellation sparkles and glows, the stars reel across the great black arc, and, climax of this pageantry, the full moon rises from the sea into a green-bleached sky. Moonlight, which breaks up and rearranges the houses of the port, sets the white oleander below ablaze. All night the white flowers burn while everything lies motionless under the spell.

But there are the winds, as well, to give the scenery a quite different and dramatic lighting. Everything is in baroque movement. Under skimming shreds of cloud the barley heads leap and bend like shoals of flying fish, the rock pinnacles appear and vanish as the low clouds furl and unfurl round them. There is salt on one's lips. The scents are caught, dispersed so that the sweetness of the neighbours' drying hay is blown into my nostrils as the libeccio or the scirocco snatches away the scent of the irises. The nightingales stop their songs for a reflective chuckling.

Here, colour and form change quickly: by the first week in June the green-gold barley-fields are laid in flat, silky swathes, and one misses their nodding phalanxes at the side of the paths. The road seems open and a little bare. The wheat still stands deepening to orange, laid like carpets between the vineyards on the hillsides. The broom is podding, the long grasses seeding, the shale slopes are pink-misted with millions of minute dianthus. The verges are blue with chicory, shimmering with the ash-blond overtones of oats. Sounds change, too, although the cuckoo still calls without a stutter. The villa is surrounded by little, sharp, twittering birds who make grey lightning on the walls with the shadow of their flight.

There is real lightning, too: storms come suddenly. The scene from the balcony is all washed in with blue-black ink. The sky seems to have sucked up all colour beneath; the olives are silver; the pines black; the vines' new green almost luminous. Superb and splendid, did it not hold menace of hail for the embryo grapes. But except on rare nights before a storm, the island is never wholly becalmed. There is always a breeze, an air-current and a responsive catspaw on sea or cornfield, a splattering of poplar leaves. The old poplars stand in small flickering groups by rivulets and springs, giving the rocky valleys a sudden mild grace. The young ones happily flank the long approach round the ruined blast-furnaces of Portoferraio, the capital. Perhaps because I know them best, my favourite poplars stand at the end of the Valle del Botro, to the right of the villa.

I went there first one evening in May. From the sharp red path I saw the villa's stable gradually disappear behind the steep ridge of standing corn; on my left, water trickled and flowed, hidden in the canes. The opposite valley-wall was bent and hollowed into vine terraces, and just below the path the valley bottom was laid out in vegetable gardens, scrupulously cultivated. Unattached to any dwellings and, that evening, deserted, they had a strange, dream-like quality. From the higher slopes three figures, dwarfed by the peaks, moved silently about farm-houses. The path narrowed and clambered between flowers and boulders, below old chestnuts with trunks twisted like romanesque pillars. A sharp bend shut away the sea behind me; it was indeed well-named *Botro*—a closed and watery ravine. Then, suddenly, in the silence, I came upon the flower garden, and knew that it must be a dream. For there below it hung, rich and exotic as Babylon, glowing with those great waxen lilies called *amaryllis hippeastrum* and their kindred white ones boldly striped with vermilion which, even in a florist's window, seem the invention of an interior decorator. A tall band of madonna lilies divided purple and pink larkspur and round bushes of sophisticated white daisies—all blooming piled against the rocks, the wild verdure of the screes. The garden, too, was quite deserted, but between the boulders human feet had obviously worn a path up the steep hillside to the chestnut grove.

It is beyond this enchanted garden, where the valley comes to an end, that the four poplars stand shivering in the shadow of the rock walls. Underneath them is a patch of green grass and beside them a little, clear, spring-fed pool shaded by bracken, blackberries and tall greenery. I disturbed a cuckoo drinking there; it flew away complaining, and I was enclosed in the warm silence

with the tall and elegant clip-clapping poplars. I sat by them until the far side of the valley had doused with its shade the blazing red lilies. I saw from my new approach that the footpath led to a rather dour farm-house set above me on the still sunlit scree without even a hen, a barking dog.

Then, quite suddenly, the glass-like trance was splendidly splintered, the silence sharded, as into it, heralded by a series of *Holàs*, black against the lemon sky rode a man on a big raking ass, wheeling at a stone's throw and spurring at full tilt up the almost vertical hillside, with a roped cow lolloping and scrambling behind him. There was something gallant and ridiculous in the pace and panache of this elderly man in his flat, stiff-brimmed black hat which made me think of Cervantes, long before I knew the Spanish history of this side of the island. It was all over in a flash, and from Spain I was back in the drowsy Tuscan evening.

At the mouth of the watery ravine, where the corn-covered spur flattens down to the road-fork which serves our hillside, I met a Vicentine master builder who told me that he had come to work in Elba years ago and liked it enough to spend the rest of his life in the island: he had retired and was going to work in his vegetable garden. We discussed the relative merits of Vicenza and Porto Azzurro, and, Palladio apart, I entirely agreed that old age in Elba would be infinitely preferable to the bleak Venetian plain. He told me that the man on the ass was brother to the two Verzoni spinsters who had made the red lily garden. Their family had always lived up there. Strange, they had never married, they were all three past fifty. When one day I met the Verzoni sisters I was as surprised as the carpenter: they were so beautiful. Stately and upright in their black cotton dresses and head-shawls, their faces are like worn silver. They have good bones, and round their mouths and their grave dark eyes, smiles have scored a record. They would fit perfectly into the classic idyll of the Bucolics – that false and comfortable conception of rural life without the mud and manure, the hunger and cold, which Bembo revived in Renaissance Italy. False, alas, because not only are women such as Lidia and the sisters Verzoni rare in any community, but the relatively independent and comfortable circumstances of the Elban small-holder and *mezzadro* find few parallels among the mainland peasants, and set in ghastly relief the starvation-level on which many of the peasants of the southern provinces live.

This Elban independence has for centuries been remarkable. Apart from the ever intransigent Capoliveresi, it has been the subject of comment by all our Relators: 'the Elbans are rough-mannered and independent, not given to book-learning but hard-working and upright.' 'The inhabitants are very independent, rough, and most honest; they are not anxious to cultivate their minds, but are good agriculturists.' 'The Elbans show no desire for more education but they are hard-working and peaceable': thus the commentators. Italian fort-commanders sometimes accused them of ingratitude and perfidy, if one village or another showed a disrespect for Medicean authority or lack of fulsome thanks for food supplies. But the Spanish rulers who, in their own country, were accustomed to the traditional privileges and liberties* of certain provinces and classes, whose *alcades*, in their turn, accepted the decisions of villagers gathered in the plaza after Mass to discuss and legislate upon matters of local importance, were able to understand and respect the islanders' character. They could recognize a kinship with the peasants of Spain: with 'a breed of men like vine-shoots, grilled by the sun and tanned by the frosts; a temperate breed of men ... a breed of men made for inclemency of sky and bareness of life'. The Spanish peasant, as Unamuno tells us, 'is calm in all his movements, his conversation is deliberate and grave. You might think him an unthroned king.' And his description (without the frost) admirably fits the Elbans.

In spite of the island's long and persistent history of warfare the Elbans are not, and apparently never were, either servile or belligerent. With their independence goes a respect for the law, or perhaps 'law-abidingness' is more explicit, for they do not like lawyers. 'There are no feuds, no knifings – the hospital records here can prove it, and the last capital crime was in 1946 ... And then it was committed when political feeling was running at fever pitch. Think of it! Only one life taken in the whole island.' After thirteen years Dr Bitossi seemed still surprised and pleased with his compatriots' record. And well he might be. By profession a newspaper man, he knows and remembers the tragic details, the terrible years when Italy fought the Germans and, simultaneously, a civil war. He is Elban born, but years on the Tuscan 'continent' have bred in him the shrewdness and humour salted with cynicism which is characteristically Florentine. He is now editor of the

* *Fueros.*

Elbano, the sole local newspaper, in whose office in Portoferraio I first met him. It is a good kind of office, for it consists of a couple of tables and chairs, shelves and a hook, upon which the Doctor can hang his jacket and his red-banded straw trilby, all set among the printing presses. Like the rest of Elban enterprise, it is free from the high walls with which the more highly organized specialist is shutting himself away from the individual in other fields. It is Dr Bitossi who counterpoints the click-clacking with shouted instructions to 'slug' this or 'box' that; who takes orders for printing handbills, wedding and christening invitations, while sub-editing the latest statistics of viticulture, or the article of a learned priest about Pisan rule in Elba. For discussion or conversation the Doctor reaches for his hat, scatters a few instructions, and crosses to the Roma Bar which, he explained, setting me at a table, 'is our club'. The window at which we sat was entirely filled with prows and bows, masts and stays against the bright-blue harbour water. I should like to live in the Roma and work at that window, sustained by innumerable cuplets of coffee—though possibly I should find myself drawing on the blotting-paper, or simply sitting. 'Yes, as I was saying, the Elbans are kindly and friendly,' said Dr Bitossi. 'Can't be driven, though, and not keen on book-learning.'

Hadn't they been telling me that for four centuries!

'Here, the young ones aren't ambitious: not mad keen to get to a university as they are on the mainland ... '

'But what will they do for a living? I am told there's unemployment—'

'There is, but there are also plenty of voluntary workless.' His eyes twinkled.

I tried to get to the bottom of their subsistence.

'Listen, signora: they are poor, but they still have few needs.'

Few needs: how blessed, how wise. No high-powered salesmanship. I recalled the elderly euphoric American in Florence who told me that he had spent forty-eight years selling things—'just anything'—and who regarded the apostles as the 'hot salesmen of all time: they sold the public Jesus Christ'. His wife wanted to see Elba. I thanked God that he'd retired. The Elbans hadn't yet been persuaded that life without vacuum cleaners was hell, that life with one could be improved by a bigger and better one. Then, uneasily recalling the bitter, hungry, hidden-away poverty in some of the

mainland's beauty spots, in the mountainside villages so picturesquely perched above the great motor-roads, I came back to needs. Elbans must eat and clothe themselves. How did they do so without earning?

Dr Bitossi smiled. 'A little unemployment pay. [It is given for a limited number of weeks only in Italy.] A little fishing. There's always enough fish for the family and enough to sell for the day's groceries. Most of them have a bit of garden. They are quite content. Believe me, some of the richest farms and vineyards are falling vacant for lack of hands to till them.'

'But,' I persisted, fighting for my picture of a wise, well-fed and happy rural community, producing men and women like Lidia and her family, 'they can't all want to live from hand to mouth on fish?' And I seemed to smell above the coffee steam the succulent smells in the Guglielmi kitchen. 'Will they rebuild the blast-furnaces? What else is there for them to do?'

Dr Bitossi shook his head ruefully: 'They say they will live off a tourist industry.'

I couldn't bear it. To see Elba as, alas, I discovered many of the young Elbans wanted to see it: every superb bay with its lonely grandeur desecrated by not one but many chromium-plated bars, each with its eternally patronized juke-box, its cliffs and slopes seamed by high roads wide enough for endless streams of motor-coaches (with wireless accompaniment), its headlands concreted car-parks, the flocks of fascinating visitors they lovingly promise themselves. But worst of all to contemplate is the kind of person a tourist industry produces: self-sold into a dependence on foreigners, pledged to please at all costs, to extort money and yet more money for yet more 'attractions' by a mixture of servility and insolence. Yet the young Elbans do not see their peril, for they have not learned about the nature of money, have never seen its effects. Their parents earn and save it, but they do not relate helpfulness to money. They do not expect reward for a kindness other than their obvious pleasure in the doing of it. They refuse money from grateful foreigners and, if the well-intentioned but uncomprehending insist, they are not so much offended as puzzled as to how or why money enters into it. Innocently they see 'tourism' as an expansion of their present pleasures, their friendly hospitality, their honest joyful satisfaction in pleasing visitors simply pleased. They do not know that it does not work like that. Wherever

'tourism' gains full ground, professional exploiters gather, cut-throat competition destroys friendly rivalry, and the tourists themselves change. The big yachts come as well as the coach-loads of trippers, and both demand entertainment that a fishing-boat, a bathe on an empty shore, a drink in a small, noisy bar will not fulfil. Then there is the expensive *chaumière* simple life of the satiated who need the stimulus of violent contrast, which is even more disastrously destructive to the truly simple than a thousand juke-boxes in a thousand plated bars. The young Elbans, Dr Bitossi told me, listened with respect to their contemporaries from the mainland cities who equated contentment with inertia, simplicity with lack of enterprise.

'They say it's progress,' Dr Bitossi's voice impinged again, 'that we are backward here.'

I felt like copying Gertrude Stein: backwards is forwards, is backwards; but all I said as I left him to read more *Descrizioni* in the library was: 'I hope it will take them a long time to catch up.'

* * *

I discover that reading the Descriptions that were historically evocative on the top floor of the Commune in Portoferraio, in the tranquil University of Pisa, in the massive silence of the Uffizi in Florence, or in Charles V's great castle at Simancas, is one experience, while transposing them from the muniment rooms and setting them down in their respective geographical localities seems at first to be quite a different one.

On paper it is the language of the politics and emotions of war, the spirit of battles, of sieges, of skirmishes, which is basically unchanged. Because I have experienced two world wars I can identify the pitch, the intensity of those emotions: I recognize them in myself. From the library in Portoferraio and the diaries of the men who took part in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century wars, I return to the villa balcony to re-people the lovely landscape with attackers and defenders, and I, whom war has taught to think in millions of men, of money, of things destroyed, look at the little fortresses, the small port, the compact cluster of houses which belong to the two thousand inhabitants of Capoliveri, and think that in the Succession Wars there were only five hundred Spanish attacking the Emperor's men, besiegers of Longone, as Porto Azzurro used to be called; that over the ridge at the shrine of

Monserrato one Spanish captain and two of his soldiers were killed 'and 2 Germans wounded' in the engagement there; that the taking of '30 Germans with a flag', on the hillside behind me, was worth twice recording; that in the important fight in Longone between Spanish and French in 1650, only 'seven companies of Spanish infantry' were engaged; and relief is my first reaction. It was all on such a small scale, I say. And then relief turns to dismay with the recognition that, in the final count, numbers do not affect man's victories or defeats, his fear or his courage, his treacheries or his loyalties. The fear bred in these Elban peasants by the cannon-ball in Lidia's garden is no different from Lidia's fear when she fled up the valley of the red lilies to escape the Americans' air attack on the German garrison, and the landing of French coloured troops at Lacona, three hundred years later. Bomb or ball: they are the same. The political causes—the fight of the powerful for absolute power, their cynical disposal of the weak—in motive and morality are unchanging, and I leave the flowery balcony cast down.

On these occasions I go to Lidia, because I need to be reassured that man's goodness, thank God, has not changed either, and that the two will go on side by side (I reflect, as we shell peas together) for goodness knows how long, since the very existence of goodness presupposes non-goodness. But with Lidia fruitless speculation ends: she *is*, and in her orbit the idea of progress in a straight line seems futile; and the futility is not important either. My intellectuality goes down her kitchen sink—its proper place. Lidia, open-eyed, accepts the whole of life, but never with resignation.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

Ranieri Sardo's *Cronaca* may be found in *Arch. Stor. Ital.*, VI, part II, disp. i (1845).

Giovanelli's *Breve Relazione dell'Isola dell'Elba* (1771) is in the Foresiana library in Portoferraio, together with several transcripts of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century soldiers' diaries and descriptions of the island. Transcripts of Coresi del Bruno's and Fazzi's reports on the island are likewise here: *Zibaldone di Memorie* (1729) and *Una Descrizione topografica dell'Elba*. The original MSS. are in the Marucelliana library in Florence. The transcript of the guard-house order book is also in the Foresiana.

Marcello Squarcialupi di Piombino's diary (*Arch. Med. I. a.*, F.I.), Riccio's letters (Carteggi di P. F. Riccio) and Cuppano's reports (Lettere di Lucantonio Cuppano) to Cosimo I de' Medici are in the State Archives in Florence.

The Napoleonic literature is so vast and has been listed so often that I refrain from adding to the bulk of these notes with it.

An MS. copy of Villeneuve's letter is in the Foresiana.

The archives of the Pisan Republic contain many fascinating details about the administration of the island.

Among printed books I have found excellent material in R. Roncioni, *Storie Pisane*, in *Arch. Stor. Ital.*, VI, I and II, disp. i; and E. Pintor's *Il Dominio Pisano nell'Isola d'Elba durante il secolo XIV*, Studi Storici, VIII (1899).

The quotation referring to the dilatory Capoliveresi is taken from del Borgo's *Diplomi Pisani*, VII, and that from Napoleon's orders from Sir Neil Campbell's *Napoleon at Fontainebleau and Elba*, 1814–1815 (1869).

The accounts of the battles of 1646 and 1708 respectively are contained in the transcripts in the *Zibaldone* and also in an anonymous contemporary diary in the Foresiana.

Proper names: I have used both the English and Italian versions of some proper names, according to the rhythm and mood of the passage. For instance, the 'Knights of St Stephen' suggests nothing to me, since being a purely Italian order of chivalry it is almost invariably referred to as the 'Order of the Knights of San Stefano'.

II

AT THE VILLA TEGHINI

THE cannon-ball weights the bucket chain at the villa's stone cistern under the vine trellis in the Mondello valley. It looks like some hybrid by the orange pumpkins out of the aubergines, hanging purple-black in the high summer sun. It is a peaceful place down there among Lidia's vegetables, with no sounds but the birds and the papery rustle of the cane brake, nothing in sight but red furrows, vines, fading summer stubble, the ochre and white of little houses against the blue harbour—the Porto Azzurro—with the smooth green hills dropping five hundred feet from Capoliveri to enclose it, and behind one the other Elban profile: the bare, sharp-edged, dark-red, miniature mountain peaks. The children, fingering the iron ball too large for their handspan, say: 'It came in the war of 1915–18. Angiolino found it: he fought in that war, so he knows.' Angiolino says: 'It is from the time of the Spaniards,' and he is right, but he means the seventeenth-century subjects of Philip III who built the fort above the harbour. Thirty or three hundred years ago, it is all the same to the timeless vision of children, with their capacity to fuse the past into a seamless background for the present.

This side of Elba is milder in contour, Spanish in tradition, while Portoferraio and the spectacularly beautiful, and now fashionably foreign, north coast is Tuscan. The fort at Porto Azzurro and the Focardo fortress opposite it were built by the Spaniards in 1605. The young Cosimo de' Medici, first Grand Duke of Tuscany, started to build the twin fortresses of Portoferraio half a century earlier. Although the Emperor Charles V was his overlord, the flavour was and still is Italian: all round the bay the people use as strongly an aspirated 'c' as any Florentine.

Up to the sixteenth century Elba was important to the mainland

for its iron ore. But when France, Spain and the Turks were at each other's throats in the Mediterranean and on the mainland, and the great rivals, Charles V and Francis I, were constantly forming and re-forming alliances as it suited them, joined by Pope or Emperor, the superb harbours of the islands, particularly of Elba, became as important as the ore. Portoferraio's great sweep of deep water, sheltered by the swooping range of peaks, dominated by the needle-pointed Volterraio and the huge natural mole on which Cosimo built, could and did accommodate whole fleets of Spanish, French, Genoese, Florentine, Neapolitan and Papal galleys. That great Genoese captain, Doria, sheltered his ships there; so did the Knights of San Stefano. The Knights of St John, with their fast, narrow, fighting craft, could water there in comfort; they could also dart in and out of the small harbours in the rock walls of Gorgona and Capraia away across the purple-black swell. Longone, with the Focardo, guarded a harbour which—with Piombino on the mainland, to whose lord most of Elba belonged—dominated the direct seaway from the east to Leghorn and Genoa. To the Turks bases were vital; Francis I offered the younger Barbarossa, repelled by Elba, the use of Toulon when he leagued France with the Sultan against Spain. His son, Henry II, went further in infamy, offering the Turks all the slaves they could take in return for the fort and port of Piombino.

On the islands the forts were not built to protect communities. The villages, like eagles' nests, relied for safety on the steep hilltops, though even there the corsairs raided them and enslaved their occupants. Civil life could grow up safely at sea-level only after the fortresses were built. 'There is not a habitation in the world where we are to build,' wrote Lorenzo Pagni, Cosimo's secretary in Leghorn, asking Riccio for a provision of tents for engineers, soldiers and workmen at Portoferraio. Marciana and Poggio, the nearest villages, were scarfed with trailing clouds 1,200 feet up the 3,000-foot peak of Monte Capanne. Later, the garrison at Longone was to look up for civilian and religious consolations to Capoliveri, whose waterway was a canal prolonging the Mola inlet—silted up today—and whose land approach was a precipitous mule-track. But Longone's first governor, de Pons, not only saw to the building of a church inside the walls, but also, out of his own purse, built a shrine (of which I shall write) up the valley divided from ours by the shoulder of the big

pineta, over which the red harvest moon rises and in which the levante soughs an accompaniment to the sea. On its glass-smooth, aromatic floor I once found a single brown orchid cluster, a small fire of brown flames, kindled in that bare brown expanse by what capricious shaft of sunlight? I have often returned there, but I have never found another.

In all this region the present-day adult tradition reaches back no farther than these seventeenth-century Spaniards of Longone, with a fiery, bloody—and historically confused—backcloth of Turk and Saracen raiders. They are the common denominator of any age or event. To me, taught to take Elba and Napoleon as almost synonymous, it was at first surprising that the answer to inquiry was: before, during or after the Spaniards, never Napoleon. It was the way I was taught history: the exclusively British way.

Queen Mary I of England, when she became Philip II's wife, concerned herself royally—and rather presumptuously, it seems to me—with the spiritual welfare of the Elbans, who were not even her husband's subjects; but the history of the Tuscan archipelago of Elba, Pianosa, Capraia, Giglio, Giannutri and Montecristo impinged directly on English records only when British naval strategy required them, and dramatically only when Napoleon was concerned with them as his potential kingdom. To the islanders today Napoleon is only incidental, only of importance as a draw for tourists—far less real than Barbarossa and his corsairs, who in 1534 landed at the cove we can see from the flickering shade of the vine trellis. The small half-moon beach is Barbarossa's to this day.

The history of the islands is Mediterranean pattern: parochially republican, then feudal Italian and Spanish, eternally involved in the infinitely complicated Franco-Hispanic struggle for power on the mainland, eternally on the alert for Turks and Algerian pirates. Because of Elba's importance as a source of iron for the medieval city-republics, the opinions of her communes were highly respected. Later, after the republics' decline, the communes became appanages of the powerful families on the mainland; but their fine republican tradition was so deep-rooted that the island never experienced serfdom, or the hungry, tax-oppressed vassalage without rights or voice of the Tuscan mainland. Elba, until the late eighteenth century, was not even under one government. That there are no large estates, no indigenous nobility nor ever were, gives the islander his outstanding dignity, his independence, his capacity for

responsible behaviour and judgment – the invaluable asset of the peasant proprietor, the smallholder, and, I should add, the seaman.

In the islands there is still no division between the town- and country-dweller. Almost every fisherman, shopkeeper and professional man has his plot of land, his vineyard, his small house or villa; every *mezzadro* his relatives down in the little ports. The vines below Franca's land belong to Febo Giannelli, a blue-eyed old sea-captain.* He owned his own barques; now he has a little shop in the port and comes to his one-storeyed house among the vines to work or just to stay.

Franca's great-grandfather, Don Vincenzo Mandriguez, a Spanish cavalry captain, came from Barcelona at the beginning of the nineteenth century, bought the land on the hillside, the farmhouses and the villa, married an islander, stayed on to become 'Mandrique', Napoleon's minister of his projected Elban merchant navy, and was sent one of the Emperor's green-ribboned bronze medals from St Helena. His only daughter married Tito Teghini, a magistrate from Florence. He and his son Umberto spent part of each year at the villa. They kept a horse there and a *volant*, in which Angiolino's father and later the young Angiolino drove them down to Mass each Sunday and feast-day, and to their boat when they wished to be rowed out to fish or to visit places served only by precipitous mule-tracks. A great excursion, of which Angiolino still tells and which Franca well remembers, was the Teghini family's visit to the Arch-priest of St Ilario. The drive took all day (today the bus from Portoferraio does the road in an hour), and they stayed there overnight.

The Arch-priest was accorded great respect by the democratic Elbans, because Don Teodoro Mennucci, rich and dignified, was a formidable litigant. But, as a rule, that compact island society produced an excellently balanced homogeneity, bred mutual respect and made class-consciousness ridiculous. This life, alas, is cracking. The social and economic rift is there. Already good farms and vineyards – the island's staple wealth, now that iron takes a minor place – are falling victim, not to the old enemy, the invading Turk, but to the encroaching maquis, the thistly grass. Nino, Lidia's handsome son, could find no girl on the island willing to live on the holding on the mountain slopes, although, below the vegetable

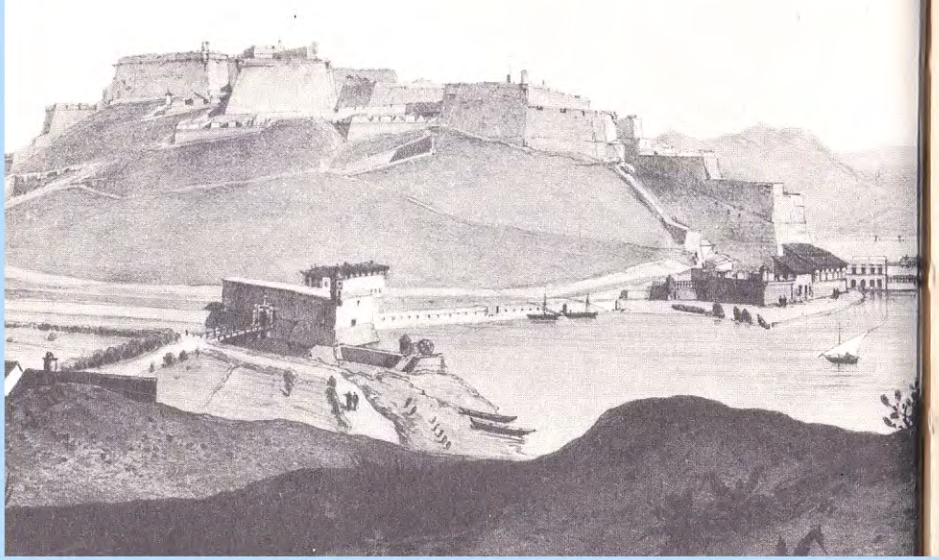
* Since this was written, old Febo, lacking the physical strength to work his land, reluctantly agreed to sell it. His heart stopped as he handed the deeds to his successor.

Porto Azzurro (Longone)

The Mola Inlet

he Focardo Fortress

Portoferraio about 1870



garden, Franca's second good house, Mondello, waited empty; so he turned to the mainland and found a bride in Calabria.

It is a good life and a sane one and there need be no sentimentality in thus assessing it. The rural island life is hard on muscles, ruthlessly demanding, its gains entirely dependent on weather. Its tasks can never be postponed. It allows no annual holiday with pay, no full exemption except on Ascension Day, when no peasant will work. Lidia's uncle, she says, sprayed his fine vines on that forbidden day and they all died. No one can tell me why or which offended power calls down this retribution on the law-breaker. It just is so, they say.

From the balcony of the villa, which, like all old Elban villas, is not set apart, but half-way up the vineyard slopes, I have a full view of the cycle of the peasants' life. The balcony is a theatre box, with the whole stage-set of vineyards, farm, cornfields, cowsheds, fruit and vegetable gardens, against the blue sea backcloth, with Angiolino, Lidia, Nino, cows, dogs, chickens and ass, playing their unending roles. For hundreds of acres all round the great scallop-shell bowl formed by the nine saddle-linked peaks, the pattern of the play is repeated. There is no audience but the peasant, straightening himself above his vines, leaning on his hoe, his wife pausing for a moment, Demeter-like, sickle in hand above her mound of flowery fodder, brief spectators of their neighbours' spectacle. It is all spread out beneath the balcony, suspended there above the red shale path. It reminds me of medieval miniatures illustrating the *Georgics*, of the work of the seasons carved above the door of Lucca's *duomo*. It is an enduring classic, preserving its rhythm in a hectic age.

On the balcony it is so easy to adopt an Erewhonian attitude. But one must admit that the peasants have benefited greatly by scientific research, by the products of just that headlong urban life that one contrasts so unfavourably with theirs. It may be debatable whether it is as amusing for the peasant to turn a handle to squash out the grape-juice that his father trod out in a glorious, stained and sticky revel, but hauling and carrying endless barrels of water up the slopes with the mule in scorching summer heat was a prematurely ageing work that all agree is better done by an electric pump and a plastic hose-pipe, while calor gas lifts the burden of countless faggots from the women's heads. And to be honest, although the island silence is torn by the noise of their

engines, a motor-scooter for the milk cans is an undeniable boon to the busy peasant, and he revels in the roar of an open exhaust pipe.

But with all the new aids, there is always more than enough to do. The vineyards must be hoed three times a year, the vines need spraying, sulphur-dusting, tent-sticking, topping, tying, stripping of their lower leaves. There are the fields to sow and reap. Peas, tomatoes—an acre of them behind the villa—to be weeded, watered, picked and carried down to market. Each day the animals must be pegged out to graze, cows milked and fodder-fed, watered—until last year—at the stone trough beside the villa. Lidia—and every good *mezzadra*—takes in her stride the daily care of the poultry, the marketing of eggs and garden produce, the making of gallons of tomato sauce, the fig and grape jam, the brandied grapes, the drying of raisins, the salting-down of anchovies.

The sulphur makes Lidia's eyes burn, Angiolino cough. The copper solution cans bend even Nino's broad back as he sprays up and down the slopes in a blue mist. If rain comes, within the twenty-four hours he must do it again. The vintage brings excitement: reward for hard work; feast-days provide some minor exemption for every member of the peasant family. They are one of the wisest creations of the Catholic Church. Apart, entirely, from their religious significance, they are, particularly to small rural communities, physically and psychologically valuable.

Sitting on the sea wall with Lidia—a sort of living Elban Almanach de Gotha—at my side, I watched the Corpus Domini procession. It was a spectacle in which all could take part, an entertainment giving a satisfaction far greater than the passive visual acceptance of the cinema or television. It wound its way almost head to tail all round the village. There were the usual enchanting little girls in their first-Communion gauzes and muslins, their male counterparts clad in stiff white suits, eyes on the spectators, herded along by firm and kindly elderly nuns; the peasant women all in black, with their magnificent carriage, mingling with the pretty girls teetering along on pin heels, the warders from the prison in immaculate uniforms, and, under a superb, pale-blue, gold-glistening baldachin borne by four carabiniers, the priest coming to the water's edge to bless the sea.

Such a procession fulfils the human need for pageantry. It offers creative participation, links onlookers and actors in a kinship of

blood, of affection—of hatred and envy, maybe. But it is never something artificial and detached. The whole village seemed held together by these invisible bonds as well as by the words and gestures between marchers and onlookers. The wind swung out the silk banner tassels, the baldachin blossomed and swayed like some giant medusa on the very edge of the sea. The crowd was thick, the procession had piled up on itself; all were silently wishing for the sea—their sea—to be properly blessed. Then, the blessing surely bestowed upon the harbour, upon those good men and women, the rosaries were put away, the brass band from Capoliveri burst gladly out, and the ice-cream cones, like torches of victory, appeared in almost every hand, including the warders' and mine and Lidia's. Nino was looking after her milking for her: she could sit back and look and lick and talk.

* * *

Tying the vines, too, provides a social occasion. In May the vines seem to shoot up new tendrils in a single night, and dawn-light reveals, above the bound of yesterday, hundreds of fine, swaying tentacles—aerial octopi groping for support in the gold-shot blue air. Angiolino and Lidia tie day after day. They bristle with bundles of the supple green rushes stuck in pockets, in belts, anywhere that will grip them. One finds handfuls, fresh-gathered, left on rocks, in tree forks, beside the paths. The whole valley bristles. The tendril is bent to one of the supports with the rush, whose ends are twisted together and bent under on to themselves in one quick, continuous movement. The bowl of the hills is alive with tyers in the sea of wandering suckers. Friends and relatives come up from the port to help: they all know how to tie a vine properly, with no amateurish fumbling. They have not developed the one-track mind by which Progress sets such store, nor, it appears, is wine-producing governed by union rules.

The Elbans still surprise me by the variety of their trades, their versatility; Lidia's son-in-law is a very fair cobbler, a good carpenter; he also works in his brother's saw-mill, and with his wife, Ginetta, to help him, keeps a little stationery shop. Like all Elbans I have ever met he is, too, a fisherman. Most of the younger men share a boat. Nino works all day, but he will fish all night. The sea is part of the Elbans' lives, its temper their concern. 'Che bel' mar' oggi!' is no idle aesthetic comment, but appreciative of

good fishing, of safe voyaging. So, during their work, they pause and stare at the sea, dignified and solid as the hills, independent and obstinate as their mules, not taken in by appearances dear to the city-dweller. Earth- and sweat-stained, wind-etched and sun-dried, theirs is the fine bearing, the unembarrassed, courteous, eminently civilized simplicity of men who are their own masters. Here, on the bowl-side, their voices float across the ribs of the valleys and carry through rocky funnels, up and down. Angiolino has a voice like a corn-crake, Lidia like a brass band. Effortlessly they carry on conversations within an aerial circumference of miles.

There is, too, a whole gamut of sounds which would delight the makers of *musique concrète*. I have grown to recognize and tell the time by them. Not the red-second-hand-pip-pip B.B.C. time, but the approximate sun and moon, drinking and milking times—the important valley time.

There is, under the windows, very early, the thin clink of the milk-can handles, a little later the soft splatter of cows' hoofs, then the distant ring of iron on iron as Angiolino pegs their tethers down into the iron-red earth. Then there is the soft brush of a fodder-load against the oleanders, the varying tread of Lidia and Nino, laden or unburdened, the dry quick click-click of the asses' hoofs.

Nino adjures Marco, the ass, with loud, grand-ringing noises—reminiscent of Old Testament names—whose meaning only he and the ass understand, but usually he ends with the useful 'Scemo!'* which is clear to all. I have never made friends with Marco. He is altogether too ready with his heels. He broke his tether one day and appeared at the drinking-trough, fat, sleek but wild of eye, with the three Guglielmi in his wake. He drank warily. Nino, letting fly with his whole biblical repertory liberally salted with 'Idiot!', attempted to seize the rope-end. Marco ups with his heels and cavorts away with a 'no-you-don't' look in his eye. Angiolino tries the cautious, blandishing approach, but Marco is not to be taken in. He allows Angiolino to get quite close, then off he goes at a wheeling tangent up into the pineta, followed by a flight of Scemos. All the time, not moving, Lidia stands with a handful of young vine-leaves, saying nothing, sweet or sour. The ass pauses, looks over his shoulder, turns; minces a few steps, stops—all part of the game. Five minutes more with the men at deep field, Lidia

* Idiot.

quietly waiting, he stretches rubbery lips to reach her leaves, lets her take the rope-end and is led away munching.

Unlike many Mediterraneans, Elbans are kind to their animals and keep them well from affection as well as necessity. The day that the Guglielmi's two Segugia bitches stopped barking every time I passed the farm, I was proud: I was accepted as one of the family. They, too, keep the memory of that day. Year-long intervals do not efface it. There are no walls, no hedges and few fences on the islands, but even the tethered cows moo at strangers and the donkeys bray despairingly, less welcoming than their owners, who are unfailingly and perfectly hospitable.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

Lucantonio Cuppano's report of Henry II's offer of slaves to the Turks—taken from an escaped slave—is in Carte Strozziane, F.71a.81. Copies of his summary of events were also sent to his ambassador in Spain: cf. Cosimo I de' Medici letters to Pandolfini, Serie I, Strozziane 1110, 75 (*Arch. d. Stato*, Florence).

This file also contains a copy of the letter Mary addressed to the Elbans from London, telling them to ignore the 'devilish accusations of being Papists and heretics' and to 'turn all their thoughts to living in the fear of God'.

Pagni's letter is in Carteggi di P. F. Riccio, F.VI (*Arch. d. Stato*, Florence).

The accounts of the battles of 1646 and 1708 respectively are contained in the MS. transcript of the collection of papers made by Coresi del Bruno, and the transcript of a contemporary, anonymous diary also in the Foresiana.

I have used both the English and Italian version of some proper names, according to the rhythm, context and mood of the sentence.

III

LETTERS FROM CAPOLIVERI

IN SPITE of the neat, well-built houses rising in the barley-fields which, two years ago, ran silkily down to within a house-breadth of the harbour, Porto Azzurro still has the feel and flavour of a fishing village. The piazza, for all its name, is an extension of the quayside, built barely a quarter of a century ago over the sandy foreshore to meet the narrow granite paving in front of the houses. The mole with the winking light was built about the same time. Until then, the reef below the fort—which is now a prison—was the only breakwater. At high tide the sea came into the houses.

Recalling the winched-up barques and schooners at Giglio—the Island of the Lily—their bowsprits almost putting the houses' eyes out, I said to Febo, who was describing the old Longone to me, 'like the harbour at Giglio'. We were sitting on one of the iron seats, waiting for the early bus to Portoferraio. 'You must know Captain Cavero there.' I said 'must', because the two old sea-captains were cut on exactly the same pattern, although Demo Cavero was the more upright.

Usually Febo looked out to sea when he talked, for he was almost always within sight of it; now he turned completely to look at me from between his bowed shoulders. There was fresh interest in his bright blue eyes. '*You* know Giglio and my old friend Demo? However did you come to do that?'

'I stayed with him and Corinna on the island.'

'You did? But why did you go there?' He could not get over it, and I had to tell him there and then what I have reserved here for another chapter.

The bus was unusually late. It comes from Cavo at the northern tip of the island on what, until a year ago, was a terrifying road, prone to sliding into the sea at unpredictable intervals, as it did

the day that I first went. Then the passengers had to climb out, over the cascade of rocks and join the out-going bus which turned round and bore them on to their destination. It was all done with the greatest good humour and calm—except for myself who was out of temper and terrified—for the road is a new boon of Progress where there was only a mule-track before. It has opened up employment in Rio and even in Portoferraio to the hitherto remote Cavese.

Febo and I fell silent. We looked across the harbour. Over by Mola a slender, tall-masted white yacht had anchored during the night. Fragile and gleaming it lay, like an enchanted Perrault princess spellbound to her own perfect reflection, unmarred by a ripple, a single flutter of bunting. 'A rich man's ship,' said Febo, following my eyes. Was that high-masted languor, I wondered, ever called upon to face the great moody Mediterranean winds: the tramontana, the grecale, the scirocco, the maestrale, the levante?

'Have you ever heard of the cemetery of ships?' I asked Febo, pursuing my thought.

'It was over there, at Mola, by the old canal.' He lifted his bristly white chin in the direction of the yacht. 'Under the yacht. When I was a boy, the old ships were buried there. You could see them lying.' And I saw the ribs of the dead ships, a Winter's Tale, grotesquely refracted there, under the glassy green water.

'And nowhere else?'

'Nowhere else.'

* * *

In Pisa there is an order of 1380 from the elders of the Republic, which then ruled Elba, to the citizens of Capoliveri about their sea approach. It runs: *quod nullus patronus alicuius navigit possit vel debeat exonerare vel prohicere aliquam zavorram* in canali*; and an earlier local order warns captains of ships not to encumber 'the waters or foreshore'. Why did they choose that place, so inconvenient for Capoliveri, which at that time housed the captain of the island, when they had miles of uninhabited coast-line and coves wherein to dump their ballast, their refuse, and their ships' bones?

'Why there? Was it something to do with the currents?'

But he could not tell me. He was prepared, however, to discuss

* Latinized version of *zavorra*—ballast.

the seventeenth-century closing of the port against the Spaniards, described in a diary in Portoferraio. 'That day,' I read to him out of the exercise book which held my transcript of it, 'with baulks and chain they closed the mouth of the said port so that no vessel could enter, but immediately a great gust of the east wind broke and splintered the said boom. But those men [the French] mended it and made it stronger than before, so that nothing could get in.'

Febo listened attentively. It would be quite easy, he said, to stretch a boom from the Focardo point to the rocks below the fort —about five hundred yards. But a big sea, when the levante was really blowing, could quite easily carry it away.

'So the Spaniards fought off the French?'

'No, it was the other way round, the French took Longone, but the Spaniards got it back again.''

Elba's history in the seventeenth-century wars was too complicated to tell Febo about, with one eye on the corner of the piazza round which the bus would appear. But apparently the boom was efficacious, for the defenders used one in the Napoleonic wars.

One of the fishing boats was returning from the broken sea beyond the point. In the satiny, early-morning water of the harbour it scored a forked wake, rippled at the edges like a flint arrow-head. It nosed its way between the boats to the quay-side, warped up to one of the iron seats. The men mending their nets, holding them taut with their feet, relaxed their big toes and watched it with deep attention. One might have thought no one had ever seen a catch of fish before. Like a magnet it drew the few citizens standing about in the piazza at that hour: life, in a moment, knotted itself above the boat. I was struck again by the passionate personal interest which the Italians still have in the details of their daily lives and in those of their neighbours. It is an interest and a capacity for enthusiasm which sweetens circumstances often of extreme bitterness and hardship. In no Italian village have I ever met with that paralysing phrase, 'I couldn't care less.' No one disguises his interest, no one is ashamed of curiosity.

Cavaliere Berti, many times mayor and an important citizen whose pharmacy for years was the only local forum, came out of his house, carpet-slippered, to study the haul. A lean grey cat took up a strategic position under the seat, watching. Febo and I watched,

too. The catch consisted of three buckets of small glinting fishes, another of squids, lying inert like dark-red coral, a couple of twining eels and, finally, a dripping box waving with feelers, groping claws and steely-blue fringed fantails. No one but myself seemed disappointed. Indeed, the onlookers, even with the prospect of more homing boats chugging round the point, were completely absorbed. The hand-scales jingled, the audience made way for the middle man, dangling his weighing hook, and for a housewife whom, from her absorbed prodding in the fish-buckets, I took to be a *cacciucco* expert. Bargaining was brisk, quiet and friendly. The housewife bore off two minute slivers of silver, the sum total of her deliberation—possibly the vital flavours missing from her *cacciucco*; the audience drifted away.

Cacciucco is the Elban variety of the mixed fish dish of the Mediterranean, which is *bouillabaisse* in Marseilles, *zuppa di pesce* in the Adriatic and *zimino* in Sardinia. Travelling gourmets will tell you their fine differences, their relative specific gravity, their respective reaction to wines; local experts can only tell one the sovereign secret of a good *cacciucco*, and that is—'good fish, signora'. It is by no means only a matter of flinging together a sample of the day's catch, although it seems at least probable, in these waters of abundant varieties of small fish, that the dish originated in that way.

There are certain fish of the islands which lie in my memory like the wily old trout I used to watch in the Torridge, hanging nose upstream, each in his own pool. But, unlike the trout, who were never caught, the Elban fish are cooked and eaten. Piombino conjures up, not its feudal lords, the Appiani (of whom, nevertheless, I have had more than enough), but a dish of plump, briny scampi, eaten under a modest, flickering canopy of leaves and so superbly fried that even their whiskers were crisp and delicious. Again, Cavo evokes neither its horrible road nor its one enchanting, almost sea-borne villa, with pines and flowers to the water's edge, but a most succulent grilled *occhiata*, garnished with parsley and a pink rosebud, produced by the empty little ristorante. The decorative *dentice* are excellent boiled and eaten cold, but the most memorable one was displayed to me in all its blue-backed, yellow-flanked splendour, intact on its dish, in Ischia; so strictly speaking it can have no place here. However, if any head waiter in Elba or anywhere else takes to this embarrassing habit, I, having gratefully

learned from Monsieur Cocteau, am now provided with a suitable response: 'Très vraisemblable'—or its Italian equivalent.

The tunny fishing from Elba used to be famous enough for grand-ducal pleasure as well as profit, but for some years now the great fish have left these waters. There are still old fishermen who say that it is because the dolphins, too, have gone. They will tell you that the light-hearted creatures would lure the tunny into the nets and then make their own rollicking and gleeful escape. But the anchovies remain to maintain the island's centuries-old export to the mainland. They are delicious to eat when newly hatched and transparent as glass.

Gorgona's fishery was particularly famous, but the eighteenth century found it so declined that the Grand Duke, Peter Leopold—the first conscientious Habsburg-Lorraine ruler of Tuscany—decided that, among his reforms and schemes, its encouragement and development should come high on his list of priorities. The encouragement would cost the exchequer little. In 1777, therefore, he announced that anchovy fishers, both active and prospective, would be granted cheap—even free—land (taken from property owned by the Carthusians), the cancellation of all debts of four months or over contracted outside Tuscany, cheap salt, a rebate on local taxes and free drying space for their nets on the limited foreshore. But Gorgona's two and a quarter square kilometres are bleak, its cliffs, rising sheer out of the dark, swelling seas frayed white by sharp reefs, formidable. The narrow, dog-leg harbour entrance is often too dangerous to attempt, and the response to the Grand Duke's liberal offer was poor. Gorgona is an open prison today. According to a civil servant—a fellow-passenger in the ship which took me there—the sea between it and the mainland is notoriously vicious and no one ever tries to escape—which, I thought, feeling the bitumen-black surge from a comfortable passenger ship, was not surprising.

Then there are the mussel beds at Mola, old and important to Porto Azzurrean economy. Huge, blue-black, water-shiny mounds on the granite tables in the market-places of the island are daily demolished: Elbans eat them boiled or stewed in their *cacciucco*. On the sea floor in deeper water, Gino, Franca's husband, who was one of the famous first frogmen, found great mussels like folded ploughshares, anchored upright by infinitesimal golden filaments; the one in which he found a silvery pearl is here, in the villa—a

beautiful, blade-like, translucent amber shell, thinly enamelled with nacre. Was this the large shell described by Coresi del Bruno in his *Relazione*, 'whose root or beard the inhabitants used to weave into silk-like stockings', or was someone testing his credulity?

* * *

The Elbans have a curious attitude towards fishing. Almost every Elban knows how to handle a boat, lay a net and use a harpoon, goes fishing for pot and/or profit, but professional fishing, he will tell you, is the Neapolitans' job. Neapolitan fishermen have been settled on the island for at least four hundred years, probably far more—long enough, one would have thought, to be regarded as Elbans. But talking to the boat-owners of Marciana Marina, Campo and Porto Azzurro made clear to me the subtle difference between going out fishing when one's duties on the smallholding or vineyard permitted, and fishing exclusively for a livelihood.

Only a few years ago, fishing for food, as well as for export, was a necessity. Now it can no longer be said that the islanders' diet would suffer without sea-food. Grain and other staples have always been imported from the mainland; today the dry torrent beds are full of rusty tins. The owners of the sweet-chestnut woods on the northern slopes of Monte Capanne no longer make chestnut flour, nor even, I was told at Poggio, bother to harvest the good plump nuts. I turned over dreams of producing *marrons glacés* in a big way, making my modest fortune; but the sickly project appealed less to me when I thought of living in close and sticky association with vanilla-scented syrup, and reflected that the Elbans have never tasted them and showed little inclination to do so. Moreover, the Parisian guests of M. Balmain of the *haute couture*, who is building a fortress-like villa below Poggio, look as if their figures would never for a moment permit indulgence in chestnuts.

In earlier centuries, even with a sufficiency of flour, fish was important and fishing one of the few diversions. Among the official letters of 1575 from Capoliveri to Piombino is a request for permission to build a 'communal habitation' at Mola to house the anchovies and sardines before salting.

Whether from sport or necessity, the citizens of Capoliveri, with their traditional disrespect for established authority, decided to ignore the curfew and go fishing at the Razzuola at one in the

morning; they attacked the guard and 'caused confusion at the gate' and some casualties. About the same time Tomaso, the governor's son, died after a fracas in which stones flew, daggers were drawn, and five men were wounded and their assailants took to the *macchia*. The surgeon from Portoferraio was fetched, the parish priest called, and the sorely tried mayor of Capoliveri took pen, ink and sand-box and poured out his troubles to the Governor-General at Piombino. His letters at this time are full of the 'brawls' of citizens who are 'a scandal', 'bad examples who must be restrained', 'rascals with no respect for anyone'.

'Where was the Razzuola where they fished?' I asked Cavaliere Berti, who has used his long life in serving his island. But he supposed that it was one of the coves beneath the Calamita point whose name had been changed or forgotten.

Then 'Turkish galleons landed men at the Grotto of Pines and carried into slavery six persons including Horatio di Giovinetti and his two sons', and the mayor, reporting it, ends: 'Our best defence is so little, so few guards have we.' For had he not already reported that the soldiers insisted on going fishing at the Razzuola, while only 'one squad of forty men remain on watch'?

When raiding Turks had stolen or burned their crops the Elbans had to rely for grain on the mainland. The Capoliverese, at least once in the Pisan records, are convicted of piracy of Corsican grain-ships and punished. However, throughout their history they remain haughty and intractible. And today the charming, demure little white-collared, black-overalled boys issuing from the gates of the gentle nuns' school in Porto Azzurro fill their lungs with the seaweed-smelling air and bawl after the small, no less charming and demure Capoliveresi, waiting for the bus to take them home: 'Bandy-legged Capoliveresi, race of lice, if we catch you we'll put you in a wheelbarrow and land you in the cess-pit.'

Certainly the sixteenth-century Podestà of Capoliveri held no sinecure. Boredom led to brawls among the soldiers, to duels among the officers. Francesco de' Medici's captains of the splendid twin forts at Portoferraio went further: they fought a duel in which both were killed, and the forts were left without commanders.

* * *

The gritty, glinting letters from Capoliveri and Rio, which left

the dust and sand of four hundred years on my fingers, evoke, as no history book can do, the social life of that high village opposite, the daily existence of the sixteenth-century Elbans. In the paper parcels of the State archives in Florence they lie imprisoned, to be let loose with all their problems, passions and pleas by the simple pulling of a string. They are trivial papers, building up, with incident and comment as small as Roman tesserae, the complete picture. There are letters about the price of vegetables, the yearly branding of their cattle, the public crying of their numbers and the two-scudi fines they had to pay for neglecting to do so; their brawling and their stone-throwing; their petty daily offences: beasts wandering in the cornfields, wood-cutting without a permit, the burning-off of *macchia*; disputes over boundaries – the personal grievances of voluble peasants, faithfully taken down by a scribe or laboriously penned by a literate relative.

These were their daytime affairs. What did they do during the long winter evenings, up there on the hills swathed with mist? The governor with a two-year appointment in his gloomy fortress, the priest, the clerks, the scribes and possibly the garrison commander would probably be the only literate persons in the commune. Passing ships anchored far below off the Mola inlet, which was separated from the gates by two kilometres of breakneck mule-path; there were no casual travellers, except occasionally the monks from Montecristo and from San Felice in Vada, for whom, in 1235, the Abbot had reserved the right of parish hospitality when travelling to Sardinia. Since the days of the early Christian anchorites, of exiled or fleeing priests, of whom St Cerbone, the sixth-century Bishop of Populonia, is the most famous, medieval Elba knew no religious foundation of any note, possibly because of the proximity of the rich abbey of San Mamiliano on Montecristo on the one hand, and the Carthusians* of Gorgona on the other. At some time there were six or eight monks attached to the little church of San Mamiliano at Capoliveri, but the brothers fled to the mainland, if we are to believe Coresi del Bruno, after the Turkish incursion of 1543, returning only to collect the rents from the land they still retained. The civilizing monastic influence, therefore, was missing. The soldiers and villagers would, no doubt, gamble with dice, play rough fighting and wrestling games, make wooden pipes, the jesses for their falcons, baskets and hods for the

* They succeeded the Benedictines in 1374.

vineyards, nets and traps for fishing. Dance, sing, possibly tell endless stories? Certainly, as I have heard Angiolino and Demo Cavero tell them. Not inventions, not heroic sagas in which savants trace Greek and Roman myth, but stories of things that happened to themselves, their animals, their boats; happenings they find irresistibly comic, told with exact and often bawdy detail, over and over again.

These sixteenth-century men would have argued for hours over small points: the set of a sail, the result of a hunt, the age of a woman; would get heated over their renowned strong wine; court the girls, go to bed early; and the governor would write his interminable letters. They would all celebrate, often after dark, the religious feasts at the small scattered shrines, built perhaps on Roman sites. There was the little chapel of Santa Petronilla, near the road to Portoferraio, and of San Rocco over towards Longone. (The favourite shrine, the Madonna delle Grazie, looking over Star Bay, which the Capoliveresi built to house the Madonna's picture found floating in the sea, was not built until the sixteenth century.)

From the villa I often look across at Capoliveri's little pricking lights on the thick velvety night, wondering, for that matter, what they do now. When I stayed in the autumn above the piazza at Poggio, fifteen hundred feet up the flank of Monte Capanne, life seemed to have changed less than one would have supposed. After dark the village with its high horizon of sea was quiet: no wireless, no juke-box, few voices. An owl calling in the chestnut trees. On fine nights men sitting on the wall above the woods talking, light and voices coming from the little wine shop on the steps. Boys practising musical instruments and singing, few lights after nine o'clock. On the vigil of the Feast of the Virgin the Poggiese sang a rosary to the Virgin of Monte Nera. Signora Fernanda guided me through the dark, narrow streets. Now and again our lamp awoke a responsive glinting eye through a door-crack beneath the arch of house steps, a stamping and a snuffling or the sleepy chuckling of hens. The problem of keeping livestock in a walled village built on precipitous rock, constantly threatened by raiders, was solved centuries ago by taking the animals to live in the house, where they and their dung were at least as safe as their owners; the manure conveniently at hand for dispersal on scattered holdings. Since fertilizer was precious, human excrement, up till the end of

last century, was added to the store in the stable. Flies, fleas and lice were a bane second only to the corsairs.

Although it was a fine autumn night, all the house doors were shut, the streets quiet and empty. A few figures were walking in our direction; Signora Fernanda knew them all. We were making for Piazza Pesce where the little primitively-painted Madonna, set in her niche, looked over wide, worn steps flowing down between the houses. Men and women were standing behind the priest looking up at her, flower-decked, illumined by the light from two Chinese lanterns and two electric bulbs—the only anachronism in the medieval setting. *Ora pro nobis*, they begged the Mother of God, as their forbears had done for centuries on those same steps. They then sang hymns, beautifully in part, hymns with pleasantly colloquial tunes which, with other words, one could imagine sung to guitars on lay occasions. They gave the impression of being familiar with one another's voices.

As we returned, the village was quite silent. One could reconstruct the medieval pattern of life unhindered by wireless music tuned fortissimo.

Tied to the rhythm and moods of season and weather, the life of these small, hill-top agricultural communities must have changed little from generation to generation. Today the young people can read and write; many of the old peasants can do neither. After a static, pirate-free, two-hundred-year security, disturbed only by the lesser ripples of two world wars, the islanders are leaping out of the Middle Ages into the dazzling, almost miraculous age which can provide them with television, motor-scooters, calor gas, plastic pipes, and the metalled roads with which to make these boons accessible: roads to link them to the ports, the schools, the churches, to bring the golden hordes of tourists. There is no compromise, no transition. The Elba Franca knew as a child, swaying over the rocky roads to Sant' Ilario behind Angiolino and the toiling horse, corresponded to the Elba of the eighteenth-century government files which, in their turn, repeat the pattern of those sixteenth-century letters from Capoliveri. Perhaps the governors had a few more comforts, the few professional men more books, but the people's tradition remained basically the same, the price of beans still important.

There is an undercurrent of loneliness in the letters which went to the sixteenth-century Governor-General in Piombino, the small

personal confidences of a man without friends. Plautio Lupi, after reporting his difficulty in housing the growing number of law-breakers in a makeshift gaol—'an empty house in very poor condition'—confesses his second worry, that his black bitch is afraid of falcons. Imposed from without, the men who administered this rocky territory of hard-seasoned, independent peasants had no light task. The outlaw element—for the islands since Roman times have been connected with banishment—was difficult to assimilate into the community, and the convict labour-force to reconcile to the Elbans.

As early as 1335 the Capoliveresi protested to Pisa that as they worked out in their vineyards and '*Terra Capoliveri non est murata*', they could not protect their houses from the depredations of these men, nor prevent them from living in the commune, which was an offence in itself. But I found no evidence that the Pisan elders were co-operative, for the walls were being built only in Lupi's time when he sent Piombino 'all the expenses incurred in the building of the wall'. Coresi del Bruno says that they were built '*all uso antico* ... with big round towers and half towers, the which still stood until the year 1708, when they were demolished by the Spaniards'.

To envisage these men's sense of remoteness one must think of the contrast between the moody islands, storm-swept and steel-grey as often as gold and blue with sunlight, quite primitive and content to be so, and the civilization of Renaissance Italy—the sophistication of cities seething with new ideas; the tortuous activity of the political background, the constant stimuli to wit and rapier which was the breath of life to the urban Tuscan. The Tuscan townsman of those days did not appreciate the savagery of natural beauty.

* * *

Under the Pisan administration Elba and the continent seem to have been more homogeneous, or perhaps the contrast was less marked. Loss of the early communal records leaves one with a blank in Elban history, while the Roman temples, baths and villas round the bay of Portoferraio were gradually silted over. Then in 1152 the Pisan archives record the election of seven Elban consuls, but it is not clear by whom; the powers of these local magistrates were restricted. In the thirteenth century Capoliveri, Rio and Portoferraio each had two consuls, two councillors, a mayor and

two chamberlains; Marciana had three consuls and, with Rio, an extra chamberlain. At the beginning of the fourteenth century they were replaced by a new hierarchy, the *Capitanus Capitania Capoliveri*, governing with the communal elders. Then the administration was shared by the Captain of Grassula or Grassera in the iron-mining district of Rio, who had the same authority. From then on, Capoliveri gradually lost importance to Rio, and the Captain of Grassera was given the office of Doganiere della Vena di Ferro, charged with the whole responsibility for the iron-mining, of the greatest importance to Pisa. From 1308 he lived in Grassula, kept entry and exit returns for the iron mines, and appears to have been elected by secret ballot yearly, most probably in Pisa. Every August this officer was responsible for checking the island's grain supply. He seems to have been the most powerful man in Elba. It is not altogether surprising that the Pisan Republic, as it developed its efficient principles of democratic rule, felt that a check should be put on the Doganiere, that his doings should be watched by a Modulator. So, in the fourteenth century, Capoliveri comes back into the pattern of rule with a Vicario with plenary powers, whose function it was to keep an eye on the Doganiere. But apparently he also was watched, for in 1330 Pisa made certain provisions for the preservation of 'the wood' at Capoliveri, and sent over two Barigelli or sheriffs, to see that they were enforced. This so incensed the Vicario that he took proceedings against them and brought the case before the judge of the Maremma. It is from this period, according to Professor Sabbadini, that the saying *Capoliveri, caput mundi* dates. I often wonder whether it sprang from the arrogance of the Capoliveresi whose commune the old writers called *Caput Liberi*, and the old maps *Caput Liberum*, the Roman settlement of freed men, or from the ironic tongues of Tuscan townsmen.

But this solution of quis custodiet ipsos custodes could not take the importance away from Grassula and Rio. In any case it remains doubtful how efficacious the Vicario's surveillance could be fifteen steep and slippery kilometres away across the hills. And, in the Middle Ages, it was through Rio that Elban life and Elban contacts with the mainland flowed.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

The Pisan orders to Capoliveri are contained in Provv. d. Anziani, A.159, in the Pisa Archives.

Pintor, op. cit., quotes the text of the prohibition to jettison ballast.

The description of the French boom at Longone is given in an anonymous contemporary diary, a transcript of which is in the Foresiana library in Portoferraio.

The Grand Duke Leopold's plans for the Gorgona fisheries are to be found in Sandro Foresi's *Pesce, Pesca, e Pescatori del Mare dell'Elba.*

All the sixteenth-century material relating to Capoliveri is taken from the MSS contained in Piombino, 652 (*Arch. d. Stato*, Florence).

For the Castellans' duel see Strozziane, F.87a.47 (*Arch. d. Stato*, Florence).

Pintor, op. cit., gives a good account of the early administration of Rio and Capoliveri, and I have used it freely as a guide to other MSS and printed sources.

For the affairs of the Doganiere see Ranieri Sardo, op. cit., and Bonaini's *Baldiccione Miladossi's memoirs.* Miladossi was Doganiere in 1351.

The Mediterranean winds are: north: tramontana; north-east: grecale; east: levante; south-east: scirocco; south: mezzogiorno; south-west: libeccio; west: ponente; north-west: maestrale.

IV

RIO

IT WAS her iron and her harbours which, from the start, involved Elba in wars and power-politics: 'Ilva, armed with her native metal wherewith she nourishes wars.'* It was not, however, the Elbans who were bellicose, but the overlords who exploited their island's ore. Certainly Elba always provided her quota of fighting men. Virgil says that three hundred Elbans sailed with Evander's Tuscans against Turnus, King of the Rutuli, but it was the 'unexhausted mines of iron'† which singled out the island for the envy and attention of expanding and adventurous peoples.

Out of the slow colonization of Umbria by immigrants from the Danubian plain, the Etruscans, whose graves lie scattered over Tuscany, settled and prospered on the coast. By the seventh century B.C., virile and able traders, they had established themselves from the Alps to Campania: Volterra, Terracina, Capua, Tarquinia, Cervetri, Herculaneum, Pompeii were all their flourishing trading centres, linked by serviceable roads. And, like the Villanova people, they worked iron wherever they found it—mostly in small deposits—so that when they discovered the richness of Elban ore they set themselves vigorously to exploit it. They felled the great woods wholesale to smelt it—a wasteful process for both fuel and metal. Their slag-heaps were worked over by medieval smelters and from these the experts estimated that they extracted only ten per cent of the metal, but at Naregno and the lovely bay of L'Acona (or Lacona as it is now written) untouched remains of them reveal that their methods extracted about half the iron from the ore. The Etruscans worked so industriously

* Silius Italicus, description of the gathering of the Italian contingents against Hannibal.

† Virgil, *Aeneid*, x, 172.

that the Greeks recognized the island by the glow of its little charcoal furnaces. The Sicilian Diodorus wrote:

> Near the city of Etruria called Populonia is an island called Aethalia ... which has taken its name from the abundance of fires burning there. It possesses, indeed, an abundance of ore which is broken up for the melting and making of iron ... They who do this working of the iron ore, break it up and cook the pieces ... in specially constructed ovens ... This [iron] is exchanged with the merchants of Dicearchia [Pozzuoli] and other markets ... The cargoes are bought by those who employ many smiths.

At that time it appears that Portoferraio was the chief port. First Fabricia, it became Ferraia.

Working on this scale, the Etruscans soon burned the Elban woods; their cargoes were preyed upon by Corsican and Focese pirates, and their power to defend their trade was diminished by Carthaginians and Syracusians; shrewdly they transferred their smelting to Populonia on the mainland, where the immense forests of the Campigliese hills fed the voracious ovens. Strabo, with his passion for collecting first-hand information for his great geography, describes how at Populonia he saw: 'those who work the iron arriving from Aethalia, because this iron cannot be worked if it is not brought to Populonia.'

The sum total of the writings of the period gives one a picture of immense activity and prosperity. Elba and, to a much lesser degree, Giglio must have shared this *vie mouvementée*. With the decline of the Etruscans, life seemed to have ebbed from the islands, although mining must have continued on a diminished scale. But Etruscologists can tell us little of it.

* * *

Faced with a strange, dead people, a past culture new to me, I need a magic evocation to rouse my interest. Always I have been led to appreciation by a Dantesque guide, under whose tutelage my horizons expand to comprehend the new territory he has made his own. Etruria began for me not in innumerable Etruscan museums, but in the Florentine palace near Piazza Santo Spirito where my mentor, Doctor Aldo Olschki, lives with his family, his cats and his publishing house. There he conjured up for me, among his

beautiful books and the Siamese cats, those mysterious, lusty people, till I, too, wanted to know more about them ' ... and Elba was one of the most important centres ... and nothing has been done, the archaeologists have neglected Elba for the Tyrrhenian coast.' He was as forceful as anyone so quiet and harmonious could be. 'Italy says she is poor, but too often money is wasted on games and entertainment when it should be spent on culture.' Yes, Dr Olschki has espoused the Etruscan cause warmly, wholeheartedly and, defining my terms, I should call his work for it also his entertainment. He and Dr Bitossi have enlisted the support of Etruscologists in founding an Elban Society for Archaeological Research, and in his envoi for it he writes: 'Every cultural interest in the island has been confined to the figure of Napoleon and his brief kingdom.' 'How I agree,' I said. 'In my book I am going to avoid adding to the literature about Napoleon in Elba.' Yet we met, he and I, as guests at the Congress of Napoleonic studies, this year in Portoferraio. Napoleon is not to be ignored. Over our cups of China tea in the oasis of quiet at number 14 Via delle Caldaie, while the cats wove round his objets de vertu, he told me about the submarine discoveries of ancient ships made by his son, a passionate under-water fisherman, to whom I shall return later. 'When they have the funds to raise them, who knows what they may tell us, but it is all very costly.' He sighed for the dead and withholding Etruscans. But if some Etruscan Rosetta Stone revealed all their secrets, would Dr Olschki be happy?

* * *

Scipio's troops were armed with Elban iron, but at least one historian offers the suggestion that, with the vast resources of the Roman Empire, the iron of the Tuscan archipelago lost its importance. In the days of the Pisan domination, which reached its zenith during the eleventh century, Elban iron was an important source of revenue which was used to liquidate the public debt.

The early miners were chiefly the local smallholders and artisans. Anyone could stake a claim, if by doing so it did not interfere with a prior holding. The claim was made by signing the land claimed with a cross. Any disputes went before an official arbiter. If the claim was not worked after three months and a day, the right lapsed. Widows could have their claims worked for them. The ore

was taken down to the shore and bought by the State or whatever company was exploiting the iron on lease from the rulers of Elba. The ore was dispatched to Corsica or to the mainland.

Pisa sent trade delegations to sell the iron to Genoa and the towns of the Italian mainland, and also farther afield. For instance, we know that the iron was sent to Sicily to be specially processed by the orders of the brief king, Corradino, and that in 1268 he gave the Pisans certain privileges and favoured treatment, to which they were already accustomed in other Mediterranean ports. Then, too, we know that Elban iron reached Pisa's arch-enemy, the Saracens, probably through Sardinia. But the trade cannot have been so clandestine, for papal disapproval was framed in what must surely be one of the first impositions of sanctions in history: *De non portando ferrum et alia vetita ad partes Saracenorum.*

I often wonder whether the ban was observed. But there was never any lack of customers, so that, after the fourteenth-century decimation of the Riese population by plague and corsairs, new inducements had to be found to attract miners.

* * *

The territory of Rio and Grassera (or Grassula) has always been the centre of the iron industry. Following the Mediterranean pattern, the miniature town of Rio is set seven hundred feet up among the hills and three kilometres inland from its port, Rio Marina. The great plague of 1348 killed one-third of the twelve hundred inhabitants of Rio, and today the port, in its haze of red dust and with its iron jetty stalking out into the sea, is larger and more lively than its grey, centuries-scarred parent, recoiled against Monte Capanello.

To me the Grassera region is bleak, a little forbidding. It may be because I know its history. Robert of Sicily burnt most of it in 1319; it was razed to the ground by Barbarossa in 1533, and finally abandoned after the Turkish attack of 1553. Lidia tells me, however, that the ruined church of Santa Caterina was traditionally the focal point of the Easter trysting. There, under the old walls of the church, when she was a girl, the Riese boys gave the girls the *cirimito*—'a sort of bread spiral with a hen and an egg'—and the girls gave their sweethearts 'little bread ships in baskets of bread'. There was also a mock battle between the lads of the Rio Marina and Rio in Elba for possession of the church.

But Lidia was never there to get a *cirimito*. Her father kept her practically a prisoner.

Lidia's grandfathers were miners, or I should say mined ore. The distinction, like that in fishing, is important. Family tradition gave them Spanish origin, but how far back, Lidia does not know. Rio, however, is the setting given to family tales and legends, and her father was prosperous and owned a white house among good vineyards above the high road from Longone to Rio in Elba—'a palazzo', Lidia called it, using the island peasants' name for a two-storeyed house. 'But even then he was mad.'

I was sitting waiting for supper with her menfolk in the farm kitchen. Lidia put a dish of fledgeling sparrows fried whole on the table beside the pasta. 'Why mad?' I asked, carefully not looking at the bulbous, hooded eyes, the big open beaks. 'Mad about work.' She sat down and ladled out the spaghetti. 'He made my mother and me work like slaves. Drove us out into the vineyards and watched us all the time. "Work, curse you, work," he would shout at us.'

'But you went to school?' For Lidia writes a very fair letter in a good hand and keeps all the *mezzadria* accounts.

It appeared that the child Lidia had walked down the three-kilometre mule-track to Rio Marina and up again to acquire her education. But when she was ten years old her father discharged the peasant he had to help him work the land, declaring that his daughter would henceforth serve as well.

'Then began my life of slavery. I worked till I was so tired I did not know what I was doing, and never a word from my father but curses and complaints. He wouldn't allow me any friends. I couldn't talk to anybody unless they came to the path by our fields. And all the time he was getting richer. Then he started a wine shop and put me, a child still, in charge of it. I was to sell ironmongery, too. We none of us knew anything about ironmongery. He wasted thousands of lire stocking the shop. It was a failure, and he blamed me. I liked the shop: I talked to people and got away from the labouring. But back I had to go. It was worse than ever. Mother and I talked of escaping. But we knew we never should.'

Then Angiolino appeared. He must have had an impudent, blue-eyed charm in those days. He lived with his parents and was looking for a wife to share his work in the Villa Teghini vineyards. One feast-day, he looked up from the Rio road and saw the

handsome fair girl working with the skill and strength of a man. He paused to watch.

'What did he say to you, Lidia?'

'Oh, the usual silly things they say. I've forgotten.'

She would not be drawn on the courtship, but I could imagine him standing below the vines making his obvious jokes and eyeing that sturdy body set squarely on pillar-like legs, those competent, muscular arms, getting as good as he gave in island repartee, and thinking, 'A strong girl, with plenty of character.' I daresay he was romantic, too. But peasants cannot afford romanticism unsupported by practical assets in their courtship.

Angiolino was warned of the paternal tyranny.

'So I went home,' said Angiolino, 'and we wrote a very gentlemanly letter to her father, asking his permission to court his daughter. Very gentlemanly. The old devil!'

He put another fried sparrow into his mouth and crunched it like an ogre crunching his father-in-law's bones.

Angiolino took great pains never to cross his prospective father-in-law, who insisted on being present whenever Angiolino called, and harangued the young man while Lidia and her mother sat making her trousseau.

'What's that?' her father would shout, seizing a cloth or a garment. 'Are we made of gold?' and Lidia's mother would rebuke him. Then suddenly he took against Angiolino, forbade him the house.

'And I sitting there listening to him, behaving like a gentleman.' Angiolino hooked out some unassimilable bones with his forefinger.

'But why?'

'He just said he wouldn't have Angiolino on the place, that's all. He went to bed every time Angiolino came.'

'Didn't he want you to marry?' The question sounded redundant when I heard myself ask it. 'No, obviously he didn't. You saved him a hired man.'

'I did. He stole my trousseau. Went to the town and tried to sell it. But the women all knew me and he came back furious because they wouldn't buy. He locked it in a cupboard, but I picked the lock with my scissors one night and hid the box in a friend's house.'

Her father redoubled his tyranny, telling them they must earn more or starve. They did not believe him, but with harebrain

enterprises he had indeed ruined them. Not all the work to which he had driven them, not all the money they had earned, had availed. His wild schemes, carried out with the high hand of a tyrant, had left him penniless. Lidia had no sympathy to give her father: he had long since killed it. She escaped with Angiolino in spite of him. But her mother she pitied, in the respectful way one pities someone admired. She had lost the fine two-storeyed house on the hillside and its life-blood, purple and strong: the good grapes that made the Aleatico wine which the innkeepers came to fetch in demijohns as stout and solidly balanced as herself. But at least her husband could still keep her, earning their bread with the well-digging skill for which he was renowned throughout Elba. Rude, arrogant, dictatorial though he was, the Elbans put up with him for the sake of the sweet, abundant water he conjured out of the rocky land. He shared the immense importance of water, and it fed his vanity. Like a Moses he challenged the rock, and rode his ass superbly like a conqueror. Then, one day, he missed his footing and fell to the bottom of a well he was lining. He broke his thigh. He could not work any more. He became a little confused in the head. 'Mad,' says Lidia baldly. He and his wife live on the old-age pension of five thousand lire a month in a one-roomed cabin in a cornfield, high up on the opposite slope.

Lidia's mother—she died last year, since I wrote this about her—used to bring her vast bulk to help wash the household linen. She had great dignity, and manners without trace of apology for the poverty of her style. She paid one the great compliment of treating one simply as a fellow human being—an inheritor with her of the world's tragedies and treasures. She, like Lidia, immediately called forth respect. But not from the old madman.

'Hey, you, bring wine and a chair,' he called, when, visiting them, I found him reclining on a string bed under his vine trellis. He swung his lame leg. A cloud of hen-feathers eddied up to the green grapes above him; swarms of flies rose from the hen-droppings and settled again. 'See what a fine view I have,' and his blue, sharp eyes swept in a proprietorial way out over the corn to Barbarossa's bay and the sharp cliffs beyond, cut into by the solid blue sea, bright and even-coloured as a tiled floor; the bastion, matted with the big pineta; the misty coast-line of Tuscany.

He clapped his hands like an emperor. 'Wine,' he called.

His wife came slowly out of the earth-floored cabin. She took no

notice of him: the chair looked like matchwood in her huge fist. She put it down with incredible grace. Her dignity rose from the hen-pluckings, the garbage, the flies, like a Greek pillar from a ruin.

'What is a woman like you doing here?' he asked.

'Seeing the world.'

'How can you travel without a man?'

'Widows have to look after themselves.'

'Women are incapable—though you seem to have got here all right.'

I nearly said: Where would you have been without your women? But the grandeur of his impenitence provoked my unwilling admiration, and I could not take advantage of the wicked old man in his misfortune.

'Grandfather's as mad as a coot,' said Nino.

'I bear him no grudge,' and Lidia meant it.

'He has, at least, kept his independent spirit,' I said, 'and I admire him for it.'

'We're independent people.' Lidia was stating a fact, not vaunting.

The Riese, throughout their history, have always been as independent as the Capoliverese but with dignity rather than truculence. In their dealings with authority one finds them, like the Spaniards, always setting great store by their Statute Book, demanding respect for the rights and liberties inscribed therein. The Riese do not trouble to impress: it is the stranger whose behaviour must satisfy by Riese standards. Not for nothing have their forbears acknowledged two hundred years of Spanish overlordship, and a mixture of the proudest blood in Europe.

* * *

Approaching Rio from the Piombino strait, one sees that the first confronting cliffs are still padded with green *macchia*, scarred only by the cicatrice of the Cavo road. Then, suddenly, the rock bastions, surrounded by a blood-red nimbus, are torn open and flayed, their raw flanks running with red refuse to stain the sea. On either side of the port stand the old round tower on the shore and the square fort on the hill—the fortress of Giove or Giogo, which Jacobo d'Appiano built—reminders of how pathetically defenceless the small island communities were. A garrison might hold the enemy off, even repulse him, but there was no room inside the

defences for all the miners, the peasants and their beasts. Facing the mainland, Rio was open to attack by passing corsairs, Turks, pirates and any freebooters out for slaves and loot.

By the end of the fourteenth century the Elbans had developed a coastguard signalling system, which evolved from the 'watches' paid by the Pisan treasury as early as 1324, and a special twelve-oar patrol-boat 'to protect the iron vein'. The Rio garrison in 1380 is given as forty-two gunners and eighteen soldiers. It was little more when the notorious Turkish captain Dragut, an ex-pirate, attacked in 1553.

'And then on the 10th the enemy landed a cannon at Giogo, an old fortress of Elba,' wrote Lucantonio Cuppano, at this time Cosimo's military governor at Piombino, 'and fought, and the castellan mistrusted Dragut's promise of a safe-conduct to all inside.' The promise was not maintained, as we shall see.*

It had always been the same. The wretched Riese could at best barricade themselves inside the church (for the forts could not hold them all), or flee across the hills to Volterraio, where again floor-space was limited, and, if their defence held, watch the raiders embark with their livestock and poor stores of grain, and thank God they had escaped slavery. Two years later Cosimo de' Medici answered a plea for help from the Appiano Signor of Piombino by resolving 'to fortify the church, and the tower on the beach, and the fortress of Giogo, that in the event of an attack by enemy ships they [the inhabitants] have somewhere to take refuge.' He also wrote to the commander of Portoferraio telling him to send a castellan to Giove 'so that they [the Riese] can at least put their chattels and womenfolk in there'. This seems to indicate that Jacobo, away in Genoa, had done little about protecting his mine or his miners.

Rio had a bad name for peril on the mainland. Miners and smiths were replaced with difficulty. Enjoying the protection of Pisa's great walls, they had to be well tempted with both material and spiritual bait before they would exchange it for the hazards of Elba. Medieval iron-workers, before leaving the city, paid twenty soldi to the Opera del Duomo (for the fabric and adornment of the cathedral), and heard themselves recommended by name to the care of the Almighty. Furthermore, the Archbishop, Daiberto, threatened to excommunicate anyone 'molesting or impeding them in their work'. They were apparently well paid, but there is one

* cf. p. 81.

account of a miners' strike in the thirteenth century which, with little alteration, could be used in a newspaper column today. There was not, as one might expect, summary imprisonment or punishment—eyes put out or hands cut off—but polite negotiation between the elders of Pisa and eight 'of the best miners' summoned from Rio for discussions. They got their rise in pay.

Rio first figures as a commune in a Pisan document of 1361; before that it was included with Grassera. After the Genoese had defeated the Pisan fleet in 1284, the great Republic declined in the hands of various despotic feudal lords, owing shadowy allegiance to the Emperor, and henceforward there is, I fear, no hope of avoiding the unfortunate Appiano family. They dog me in all their complexity from 1392, when the lawyer, Jacobo, made himself Lord of Pisa and of Elba, until 1628, when the female heiress to the Duchy of Piombino, in a complicated line of succession, was deposed by her Spanish overlord. I find them, with one exception, irritatingly ineffectual and devoid of charm; nevertheless, they tenaciously held on to both Elba and their muniments, and I include them in the pity that I feel for any small state forced to play pawn in the great powers' political game. I am certainly grateful for the care with which they kept their archives in the little grey and white communal palazzo by the sea at Piombino—or were they kept in the castle behind? In any case, they have survived. Italian expressions of esteem and Spanish professions of faith have swollen them, already voluminous in subject, to phenomenal proportions.

In 1399, Gherardo d'Appiano sold Pisa to Galeazzo Visconti for 200,000 gold florins, kept Piombino and three other mainland towns and the islands of Elba, Pianosa and Montecristo, and welded the whole malarial, corsair-ridden, ill-defended territory into the state of Piombino. But the Appiani soon discovered that, detached from the powerful protection of Pisa, the state they had created was extremely vulnerable. It was also strategically valuable, so that unscrupulous men were constantly trying to take it away from them. In 1402 Gherardo asked Paolo Guinigi, Lord of Lucca (husband of the famous beauty Illaria del Caretto), with whom he was on friendly terms, to send him fifty men to help defend Piombino against the Genoese, and the following year Guinigi used his good offices to persuade the Genoese to sign a peace treaty with Piombino and relinquish Capoliveri, which they

had taken. It cost Gherardo's widow a good sum in gold and the concession of the Rio iron. The Appiani did nothing to exploit and expand the iron industry, although the demand was increasing. Gherardo had two good harbours and the price of Pisa with which to develop them, but he did nothing. His son Jacobo II died a minor, and Jacobo III squandered the rest of the money on a disastrous war with the Florentines. He, however, was more energetic and capable than most of his family and he left his son, Jacobo IV, with a comfortably replenished treasury. It was in his time, in about 1478, that, with the collaboration of the Genoese, there came into being the Magona,* the iron industry which Cosimo de' Medici was to develop. The Medici already had their eye on the Elban iron, for in 1484 Lorenzo de' Medici tried unsuccessfully to buy the whole Magona.

It was perhaps fortunate for the Appiani that it was not in the interests of neighbouring states to allow Piombino and its islands to be occupied by the Saracens, but political expediency was such that the predatory moves of powerful families were watched with cold-blooded cynicism and only thwarted by the men aspiring to equal or greater place in the Hispanic or French hegemonies. So we find on June 1st, 1501, Cesare Borgia, that violent and predatory son of Pope Alexander VI, deciding to take Piombino. He is there, camped under the dilapidated earth walls enclosing a perplexed people bereft of their Lord, who spent a great deal of time in Genoa. The possession of Piombino and Elba would strengthen the Papal hand considerably when it came to dealing with France and Spain. But France thought so too, and a French expedition from Naples forced Cesare to withdraw. Jacobo remained in Genoa, leaving his kinsman, another Gherardo d'Appiano, as viceroy. But relief from anxiety was short-lived, for a few weeks later the Appiani's subjects heard the text of a letter from the Pope addressed to them. 'We understand,' wrote their Holy Father, 'that the Lord of Piombino has gone to Genoa with the intention of selling you, and we wish to write of this for your good and well-being, exhorting you to give yourselves up to our beloved son, the Duke of Valenza [Valencia], nor wait till the said sale has taken effect, nor wait till our people, sent by land and sea, have done more damage.' He promised to respect the Piombinese laws and to treat well those who capitulated ... There was not much for the

* From the Arabic.

Piombinese to do. It was the first they had heard of the peril they ran of being sold, but they had been taught to respect the Pope's word. In September Gherardo asked Pandolfo Petrucci, Lord of Siena, to mediate. Piombino capitulated, the proud men of Rio were forced to follow suit. Four of them came to Piombino, nominated mayors and procurators of Rio and the territory of Grassera respectively. They came not as subjects, but as equals, to treat with Don Michele Corella, the Borgia's lord lieutenant.

They solemnly undertook to observe the new statutes, but only if the Duke did likewise. The main clauses were: that the men of Rio and Grassera would be obliged to mine ore, in any quantities the Duke might need, on terms fixed by mutual agreement; that any Elban (and presumably Piombinese) be allowed to mine ore, but no foreigners; that the officials be elected for one year; that they should be immune from all local excise duties. They were to enjoy all their old (very considerable) privileges as set down in their famous Statute Book, only they must bind themselves to producing the Duke's quota.

There is no record of Elban resistance to Borgia rule as there is later to another usurper of the Appiano principality. It did not last long, however, for Pope Julius II, a Farnese, succeeded Alexander VI and made Valencia's position in Italy untenable. So in 1504 Jacobo IV was restored, and for the time being there was internal peace on Piombino's borders and in her islands.

The fifth Jacobo ruled in his small capital by the sea confirmed by the Emperor, friendly with Genoa (which Leo X had given by secret treaty to Spain), Naples, and the Pope, and paying allegiance to his Spanish overlord, the Emperor Charles V. He was, too, on good terms with Florence, where, after the assassination of the Medici duke, Alexander, his wife's young nephew, Cosimo de' Medici, was rebuilding the tarnished fortunes and reputation of his family and, had he but known it, already eyeing Elba and cleverly criticizing the Appiano administration in his letters to the Spanish court. The state of Europe favoured Cosimo's plans.

Throughout the Middle Ages the Italians—the quiet people who tilled and reaped, the small merchants, the fishermen and craftsmen—never knew when bands of levies or mercenaries from a rival state or feudal lord would not appear to sack, burn and withdraw, or sweep on leaving devastation behind them. It was an endemic evil to which their forefathers had been bred. But when,

in 1494, the great powers had begun to fight for the control of the Italian states and cities, and trained French troops marched into northern Italy, it meant full-scale war and invasion, and their tragic involvement in the cynical match of European power-politics. Francis I carried on the challenge to Spanish power. Milan was taken and retaken. Francis was taken to Spain a prisoner, the Guelphs and Ghibellines added to the local factions. The fighting eventually reduced itself to the bitter rivalry between Francis I (who later broke the terms of his release, as he broke all treaties when it suited him)* and the Emperor Charles V, and their successors, Henry II and Philip II. It was made morally confusing for the people of both sides when, with the Turkish threat growing more menacing daily, Charles (who had had himself crowned by the Pope and bore the title Holy Roman Emperor) allowed his troops to sack Rome and its churches, while Francis, called 'His Most Christian Majesty' of France, allied himself to the Turkish infidels.

By the middle of the fifteenth century, however, Spain was virtually master of Italy, nominally recognizing the independence of Lucca, Genoa and Venice, and recognizing the duchies of Tuscany, Modena, Ferrara, Parma and Piacenza and the principality of Piombino. Piedmont and Nice were given to Savoy. The Popes throughout had supported the side most likely to advance their families and their temporal power, so that at one moment a Papal port would revictual the ships of the French and Turkish allies, and the next the Pope would preach a Holy War against the infidels.

Franco-Hispanic rivalry was to flare up again in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and provoke wars in which Elba was to participate actively; but the island's allegiance from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries was divided between Piombino and Tuscany, so that I can leave the mainland with its kaleidoscopic confusion, its faithless behaviour, and return to the Appiani and Cosimo de' Medici in Elba.

* Charles euphemistically said Francis had not behaved like a gentleman, and challenged him—fruitlessly—to single combat.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

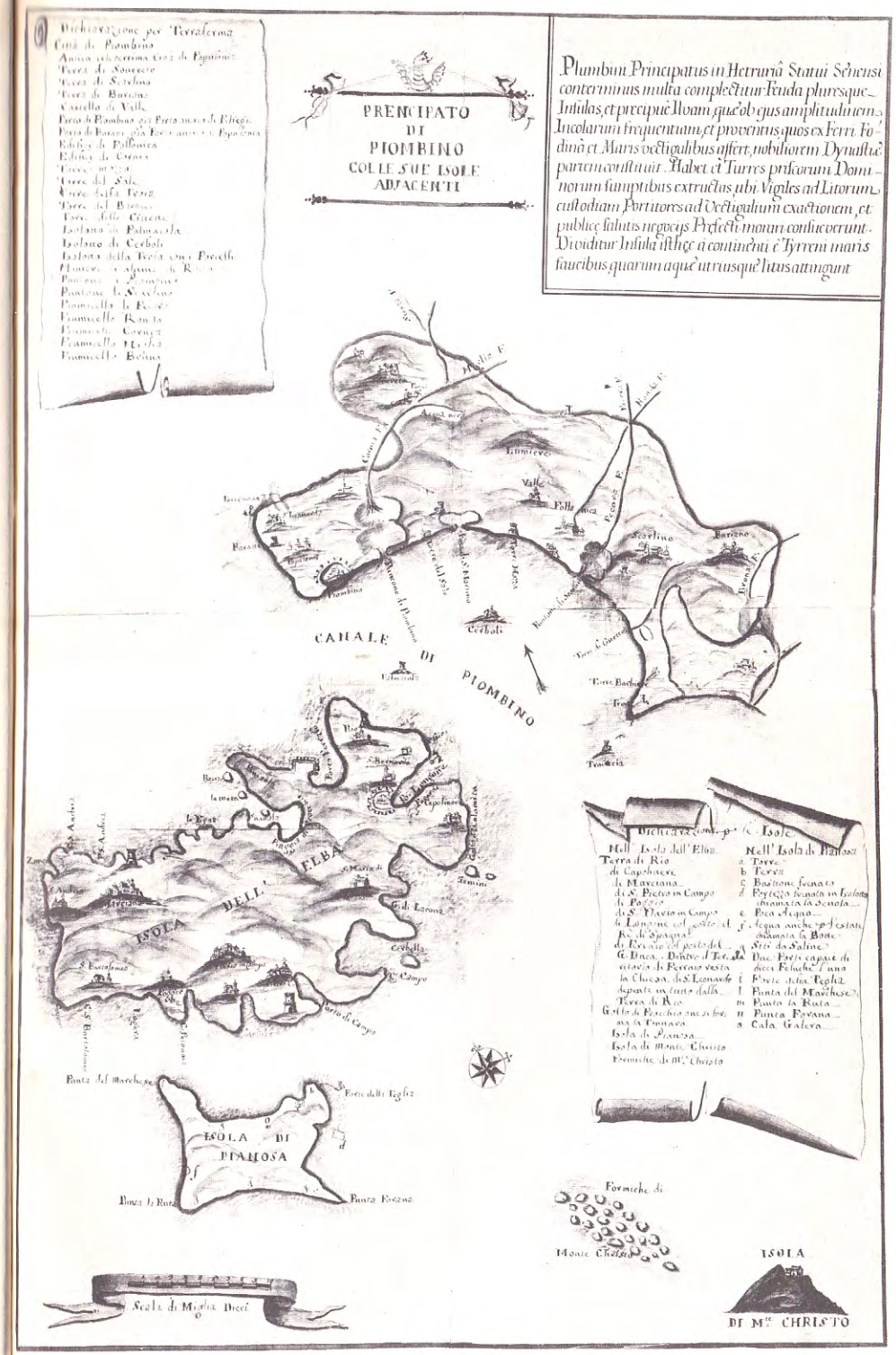
The classical references to Elba are: Silius Italicus, *Punic War*, viii, 613ff.; Virgil, *Aeneid*, x; Diodorus Siculus, *Bibl. Hist.*, v, 13; and Strabo, *Geography*, Bk. i, ch. 2.

Virgil and Varrus also write of the transfer of the smelting to the mainland.

The details of medieval iron-working in Rio are to be found in various places in Provv. d. Anziani (Pisa Archives); in Pintor, op. cit.; and Roncioni, op. cit.

For the Borgia attack on Piombino I have used the MSS Misc. Medicea, vol. 920; for the attacks on Rio and Grassera: Misc. Med., vol. 36c, 144; Cuppano: Carte Strozziane, Serie I, LXXII, n.80; Cosimo de' Medici's letters to Pandolfini, 1553, loc. cit., Serie I, 1110, n.75 (*Arch. d. Stato*, Florence).

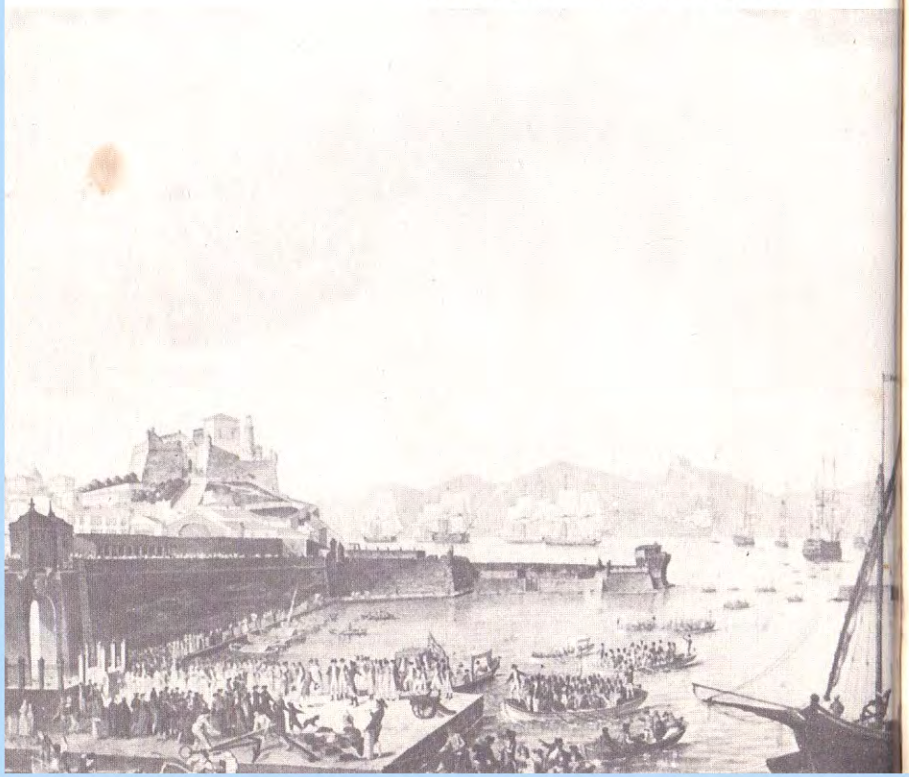
Various dates are given by several different authors for the final destruction of Grassera which, in some confusion, they attribute to Barbarossa II (who died in 1546). I have accepted the date given by Cosimo I de' Medici himself, in a letter in the Misc. Med., XXXVI, 144, to the commandant of Portoferraio in 1555 in which, referring to the Cuppano's report of 1553, he says: 'The Lord of Piombino having had the towns of Rio and Grassula burned and ruined by the French armies ... has resolved to fortify the Church, the tower on the beach and the fortress ...' and tells him to send over a castellan to Giogo.



Piombino and Elba

oferraio in 1744

The English landing in Portoferraio, 1796



V

COSIMO DE' MEDICI AND PORTOFERRAIO

AFTER the assassination of the tyrannical Alessandro de' Medici in 1537, Cosimo de' Medici, son of Giovanni delle Bande Nere, claimed the right to govern in Florence as sole representative of the younger branch of the family. He was seventeen years old. The Signoria having been abolished by Alessandro, the city was without a governing body, and there were no Medici left. Pope Clement VII, Cosimo's cousin, was dead; Ippolito, the rightful heir, had been poisoned by Alessandro; Lorenzino, his legal successor, had killed Alessandro and fled. The old city Council of Forty-eight had been convened, but had settled nothing. The elder statesmen of the city therefore decided to accept this round-faced, modest youth who had left his poverty-stricken widowed mother and ridden down from the hills with a couple of retainers, because he gave them most flatteringly to understand that he would rule through them as titular ruler only. In this he confirmed their own individual opinions that they were most capable of doing so: they probably also recognized the fact that a figure-head is valuable when personal ambitions are at variance.

Cosimo claimed his right by virtue of his grandmother's descent from Lorenzo the Magnificent. He seemed to the seasoned councillors to be unassuming, 'concealing his ambition under so humble and submissive a demeanour as to provoke the contempt of his friends'.

But the councillors were much mistaken. Once in authority, this extraordinary youth proved to be an extremely able autocrat, determined to raise Tuscany's status among the great powers, and his family with it. He was completely ruthless in carrying out this policy. He eliminated all opposition from within by putting to death

all the young Florentine noblemen involved in the revolt led by Piero Strozzi. He consolidated his position in Europe by repudiating the Medici's traditional allegiance to France, declaring himself a vassal of the Emperor Charles V of Spain, and by marrying Eleanor, the immensely wealthy daughter of Don Pedro of Toledo, Spanish Viceroy of Naples. He saw that Charles V was the most powerful man in Europe, therefore to him he turned in the guise of a faithful vassal. He had made an attempt to marry Alessandro's widow, the bastard daughter of Charles. But Charles refused, and pointed the rebuff by insisting that Cosimo hand over a valuable portion of Medici territory to her. Nevertheless, he extracted from Charles a diploma conferring on him 'all the authority formerly exercised by the Duke Alessandro', and no one that mattered to him objected when he began signing his letters *Dux*.

Certainly, for one of a ruined and unpopular family, political status was not so difficult to achieve as personal aggrandizement. But Cosimo bided his time and concentrated all his considerable energy and ability, and his wife's fortune, on territorial enlargement and vast plans for improving Florence and Pisa. To enlarge his influence he found it easier to occupy fortresses and towns in the name of the Emperor Charles in order 'to protect them from their enemies', and then to forget to withdraw. It worked well and redounded to his credit with the Spanish. He also began lending the Spaniards his wife's money.

To secure Piombino and Elba he repeated these tactics. He intended to hold a longer coast-line, and to fortify Elba and exploit the iron. It was merely unfortunate that they belonged to his law-abiding uncle by marriage, Jacobo d'Appiano V. Cosimo never beat down a door: he waited until it was ajar. But neither Charles nor his father-in-law showed themselves receptive to his hints and suggestions.

He set to work on the Emperor Charles in 1543, but there are letters in the Medicean archives from architects and other experts regarding the fortification of Elba dating back to 1541, and various letters from Cosimo, showing that he had been studying the lie of the land at Portoferraio, judging it to be a potentially important base.

He complained to the Spaniards that Tuscany was menaced by the Turks because of the inefficient coastal defences of Piombino.

He did not exaggerate. Charles had lost heavily in money and ships in his ill-judged expedition against Algiers, and the Turks, wintering in Toulon harbour, were an imminent threat to the heart of the Spanish empire. While Charles had been preparing to attack Algiers, Francis I, having made a ten-year truce with him, was secretly urging Barbarossa to attack Genoa with his support, and sent an envoy to the Porte with secret instructions to propose to the Sultan that in the interests of general peace the Grand Turk should contribute a million crowns to Francis, 'which would not be too much for him', and 'instruct Barbarossa to harry Sicily and Sardinia'. If the Sultan refused the money, he must be urged to make war on Charles by land and sea while Francis was recovering his 'usurped' possessions, for so he termed Savoy, Milan and the Low Countries. But Francis, the notorious treaty-breaker, did not inspire the Sultan with any confidence, and all he achieved was a trade agreement. The Turks made such good use of Toulon harbour that the town became known as the Second Constantinople, and Turkish purses were filled in a brisk slave-market supplied chiefly by kidnapped Niçois. In these circumstances, with the Turks at both ends of the Mediterranean, Cosimo was perfectly right to urge the fortification of Elba. He offered to build and man a fortress to guard a magnificent harbour there.

Cosimo's letters to his father-in-law at this time are obviously meant for his master's eye. But Don Pedro's letters in the Spanish State Papers are curiously devoid of reference to Cosimo de' Medici's propositions and warnings. I wonder whether this was a scrupulous avoidance of any shadow of nepotism, or whether the Viceroy regarded his son-in-law's affairs as parochial and capable of solution by himself, rather than by Charles who had the weight of a vast empire to carry. But reading Cosimo's letters in the light shed on Charles V by his biographers, it seems he was playing intuitively on the dominant passion and preoccupation of the Emperor's life: to defeat the Turks and occupy Constantinople, and to find the money to enable him to do so. Cosimo showed a proper zeal to liberate Christendom from the Infidel, but his support for his overlord coincided closely with his own interest.

In 1543 Cosimo's opportunity came. Don Pedro sent him word that Barbarossa II was approaching the Italian coast with a Turkish war fleet.

His uncle, Jacobo, knowing that he could not hold out for even a few days in his earth-walled capital, hastily borrowed three thousand ducats from Cosimo, then, in the urgency of the moment, begged his nephew to undertake the whole defence of the State. Moreover, he gave Cosimo the monopoly of the Rio iron, for which he received 10,800 scudi, less the borrowed ducats.

The description of the subsequent happenings sent by Cosimo to his father-in-law glints with the shafts which he launched at Jacobo d'Appiano and a gleeful, rather puerile satisfaction. But he was only twenty-three and, bred up in the tradition of his father and his contemporaries—the great fighters, Gaston de Foix, Bayard and Colonna—he had no pity for his miserable, weak-kneed uncle. Also Jacobo's behaviour strengthened his argument for taking over the defences of Piombino, and Piombino would be useless with Elba in enemy hands. Cosimo probably touched up the day's deeds, as he was apt to do when it suited him. 'We prepared as best we could in the short time available,' he wrote. He had eight hundred and fifty soldiers, and Cuppano, summoned from Volterra, brought between two and three hundred more, 'all paid out of my own purse,' Cosimo was at pains to point out. They found a big breach in the curtain wall 'by which one could enter better than by the gate', and set themselves to repair it.

When Barbarossa's fleet was sighted, panic seized the citizens, 'as there was not a single soldier within the walls. The people fled, abandoning the countryside and crowding under the walls, and even that gentleman, the Signor, panicked, too, and sat, out of his senses, with a coronet in his hand, crying.'

There was a crowd of five hundred local women clamouring for asylum whom Jacobo wanted to let in to the fort, but Cosimo told him that there 'was not food for one night for twenty-five of them'. He put his troops in and drove the refugees away. Then, it was their good fortune

> that, just as the Turkish squadron was about to enter the straits, a violent libeccio arose, piling up the sea, and the ships made for Elba, putting in to Porto Ferraio, ten miles distant from Piombino. And the following morning Barbarossa sent one of his galleys to Piombino which gave the Signor to understand that if he would give back the young Jewish boy to the Jew his father, who was held prisoner by the said Lord's forces, he would molest no one, but if not he would burn the whole State of Piombino.

Cosimo goes on to relate how his uncle Jacobo, after a consultation with Cosimo's captains, told the Turkish emissaries that the boy was not with him, but that he would have him placed with a man of trust with whom the father could negotiate. 'He answered thus,' wrote Cosimo cryptically, 'in order to betray no weakness or fear.'

But a letter in the Italian State Archives proves that the boy-favourite was with Jacobo all the time. The story of this young Jew was apparently well known: born in Tunis, of an Elban slave-woman, he had been taken with his mother from a Tunisian galley by Charles V's fleet in 1539. He was baptized in Piombino and became a favourite of Jacobo. Cosimo does not relate how Barbarossa took this statement, for, 'fortunately, thanks be to God and the wind, after staying a whole day in Porto Ferraio Barbarossa set sail at two o'clock in the morning for Corsica.' The reason he did not attack, according to an escaped Christian slave (one of a watering party which had made off at Terracina), was the default of supporting French ships which he had expected.

Even after this exposure of Piombino's weakness, Charles ignored Cosimo's suggestions. Charles, the Emperor of vast territories stretching from the borders of Russia to the Andes, was in fact penniless. Spain was a poor country: the shipments of American treasure were pledged to pay the interest on foreign loans before their arrival in Spanish ports; loans to the Crown had ruined the Sevillian bankers, and Spanish trade had dwindled away. The war with France had drained and ruined him. There was soon to come a time when even the Augsburg bankers would refuse accommodation, and his armies would have to pay themselves with loot. It was no wonder that Charles, seeing the futility of this ruinous warfare, once again challenged Francis to single combat and was reproved by the Pope for doing so.

Thanks to his wife's fortune Cosimo had never had to ask the Emperor for money, although he fully intended to make Spain contribute to the Elban enterprise. Indeed, Eleanor's money, prudently invested in his private commerce, judiciously offered on loan to his overlord, was a considerable help in paving the way of his advancement.

But if Charles ignored Elba, Cosimo returned again and again to the subject, not only in direct letters to the Spanish court, but also to Don Pedro and to his kinsman the Archbishop of Forlì, Pandolfini's predecessor as Tuscan ambassador to Spain. However, it was not until Jacobo V's death in 1545 that he achieved his aim. He pointed out to the Emperor that Piombino and Elba were now ruled by his inexperienced aunt and a minor heir. The Emperor should lose no time in firmly taking over the fortresses on the mainland. As to Elba, if the Emperor would agree to his building the fort at Portoferraio, perhaps he could lease the site? Charles, an innately fair man, temporized: if the Duke of Florence should occupy the territory for strategic reasons, in spite of the Lady Regent's protests, then he must be prepared to give it back to the Appiani when his overlord thought fit, subject to a financial adjustment.

Cosimo agreed. All he was working for at the moment was a foothold in the island. But still Spanish permission was withheld. Charles objected to the expense. Then he heard that news had reached Cosimo that 'the Signora of Piombino and her young son were preparing vessels, possibly to go to Elba and stir up trouble,' and that on receiving this highly improbable information, Cosimo and his captains had rallied a thousand men at Leghorn 'for Elba'. They had arms, victuals, tools and tents with them. But they had eight days of 'sinister thunderstorms, hail and bestial winds', and Cosimo ordered them to transfer to Piombino. His aunt tried to deny the troops passage, but Cosimo took no notice of her orders and, he reported, told her 'that words are impotent against facts'. He was obviously highly pleased with himself.

On April 16th he wrote to his father-in-law: 'I have got everything in order to be able to fortify the port of Elba, which is of so much importance if it were occupied by one who wants to disturb the coasts of Italy.'

Finally, on April 20th, 1548, a whole fleet of ships set sail, carrying soldiers, the architect, Giovanni Battista Bellucci and his assistants, engineers, smiths, artisans, artificers of all kinds, and provisions for a month; 'neither were there lacking munitions and instruments of war'.

Cosimo had a series of architects working on his various projects; he moved them from place to place. Giovanni Battista Bellucci was a gifted young man, a student of Vitruvius and a

specialist in logistics, about which he had written a book. He was recommended to Cosimo by an agent of Charles V. He built the San Miniato gate at Florence and the mole at Pisa, and was full of ideas. The reason that he was so soon succeeded in Elba by his uncle Francesco Sanmarino and by Camerino may be found in the talent he disclosed for military engineering.

It is often difficult to attribute Cosimo's buildings to any one hand, as he selected or rejected piecemeal the opinions and advice of a great part of the best talent of the age, and he was always willing to try a new man. He sent several architects and 'engineers' to Elba, presumably for short visits to advise on particular points.

Cosimo himself did not go to Elba with his fleet, for a week later Bellucci was writing to him: 'We started at once to build a road to get the artillery up the hill, clearing a great quantity of *macchia*.'

* * *

Standing in Portoferraio's market-place, surrounded by the purple, red, glistening green and shining yellow piles of fruit, jostled by the crowds of buyers and sellers; climbing up and down the steep, pink-paved streets; dawdling on the water-front, watching the barques loading, the self-conscious sheen of the rich men's yachts, I often try to picture Cosimo's men, working away on a bare, boulder-strewn hillside, where all trace of habitation had been lost, wary for Turkish raiders, watched by impassive islanders. Bellucci was conscious of this uncomfortable, silent hostility, which resisted all his efforts to enlist collaboration. 'The people are poor,' he wrote. 'It would be very much to the point if corn could be sent to gain their goodwill.' He had been given instructions to fortify the 'higher of the two peaks', but he maintained that to be effective both must be fortified. There was also the problem of water. Cosimo had not reckoned on covering so large an area, but with characteristic decisiveness he at once accepted the necessity of spending about double the sum which he had estimated. This boldness of action in big enterprises was not the wild speculation of a gambler, but the outcome of Cosimo's extraordinary grasp of the essentials in his far-sighted planning. The initial expenditure on Elba had been between six and seven thousand gold ducats, and his monthly costs there would be only one of the heavy demands on his ready money.

Spain was withholding the financial assistance promised to him for the forts and garrisons of Piombino, and Charles still persisted in regarding his presence on Elba as purely temporary. Cosimo was indignant. 'I have a good mind to withdraw from this undertaking,' he wrote to the Archbishop of Forlì, 'and let Elba and Piombino go, and think only of my own state.' Whether or not Charles V knew that Cosimo could always be expected to do exactly this, and was much too closely wedded to the Elban project to carry out his threat, he replied to the Archbishop: 'Does the Duke wish to divide the pelt before we have caught the bear?' which annoyed Cosimo greatly.

Andrea Doria in Genoa was also causing him preoccupation. The Appiani had affiliations with Genoa and could be counted on as Genoese allies, while the Medici were suspect, and Genoese eyes were watching the new fortresses at Portoferraio jealously. There were rumours of a Genoese attack. Cosimo did not wait. He challenged Doria by closing the port of Leghorn with several Genoese ships inside it, and wrote ordering Bellucci to 'forge ahead with the fortifications—with earth and wood for the time being'.

Thereupon Doria, who certainly missed none of this, protested his innocence and goodwill, and Cosimo wrote in May to his archiepiscopal ambassador: 'If they [the Genoese] come they'll break their necks,' and ordered more provisions and cattle to be shipped to 'the poor Elbans'. Towards the end of the month he went over to Portoferraio to see the work for himself. He was 'delighted at the unexpected progress', and at once threw himself into every problem that the fortification of the peninsula presented. They needed water: then all the engineers must concentrate on finding springs, and if necessary lay conduits to bring it to the site. And when they were digging they must take the greatest care to preserve any antiquities they might find for his museum. He had 'dry mills' built and imported horses to work them. During the summer he sent two more engineers on the search for water, and at last could write: 'not even a fly would dare approach for a drink. It [the spring] is straddled by the fortress.'

They needed bricks: they must build experimental lime and brick kilns. He was open to no discussion of his decisions. To Sanmarino, the architect, he wrote haughtily: 'We do not intend you to alter anything,' and after a detailed criticism of his methods

and modes, ended on a colloquial note which rather belied the royal 'We': 'So wake up, and don't rely so much on astrology.' Astrologers were still consulted before starting any public building and the indignant architect protested bitterly. However, Cosimo did not discharge him, although he left Elba in 1549 to work for the Duke at Barga.

Cosimo's correspondence about Elba was now huge. None of it indicates that he regarded his presence there as temporary. He employed fifteen hundred men and was spending four to five thousand gold ducats a month. But he was by no means securely established in Piombino territory. From Jacobo d'Appiano, who had taken service with him and was to become Master of the Galleys, he would have heard of Charles V's effort to make the Appiani exchange Piombino for the Duchy of Sessa, and, from his spies in Genoa and at the Spanish court, that Genoa had lodged a strong bid with Charles for Elba. Without hesitation he continued to carry out his plans.

The fortress at Portoferraio was only one of a hundred projects and undertakings. His letters are brimming with activity, splashing over with ideas, plans, orders, to each one of which he gave an intense, detailed concentration. He was fortifying Florence; he was revising the penal system; he was deeply involved in Siena's political affairs; he was repairing and arming outlying fortresses; he was building up his army and navy, reorganizing his militia, planning to found an Order of Chivalry; he was developing a widespread iron industry. He studied inventories, reports, costs, calculations. He was planning to create a new palace from the villa of the Pitti, and gardens to surround it; a new gallery for his works of art; a new mausoleum for his ancestors. Florence was immensely vital under his patronage. Reading Vasari, one's brain reels with ducal plans for adorning villas, for painting portraits, for decorating the city, for the celebration of births, deaths, marriages, for gardens, parks and waterworks. And the men he enlisted to carry out these orders—men of great resounding names: Michelangelo, Andrea del Sarto, Sansovino—worked away on ephemeral conceits with all the gusto and talent which they bestowed on their more enduring paintings, buildings and sculptures, regarding themselves not as inspired by a lofty seriousness, but as good, well-paid craftsmen intent on achieving an effect. They took an adolescent pride in using their skill in

trompe-l'œil frescoes, a schoolboy delight in inventing ingenious devices in the superb gardens to soak the guests.

Tribolo, one of Cosimo's favourite architects, who constructed the much-admired triumphal arch at Prato for his wedding to Eleanor, also designed a jeu d'eaux at Cosimo's villa at Castello 'to sprinkle people and to make fearful hissing noises'. Cosimo later called upon Tribolo to create 'woods, fountains and ponds round the Pitti palace', and sent him to Elba 'to see the city and the port to be made there, and to fetch a round piece of granite, twelve *braccia* in diameter, to make a basin for the principal fountain.' Vasari says that Tribolo had 'a special boat made to carry the block'. Tribolo died of fever soon afterwards. Was it, I wonder, from malaria contracted in the island? Did he toil up the boulder-strewn hillside at Seccheto, where for centuries Elbans had cut the granite on the bare buttress of Monte Capanne, and where the inscribed pillar abandoned two hundred years before by the masons who built Pisa's cathedral lay, and still lies, among the cystus bushes? I thought of him as I leaned against the wind above the few houses, the little bay without even a mole.

Down near the beach at Campo I had woken that morning to the sound of the sea. The scirocco overnight had whipped the glassy, glittering blue water into six rows of fierce white breakers, filled the air with sticky spindrift, misting the hills far inland. The sea was splendid, reaching up the headlands like dogs trying to reach a treed quarry. In Campo harbour the waves were coming over the jetty in great curtains of spray, and boats loaded with fish-boxes tossed and jostled, their masts swaying all one way. On the drenched quay, little boys scuttled. Again I thought of Tribolo and his elegant conceits. Sant'Ilario and San Piero cowered under ink-black clouds: it would, I thought, be a long, arduous climb for the quarry-men to reach their protection, if the corsairs attacked. Did Tribolo see Elba in this wild, menacing mood? Did he have to come up here to choose Cosimo's piece of granite?

'How would they get it down to the sea?' I asked Garibaldo, whose motor-car had brought me from Campo and who had helped me to look for the pillar. There we stood in a wild welter of boulders with the precipitous mule-path plunging downwards, hardly distinguishable from the rest of the hillside.

'On wooden sledges,' he said. '*Lizza*, they call them; they used wooden crowbars, too.'

'Mule-drawn?'

'Man.' He made a grimace. 'Quarrying's not for me,' he said.

'But they don't do it *now*, that way?'

'No, but they did when I was a boy. Now lorries take the stone.'

'Not down *here*?' I felt I would rather have lived in Tribolo's time had I been a stone-cutter.

'Why, where else? The lorries don't have doors, so that you can roll free when they turn over,' he explained consolingly.

I thought of Tribolo once more, sadly, when I toiled round the neglected, dusty alleys of the Pitti palace, looking for his piece of Elban granite. But I could not identify it.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

Cosimo's letter to Don Pedro di Toledo on the strategic importance of Elba is in Minute di Cosimo I, F.II, 195, 199 (*Arch. d. Stato*, Florence).

His description of the happenings at Piombino: Carteggi del Duca Cosimo, F.34, 98 and F. Moisè, Acq. e Doni, 285, 3, I (*Arch. d. Stato*, Florence).

His letter to Pandolfini: Carte Strozziane, F.67, 58 (*Arch. d. Stato*, Florence), when he was ambassador to Venice, shows that Cosimo had already studied the lie of Portoferraio.

The preparations for the expedition to Elba are taken from Moisè's MS. loc. cit.; Carteggi di F. Riccio F.VI (*Arch. d. Stato*, Florence); and G. B. Bellucci's letter: Carteggi del Duca Cosimo, F.56, 418 (*Arch. d. Stato*, Florence).

Cosimo's letter to the Archbishop of Forlì, about the Genoese, is transcribed by Moisè (loc. cit.) and his instructions to the architects are in Regestri del Duca Cosimo, F.4, 20 (*Arch. d. Stato*, Florence).

His pleasure in the progress of the work at Portoferraio is in a letter to his confidential agent, Fr. Vinta, or Vintha as Cosimo spells it: Minute di Cosimo, F.II, 181 (*Arch. d. Stato*, Florence). The discovery of the spring is in Scritture diverse di Cosimo, F.18, 152–76; and his rebuke to Sanmarino from the same collection is transcribed with comment by Moisè, loc. cit.

For Bellucci's biography and Tribolo's activities, see Vasari's *Lives of the Painters*.

In all these documents of Cosimo I and his subjects I have never found anything but references to 'Portoferraio', and Moisè, who was Chief Archivist in Florence and specialized in Cosimo I's activities in Elba,

never found any evidence for the popular misconception that Cosimo named Portoferraio 'Cosmopoli'. He suggests that the name may have been invented by one of Cosimo III's courtiers. But Vasari, describing the frescoes which Cristofano Gherardi painted on the façade of the Sforza Almeni palace, soon to be destroyed by the weather, says: 'Towards the door is a scene of smiths, architects, and masons before the gate of Cosmopolis, a city built by Duke Cosimo in the isle of Elba, with a view of Portoferraio.'

The eighteenth-century writers also described the bas-relief of a ship lying on the hillside at Seccheto, but at Campo and Seccheto itself no one I asked had ever heard of it. 'It is the pillar that you are thinking of,' they told me. Garibaldo, who had played pirates as a boy over all those slopes, told me the same thing, when he climbed the hillside with me looking for the column. Discouraged, I examined each flat granite surface that I passed and then hopelessly looked up at the thousands of boulders I could never hope to approach. 'Look for the ship,' I begged Garibaldo, now waist-high in cystus, but all he said was: 'It is a pillar, signora.' Gradually, I succumbed to this powerful suggestion and told myself that, during the last two hundred years, the boulder on which the ship was carved by the Pisans had been broken up by the quarry-men. Only now, Georgia Tovani, of San Mamiliano, writes that her father, who is a quarry-man, saw the ship at Cavoli in 1915 when it was re-discovered by some of his fellows, and that it was 'so beautiful no one wanted to destroy it', and that it is still there. One day I will get him to guide me to it. This experience has been a lesson to me to persist, to the point of rudeness, in the face of local ignorance.

VI

THE TURKISH MENACE

WHILE Cosimo de' Medici was building what the Appiani now complained was 'a city, not a fortress' at Portoferraio, he was at the same time developing the iron trade on the other side of the island and organizing a network of foundries on the mainland to work the Elban iron. No sooner had he obtained the concession from his kinsmen than he appointed Gualterotti, an experienced man, to organize the industry on a percentage basis and form a company for which he, Cosimo, would provide all the capital and get eighty-two per cent of the profits. The company's headquarters were, significantly, to be in Florence. The iron trade was increasing when, finally, Charles V gave way and agreed to let Cosimo garrison Piombino, on the conditions he had previously stipulated. Cosimo's aunt protested vigorously, but was obliged to allow her nephew's troops to man her castles and his commander, Cuppano, to take over control of them. Neither she nor Cosimo seems to have regarded it as anything but a permanent arrangement. Cuppano judged it not a moment too soon, with a French and Turkish threat imminent. He organized a series of smoke- and fire-signals along the coast, and the reports of large movements of Turkish ships spurred Cosimo to redoubled activity. He flooded Portoferraio with letters. I know nothing of logistics, therefore I have thought it better to leave out all Cosimo's detailed instructions and discussions with his architects about the building of the forts and the surrounding fortifications; but the specialists and those more informed than myself can find the plans, estimates, additions, criticisms and strategic assessments from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries in the various Medicean archives in Florence.

By 1549 Cuppano had won over Elban seamen (chiefly by food

supplies) to serve in his newly-built galleys. In 1548–9 the ships wintered in Portoferraio harbour, and Cosimo, who was having difficulty in getting labour for his building and contending with artisans and craftsmen who would only sign on for three-week shifts on the island, ordered that the galley-slaves and convicts be made to work on the fortifications. They were to be well fed and not overworked. Unlike the dictators of the twentieth century, he did not regard them as expendable. The following year he sent over a good doctor from Barga to look after them, 'a young man highly recommended', and a chaplain for the little new church (for, according to Campana, Cosimo's chief secretary, the local cleric refused to administer the last rites to them). All these things cost a great deal of money, and there were the big brick kilns at Procchio; the new coinage; medallions and inscriptions for the two forts which he had named the Falcon and the Star; the Duchess Eleanor's garden; his bust by Benvenuto Cellini 'for the gate of Stella'. In Rio, Cosimo, needing more capital to expand, took one Bonsi as another partner. He even, as I shall tell, thought of sending an expedition to look for the legendary treasure of Montecristo, where the once rich abbey lay ruined and deserted by all but a handful of monks. Rumours of Dragut's galleys, however, caused him to postpone the enterprise. He taxed his people heavily, he had revived Tuscan trade and they knew it, but he could not press them further. Piombino and Elba were swallowing money with no immediate return. The people were not even his subjects, he told Don Pedro, or he might have raised more from them.

But he probably referred to the mainland, for, judging from his letters to Portoferraio, he was pursuing a policy of conciliation with the Elbans. The islanders, I imagine, treated the Duke of Florence and his officers with reserve, withholding confidence until they had proved him worthy of it. But anyone who could give them protection against the constant pillaging and slave-raids of the Turks and Algerians started with great advantage. Then, too, the supplies of grain, cattle and domestic commodities were the most lavish they had received within living memory. The Elbans must have been confused by the double administration, distinguishing with difficulty (as we do, reading the contemporary documents) the functions of the military and civil governors, particularly as the Appiani were right when they declared that Cosimo was building a city on the headland. Cosimo wrote to his father-in-law that he

attributed the chaotic conditions surrounding his territory to the inefficiency of the Spanish ministers. To challenge his vanity and add to his vexation, a corsair pirated one of his frigates and a barque in the Piombino strait in broad daylight: 'a thing,' he confessed to Don Francesco de Toledo, 'which annoyed me more than I can say.'

The Moslems were not his only cause for annoyance. In 1552 the Sienese routed the occupying Spanish garrison; the French sent troops under Piero Strozzi to help them, and Don Pedro dispatched a force from Naples, which failed to restore Spanish rule. Cosimo tried to remain neutral, but he was too deeply committed with the Spaniards to refuse help when the Regent, Philip—who had taken over the rule of Spain from his father—called upon him. Besides, he wanted to add Siena and the Sienese ports to Tuscany. He sent his best and most ruthless commander, Gian Giacomo Medici di Marignano, with a large army of Swiss and German mercenaries and part of the Tuscan militia, which had been originally founded by Macchiavelli, to take the city. The whole lovely, fruitful countryside between Florence and Siena was laid waste, and its peasants brutally treated by the Tuscan army. The war was expensive; it also interfered with Cosimo's trade. The Sienese and their allies were putting up a fierce and unexpectedly prolonged resistance. In the following year disturbing news reached Cosimo: Don Pedro, his best and most powerful ally, was dead. 'It is not hard to believe the concern at the Imperial Court at the death of the Viceroy, my father-in-law, knowing how it will damage the Siena affair,' he wrote to Pandolfini, who was now his ambassador to Spain.

Damaging indeed, for if the siege went on, as it showed every sign of doing, Cosimo would have to rely on the Spanish troops to hold the French before Siena, while he withdrew his troops to man the fortresses of Piombino and Elba to meet a Turkish and French attack which promised to be no mere slave raid. He sent orders to Portoferraio for the disposition of troops; arranged for two countersigns; demanded accounts and lists of necessary provisions. At the same time he was secretly instructing Pandolfini to show Philip how vital it was to defend Piombino from 'the French at Siena' and also Elba. Pandolfini was not to write it but 'narrate it to the Emperor personally', which may account for the scarcity in Simancas of documents dealing with this period in

Piombinese and Elban affairs. There is, however, among several maps and plans for the fortifications of Portoferraio and Piombino, one significantly inscribed in Italian: 'Plan of Piombino, showing the parts that cannot be defended.'

Meanwhile, in Elba the few preparations possible were put in hand. On Cosimo's further instructions, curtain walls were being thrown up, artillery placed, new wells in the heart of the fortifications dug, and the common folk told that, on the signal being given, they were all to take refuge inside Portoferraio 'by the mill'.

In the spring, the Spanish king sent his agent, Don Bernardo Bolea, to see how the work was progressing. He was coolly received, being regarded by Cosimo and his officers as a prying nuisance. What Bolea thought of the Italians, I do not know. I searched in Simancas, hoping to find some report of his visit, but found nothing.

Jacobo d'Appiano, to everybody's surprise (or so Pagni told Pandolfini), was made General of the ducal galleys. But to me, with all the evidence before me, it is not astonishing. To Cosimo the advantage is obvious. As for Jacobo, he had lost control of his inheritance, and if the administration of his cousin galled him, the dominion of Spain, which had brought it about, humiliated him far more. He and his family had been pawns in the game of power-politics played, not only by France and Spain, but by the Medici, the Borgias, the Farnese—not for nothing were the knights given the most crooked moves on the board. He mistrusted his cousin, who persisted in keeping up the role of benefactor and defender of the Appiano family. He made no secret of his wish to have Piombino and the islands restored to him, according to the Emperor's promise. Cosimo expressed his surprise to Bishop Tornabuoni in Piombino that this should be so: 'he being given honest and suitable compensation therefor'. It would be as well if the Bishop would quote in public the sums of money which he, Cosimo, had spent on defence. 'This,' he adds, 'should meet any objections by the Emperor's ministers,' which seems to show that he did not feel his tenure to be as secure as his confident behaviour would have the world believe. It must have been obvious to Jacobo VI that if the French and the Turks took his territory, neither he nor his cousin Cosimo stood the least chance of recovering it. Moreover, his subjects in Elba would be less likely to forget their lord if he were to remain in the island; Portoferraio

was drawing away more Elbans than he liked from his villages. If the Emperor should consent to his restoration, it would be easier for him, with his detailed familiarity with Portoferraio, to take up the threads of government again. There was no doubt that Portoferraio was regarded as the capital of the island. When the Elbans wanted a doctor, needed food or protection, they invariably turned to the Medicean town.

But that summer of 1553 Dragut sailed out of the Bosphorus, and the island's domestic issues faded into insignificance in face of the Turks. The French fleet, too, had mustered. The Franco-Turkish plan was to occupy Orbetello, Piombino and Elba—from which Naples could be threatened—then take Corsica and Genoa. From the report of Marcello Squarcialupi, one of Cuppano's young officers, and from Cuppano himself, we get a first-hand picture of the fighting in Elba. Afterwards Cosimo sent a copy of Cuppano's summary of events to Philip of Spain.

On August 7th the Turks' fleet was sighted off Montecristo, where they had already carried off the remaining monks, and that night, in pouring rain, they and their French allies landed and with utmost barbarity burned and sacked Longone, Rio and Capoliveri, shooting the inhabitants and tearing their hearts out. The next day they were at Grassera, besieging the Giogo with a cannon. 'And the castellan did not trust Dragut's promise to allow all inside to go free, and the promise was not kept and two hundred were taken as slaves.'

Meantime, enemy ships had anchored beneath the Volterraio to carry off raided cattle; but, after a battle on the beach at Ottone, the men from Cosimo's galleys drove them off. However, there were one hundred and forty enemy galleys, with an unknown quantity of Algerian craft—the jackals of the Mediterranean—and while Cosimo's galleys drove right into and scattered them, the island by now teemed with invaders. In hard fighting they took Campo and Sant'Ilario; then news came to Portoferraio that Marciana had fallen and a number of Marcianese had been taken into slavery; also that 'the Turkish Armada was at the Marciana beach'. The information was brought by two escaped slaves, who said that two hundred slaves had been taken from Pianosa; that the Turkish ships had suffered severe damage from the Portoferraio artillery, and that there had been seventy Turkish casualties. They maintained that the French galleys were going on to attack Corsica

and taking no more part in the attack on Portoferraio. 'There is no doubt,' wrote Cuppano to Cosimo, quoting these, or other, escaped slaves, 'that Dragut has been put up to this attack by the Grand Baron of France, and been offered 40,000 ducats, the Signor of Piombino, and all the slaves he can take, in return for the fortress and the port.' Meanwhile, for some reason I am unable to explain, the Signor of Piombino was putting up 'a gallant resistance' in front of Volterraio, a thousand feet above the galleys of which he was General.

Dawn of August 14th revealed to the defenders of Portoferraio Turkish ships all round the peninsula, and in spite of Cuppano driving off some sixty of them, they went only as far as Marciana where they landed 'under fire from the Falcone and Poggio'.

On the mainland the siege of Siena was still going on, and Cosimo was conducting, on paper, two campaigns. Somehow his ships evaded the Turks and kept up an efficient courier service between Portoferraio and the mainland. He took no risks, however, and ordered all his messengers to 'tie stones to his letters and hold them constantly in their hands'. If the ship were attacked the weighted letters were to be thrown overboard. He dispatched Camerino, the architect, back to Falcone with 'more men to break stones for him'. He sent one thousand sacks of flour, and oil, wine, biscuit and candles to Cuppano, instructing him, in the event of a food shortage, to send the refugee Elbans to the mainland. But the Turks were still lying off Piombino and he feared a blockade. He had, he said, ordered Gian Giacomo Medici di Marignano with four thousand infantry to Poggibonsi, 'in case the French take it into their heads to move against Piombino'.

But all was not well with Dragut's campaign. Henry II of France had no intention of fighting his battles for him, and had instructed his commander Paulin, and Aramon, his ambassador to the Porte, to join the Turks only in the attack on Corsica. Dragut had been led to expect more French support in the Elban enterprise. He was far from his bases and, with the scirocco season approaching, he dared not stay out too long. His ships were old: he beached them at Marciana for caulking. Cosimo told Jacobo d'Appiano that he suspected Dragut of planning to winter in Portoferraio.

In the attack on August 14th one of the Turkish officers was killed while reconnoitring the port where Jacobo was working day

and night to strengthen the defences. Cosimo had sent him once again 'more men to break stones for lime'. The following day the Turks attempted a landing, but came under heavy fire from the Falcone and the Stella. In Appiano's next letter to Cosimo he recounts the arrival, three days later, at two o'clock in the morning, of a Greek and a Lipariot from the Turkish ships. At first they were taken for spies, but succeeded in convincing their interlocutors that they were escaped slaves seeking asylum. They told what we, with access to French records, know to be a completely truthful story, of how the French ships were moving to the attack of Bastia, and that the Turks were to attack Piombino then join the French off Rio; after the attack on Corsica the fleets would separate.

That same morning the sentinels of Cuppano and Jacobo d'Appiano, with great relief, witnessed the departure of the Turkish fleet from Marciana, and Jacobo was left with the problem of the hungry, homeless refugees, while Cuppano's men mopped up the stragglers left behind. But the Turks had only sailed round the coast of Monte Capanne to join the French ships off Campo. There, two days later, they landed again, where now the holiday-makers pitch their tents, and sacked and fired what had escaped them on the first raid.

* * *

At Campo last summer, I tried to visualize that raid. What could they destroy? The maize crop, ripe and rustling along the dried-up bed of the Bovalico stream? The houses of San Mamiliano? The vineyards round Pila? There seems so little to warrant a second attack. Slaves? But the Campese must have dispersed in the thickly wooded valleys of Monte Capanne and Monte Cenno, where Garibaldo goes hunting wild cats, or taken refuge in the tower of San Giovanni on the wild hillside. I longed for a destructive Turk or two to lay low the tubular iron lamp-standards with their hideous polished reflectors which flank the approaches to the beautiful bay of Campo. Members of the commune glow with possessive and progressive pride at the sight of them, and Milanese holiday-makers (who have discovered Campo) recall their city suburbs.

* * *

Finally, on August 22nd, the Elbans could again breathe freely: the enemy sailed off in the direction of Pianosa and from there set

course for Corsica. Meanwhile, French galleys had intercepted a Spanish troopship from Naples off Longone and sunk her, and Jacobo's refugee-housing problem was increased by the survivors, although most of the Spaniards were taken prisoner. His labour force had been increased by the crew of a French ship, wrecked on Pianosa, and by French prisoners taken before Siena, sent over by Cosimo, as a reprisal for French ill-treatment of the Elbans ... 'Their cruelty [in Elba],' he wrote to the Pope, who was now discussing peace with the French, 'indeed conformed to the cruelty and impiousness of the barbarians and infidels who were their companions.' Cosimo's attention to the condition of the Elbans is remarkable not only in an age where humanity to civilians hardly went hand in hand with Italian campaigning, but in a year when he, a ruthless man, was preoccupied with major threats to his State. Blaise de Monluc was still holding out in Siena; the French had taken Giglio from his captain, Ferrardo. In September Corsica had fallen to the French, and so seriously did Cosimo regard the threat to Portoferraio with the island in enemy hands that he felt bound to offer the Genoese his galleys and two hundred horses to retake it.

In the year 1554 the Elbans learned that their Spanish overlord had married the English queen, Mary. One wonders what they thought of this stranger when they heard the exhortation which she had written to them: 'to live as faithful Catholics', disregarding the 'devilish calumnies' which termed them 'Papists and heretics'. This must have been unintelligible to simple people who knew no other faith and in all probability had heard little, if anything, of the Reformation. Henceforward, Cosimo's letters to the Spanish king were to contain humble expressions of esteem and gratitude for the interest of the Queen Maria.

* * *

During the following months, in spite of Dragut's fleet which was out again harrying shipping, Cosimo went on steadily creating his city of Portoferraio. He also began negotiations with the Dukes of Amalfi to buy—with his wife's money—Giglio, which was once more freed of the French, and a valuable outpost in any menace from the east. His expenditure on the Stella and the Falcone was immense; the earth-works were being replaced by the great walls which, cannon-battered and bomb-scarred, largely

survive to this day. Beneath this vast protection, a town was gradually coming to life, within which a simple trading flourished. The garrison was increased, the soldiers brought their families. During the next few years the Duke was to encourage settlers by offering duty-free building materials and, to anyone in need of it, a discreet pardon for all but 'capital and customs offences'. In July of that summer of 1554 the wretched peasants, for once free of raiders, suffered more disastrous losses in a huge forest fire which raged on the island, devouring corn and wood and the small game they caught for food. 'The flames could be seen as far away as Piombino, causing much rejoicing among the Duke's enemies,' Squarcialupi tells us.

Barely had the young summer green thickened to hide the charred hills and the Elbans re-established their life's rhythm, than the sentinels on Giglio signalled the presence of Turkish ships off their coast, and the Duke ordered them once more to take refuge in the forts. Miserable as they were, they must have taken heart when Cuppano himself brought reinforcements over from the mainland, and the famous Admiral Doria sailed into the harbour of Portoferraio in the van of the Genoese galleys. Doria had already been in the harbour in the spring of that year and had been much impressed and 'astonished to see the arsenal, the cannon foundries, smelting furnaces, mills, kilns, cisterns and wells and all one could wish for'.

The Elbans, from old experience, knew that a repulse on the mainland coast always presaged an attack on Elba, so that when Dragut, with a loss of five hundred men, was driven from Piombino and his ships took refuge in Longone harbour, they knew what to expect. What they did not know was that Codignac, Henry II's latest ambassador to Turkey, was on board one of the ships, determined to see that this time the Turks attacked Corsica. Under the hot June sun hundreds of Turks were scouring the empty hill-sides, but they could have found little to steal and few captives. Cuppano was holding his men inside Portoferraio. He himself and his arquebusiers were stationed among the trampled flowers in Eleanor's garden. No one mentions the whereabouts of the General of the galleys. From the Stella and the Falcone they watched eighty enemy galleys in battle formation sailing round Punta Nera, past Marciana, and close under the fort guns. Disregarding the fire, men were poured ashore to attack the fortresses. Cuppano let them

come 'almost into the cannons' mouths and then caused great slaughter'. Cunningly he retreated and led the Turks under the main fire of his massed artillery. The Turks fell back, the fleet retired to Longone once more.

* * *

I look down there at the Blue Bay and try to imagine the French diplomat sweltering in the narrow galley anchored off the small empty beach, surrounded by a fleet commanded by a Croatian corsair and a Moslem sea-robber risen from the ranks of piracy, as cynically indifferent as his heretic-burning royal master to the barbarous behaviour, the petty pillaging of his allies, only impatient to be away to Corsica, wondering what he did *dans cette galère*. (Perhaps he originated the expression.) It is quite impossible for me to imagine anything of the sort. But the outrageousness of so much of history constantly causes one's imagination to boggle.

* * *

In spite of heavy losses the invaders still outnumbered the defenders, but reinforcements arrived unexpectedly, brought in a dashing sally by Cosimo's captain Rossermini in his ship the *Toledana*, and the woods were bloody with small mortal encounters, the hills creeping with reconnoitrers. Elba was a hard country to fight in, with its boulder-massed hills, its wooded valleys and precipitous tracks.

The year 1554 saw the last of the big Turkish attacks on Elba. By July the galleys had sailed for Bastia, and once more the Elbans emerged from Portoferraio to re-create their lives and unearth their poor little caches of valuables.

And all the time the Rio iron production was growing. Among Cosimo's and Gualterotti's many new ventures was a flourishing cannon-ball factory on the mainland at Campiglia. Who can tell how many of those balls were fired into Siena's walls? By the time the city surrendered to Gian Giacomo there were six thousand living inhabitants out of the original population of forty thousand. Cosimo was given the Order of the Golden Fleece for serving his master the Emperor so well. He had no intention whatever of relinquishing the city to Spain.

In 1556 Charles V abdicated. Whether Philip II accepted the Duke of Florence's occupation of Siena as an accomplished fact, or

regarded Tuscany with the addition of Siena as a strategically stronger unit, he allowed Cosimo to remain in possession. But, perhaps to maintain the balance of power in the region, he decided to restore Piombino to the Appiani. Both Cosimo and Jacobo, judging by their letters during the Tuscan occupation, must have been extremely surprised. In an agreement drawn up in London on May 29th, 1557, Don Philip by the grace of God King of Spain, decreed that 'Jacobo VI of Aragona Appiano, Lord of Piombino for his good services and those of his fathers and his predecessors to the Emperor his father ... and to his grandfather of immortal memory ... ' should be

> restored and confirmed in his State of Piombino and in all which belongs to him on the mainland and in the Island of Elba and that he shall enjoy possession in the same manner as he enjoyed it before the administration of the Most Illustrious Cosimo de' Medici second Duke of Florence ... That the said Duke should be reimbursed for the expenses he incurred in preserving and maintaining the said State by order of the Emperor his father and according to the pacts and conditions signed by the said Lord of Piombino.

But then came the price Jacobo had to pay:

> Firstly that there shall remain to the said Duke of Florence Portoferraio, which is in the Island of Elba, together with the Castles and edifices that are there and with a boundary round the said Port of two Miles for the use and profit of the said Castles and the inhabitants thereof, with the proviso, however, that if within the said boundary of two Miles be found any mines of gold, silver, iron or any other metal or alum they shall remain to the said Lord of Piombino. *Item:* that ... for the greater security of the said State, We reserve for Us and Our successors the Kings of Spain the right to fortify the Port and ports of the said Island when it appears fit and in each one to build Edifices the expenses of which, together with the fortifications and the guarding thereof, to be at Our cost, and to which the Lord of Piombino does not have to contribute anything at any time, free of all prejudice to the Lordship of the said State.
> *Item:* That the Castles, Fortresses, and Walls of Piombino be

> garrisoned by Us for as long as We and Our successors think fit ... that the soldiers and such persons as are to guard them should be Spaniards.

Jacobo was not to pay anything for this, but was to 'enjoy his revenues, free and intact'. By the fourth clause the Appiani were to enjoy the protection of the King of Spain and his successors, by the fifth to offer reciprocal aid to Spain against 'all the persons in the World with no exceptions'—a safe generalization which possibly did not alarm Jacobo. In any case he was neither in a position to protect nor to fight the world.

In the next part of the document he agrees to observe and to carry out all Philip's stipulations effectively, 'knowing them all to be for the greater security of my State. As also regarding that which touches the said Portoferraio and the land which is and does remain to Your Majesty' (not, it is to be noted, to the Duke of Florence) ...

Cosimo, on the other hand, wrote as if the island were his. In a letter of July in the same year to the Commissioner of Elba in Portoferraio he writes royally:

> We have relinquished to his Catholic Majesty the island of Elba excepting the site, castle and port of Ferraio with a circumference of two miles [of land] round it. And since Messer Francesco Vinta is coming to give possession to Don Bernardo di [*sic*] Bolea and to lay down the boundaries, you will render him every favour and assistance, putting at his disposition the facilities of the administration and ceding the said administration and jurisdiction to the prefect sent, reserving only the above excepted places ...

To Vinta he wrote a confidential and revealing letter typical of his methods:

> You will accompany Don Bernardo di Bolea, sent by his Catholic Majesty ... of Spain, and when you are in Piombino you will present the letters to the Auditor and to the Purveyor who will assist you in putting in possession the aforesaid Don Bernardo, according to the orders ...
>
> To the Castellan you will likewise present his letter together with the countersign which I have given you, in virtue of which you will hand over the said castle to the same Don Bernardo, ordering the Castellan to remain on duty ... until we recall him, which will be soon; and to Don Bernardo you will say with your usual dexterity that he shall provide a guard because His Excellency has need of this one and of the Castellan elsewhere ... Take the greatest care and advantage in fixing the boundaries of the two miles, to gain as much land as possible. The rest I leave to your great prudence.

He confined his letter to Attavanti, the Commissioner for Elba, to instructions for the official cession and for every assistance to Messer Vinta in marking the boundaries.

It was a bitter moment for Cosimo, but there was Siena and her important ports to console him. But, if he now ruled two-thirds of Tuscany, he was still a vassal of Spain, and, to his immense chagrin, Spain kept the Sienese ports which, with Orbetello, formed Philip's *Presidii* or garrisons of Southern Italy: Piombino, Porto Ercole, Porto Santo Stefano opposite Giglio, Talamone, Ansedonia—all down the coast the ports for which he and his forbears had striven had gone to Spain. Yet he did not relinquish his plans for maritime strength.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

Details of the Medici's iron industry are all to be found in the Magona files.

An exhaustive account of the Elban iron industry, based largely on the Magona archives and which I have found invaluable, is: *Miniere e Ferro dell'Elba*, by various hands, published in Rome in 1938 under the auspices of the Mostra Autarchica del Minerale Italiano.

Cosimo's orders on the work and treatment of galley slaves, the sending of the doctor and chaplain, is in Scritture diverse di Cosimo, F.18, 56.

His letter about the Montecristo treasure was written to Simone Rossermini (or Rosselmini as Bolina spells it), June 3rd, 1559, and is quoted by Jack la Bolina in *Italia Illustrata*, Serie I, 74 (Bergamo, 1914). His letter on Don Pedro's death is in Pandolfini, loc. cit.; his letter to Don Francesco di Toledo is given by Moisè, loc. cit.; Cosimo's various instructions to Portoferraio are contained in Codici Ginoriani, F.69, 139, and Carte Strozziane, F.71, II. and Moisè, loc. cit., gives the transcript of Cosimo's letter to F. di Toledo; Cosimo's defence measures for Portoferraio are in Carte Strozziane, F.71, II.

The sending of Bolea, and his cool reception, I found in Codici Ginoriani, F.67, and Cosimo's letter to Bishop Tornabuoni, ibid., F.69, 377.

His letter to Jacobo about Dragut is in Minute del Duca Cosimo, F.15, 134, 135.

Camerino's dispatch to Elba is in Minute del Duca Cosimo, F.13, 452; to Ferrardo Gonzaga on help to the Genoese; ibid., F.26, 96.

The whole background and the Turkish attack itself are described by Marcello Squarcialupi di Piombino (*Arch. Med. Misc.*, IIa, F.1). He is also quoted by Moisè, loc. cit., and I have compared and checked it with Cuppano's summary, a copy of which Cosimo sent to Pandolfini for the King of Spain. It is to be found in Pandolfini, loc. cit. The summary may also be found in Carte Strozziane, F.71, 81.

Cosimo's letter to the Pope: Pandolfini, loc. cit., 79.

Squarcialupi (loc. cit.) mentions the Giglio negotations, and describes the fire.

The restoration of the Appiani: the cession document is in Piombino, 43, no. 5, and Cosimo's memo. is in Codici Ginoriani, F.69, 412. The deed of cession is a copy. When I first found this document I was puzzled by the date of 1557, since all the printed sources I have studied, with one exception, give the date of Piombino's restoration as 1559. I asked myself whether, perhaps, the cession was not ratified till two years later, but then I found the revealing instructions given by Cosimo to F. Vinta, which confirm the take-over year as 1557.

All the documents quoted are in the State Archives in Florence.

VII

THE KNIGHTS OF SAN STEFANO

Two years after Cosimo handed over Elba to Spain and to his cousin, the treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis was signed, which ended the Franco-Spanish struggle begun by Charles VIII. Italy was free at last of French troops, but the Italians now had the 'strict and solemn rule of the orthodox Spaniard' who, according to that widely read historian, the late H. A. L. Fisher, brought about 'the eclipse of the Italian Renaissance imagination, which is capable of spells of incomparable brilliance, but equally of a cynical and patient acceptance of the discipline of tyranny and defeat'.

But the Medici were not to be eclipsed, nor was the free play of Cosimo's imagination affected in the least by his Spanish overlords. Indeed, now that he had the French off his hands he could devote all his time to the hundred projects he kept feverishly in play, like the fair-ground performer of tunes on water glasses. Intolerant of confusion and corruption, in his task of remodelling the criminal code he daily scanned the list of crimes committed in Florence. He set himself to restore his war-ravaged land: there were road plans, drainage, olive-planting schemes, the revival of the tapestry-weaving, the trade in silk, Carrara marble, alum, salt and always the rich Elban iron industry. His lease of the Rio mines expired in the summer of 1559, and Jacobo, he knew, was reluctant to renew it. The Appiano felt iron to be an implement which he could use to lever himself into the good graces of Genoa. Genoa, Naples and Spain itself all made it quite clear to him that they wished to see Elban iron taken out of the Duke of Florence's hands, and Cosimo knew it. He also knew that Jacobo could not afford to alienate him. A way out was found—ostensibly by Jacobo, but with so strong a Medici flavour that it is not too much to suppose that his cousin helped him: Jacobo was to give the concession to a Roman firm in

which appear a large proportion of Florentine names. Most of the capital seems to have come from Florence. I cannot find the name of this company, but by 1561 an indubitably Florentine company was again working iron, the ore being carried in a fleet of shallow-draught boats up to Pisa and farther and to the coastal quays of Follonica and Campiglia. To anticipate: in 1578, Francesco I, Cosimo's son and heir, eventually obtained a concession which gave him the monopoly of the Elban iron for a period likely to last his lifetime.

One would have thought that Cosimo had enough to occupy him, but he never ceased from planning every detail of the adornment of Florence and its surrounding villas. He commissioned paintings and frescoes by all the great painters of his day; he engaged and charged Bronzino and Vasari to collect the dispersed Medici works of arts and to buy new ones; he patronized the whole gamut of Renaissance craftsmen. There were his museums, his excavations of Etruscan cities, his gardens, and his family to educate in appreciation of all these things. He was building up an army of thirty thousand men which he boasted could be fully mobilized within five days; he was employing the architect Ammannati to plan and supervise with him the defences of Florence, most famous of which was the fortress of San Martino at Piero a Sieve; he was building galleys for his navy, and, spurred by the fighting renown of the Knights of St John, he at last realized his project of founding a naval Order of Chivalry of his own.

There was also the whole House of Medici to consolidate by a number of flying buttresses. He gave a great deal of time to delicate negotiations for its advancement and to politic marriages both at home and abroad: Orsini and Este husbands for his daughters, cardinalships for his sons Giovanni and Ferdinand—the latter subsequently married a daughter of the House of Lorraine—and an Austrian archduchess for Francesco, his son and heir. There was already a Medici queen of France. There is no doubt that he was manœuvring for a position from which he could obtain a grand-ducal crown.

* * *

But Cosimo was not yet done with the defence of Tuscany. If he would never have the ports held by Spain, then he would build up Portoferraio and the ports opposite Elba: Leghorn and Pisa, and

control his territorial waters with the fleet of his Knights based on the Ferraio. In the welter of papers for these grandiose plans, which he and men of famous names produced, we find Cosimo deeply engaged in the domestic problems of what had become the town of Portoferraio. The letters of this astonishing man show no perfunctory interest, but a real and human concern for Elban affairs. There was, for instance, the case of the dissolute doctor whom the Commissioner of Elba—as he reported to the Duke—had discharged for unsatisfactory behaviour and multitudinous debts. Cosimo, who at all times found it difficult to recruit Tuscans of the mainland for service in his Elban capital, forthwith instructed the Commissioner to 'give him time to pay his debts ... going security for him', and reinstate him at once, as he did not want his 'ministers in Elba to get a bad reputation for severity and thus discourage others' from coming to the island. 'Settlers,' he wrote, 'must be encouraged—particularly craftsmen and sailors—those who come to live should be indulged, so as to hearten others.' In 1556 there were one hundred and twenty private houses clustered under the two fortresses, with a population of four hundred and sixty-three souls; nine years later Cosimo's son was to deal with a housing shortage.

Even the behaviour of the Elban pigs came under Cosimo's scrutiny: they must, he wrote, 'be kept under control and not allowed to go wandering all over the countryside damaging the crops and making bad blood'. He also ordered the building of a larger state bakery, capable of providing one thousand *contare* of biscuit a month.

The Duke was also preoccupied with the spiritual welfare of his community. In 1558 he built the convent and church of San Salvadore, intending them for the eventual use of the yet embryonic Knights of San Stefano. Elba was under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Bishop of Massa on the mainland. Cosimo arranged that he should be brought once yearly to Portoferraio in one of the ducal galleys. But when the Knights became a reality, the young noblemen from the mainland refused, as was to be expected, the humble little church of San Salvadore, preferring to build their own church in Pisa; whereupon Cosimo offered it to the Franciscans, and six monks moved into the 'partly habitable' convent in the following year.

* * *

Cosimo founded his Knights of San Stefano in 1561. He was, of course, their Grand Master.

Standing in their beautiful piazza in Pisa, I am not surprised that they refused to make Portoferraio their headquarters. They were, after all, noblemen first and sailors second. Elba had little to offer as a background for pomp and circumstance. The Knights of Malta had begged the Duke of Urbino for Bellucci's father-in-law, the architect Bartolommeo Genga, to fortify their island 'and make two cities out of isolated villages'. The Duke, under pressure, had finally given way and Bartolommeo had made 'fortifications of the utmost excellence so that he seemed a new Archimedes to the Grand Master and the Knights, who made him rich presents'. Thus well protected they had turned to building 'a city for Gentlemen built by Gentlemen'. Cosimo, on the other hand, had built two fortresses to guard a splendid natural harbour, and let the civilian settlers more or less look after themselves. Had the Knights of St John accepted the suggestion of the Medici pope, Clement VII, that they should establish themselves in Elba, the enhancing of Portoferraio might have been a different proposition; and had the Knights of San Stefano been forced to go to Elba, Portoferraio might have become a second Valletta. As it was, necessity did not demand of the new Knights so heroically proportioned a colonizing effort. The enclave they created in Pisa took its place with dignity within the city's protective walls, for if in Portoferraio the Knights had a ready-made harbour, in Pisa they had a ready-made background. Their headquarters were between the Lung'Arno, where new palaces were springing up next to the old, the university (which was expanding as a centre of learning since the Duke's edict that no degree except a Pisan one would be recognized in his state), and the group of unrivalled buildings centred round the cathedral. Beyond the city walls they could turn to Lucca for wealth, commerce and international ideas, to Florence for all that was stimulating in the new sciences, and, for those that were sailors by bent rather than obligation, there were the wharves and yards on the Arno—navigable in those days to the city and beyond—where their new, expensively equipped galleys were being built.

The Knights' piazza is always a quiet place gratefully undisturbed by parked motor-coaches or crowded bus terminals.

Their Palazzo della Carovana, with its busts of the Medici and its richly-textured sgraffiti decorations, splendidly flanks the gleaming white façade of their church. Inside, the brown night glows with the captured banners and great carved prows of galleys, the angry eagles, the writhing slaves, all canopied by the heavy, gold-coffered ceiling set off by the turquoise-blue background of Ligozzi's and Cigoli's heroic paintings. It is a spotless and shining place. It is house-proud rather than devotional: a holy and exclusive club room. But it was not always like that. When Vasari took over the ancient parish church of San Sebastiano he built a simple church without even a marble façade. The glow and glitter came later; Cosimo's son, Ferdinand I, enriched it, while the Turkish banners were taken over the years in many sea-fights.

The Knights' piazza, if still stately, has a petrified calm, the humility of neglected age. It is so quiet that the splashing of the fountain beneath Cosimo's darkened statue is an accompaniment to the pigeons, cooing and gurgling on his lime-whitened head.

When I am in Pisa I go there almost every evening. For me it has great charm. Pigeon-crowned, burly and bearded—better-looking in middle age than when Bronzino painted him as a florid boy—Cosimo boldly breasts the silence of the square. His attitude seems unnecessary: there is no one to accept his challenge. At his feet the water flows and flows into the lead shell, blindly held by faceless nymphs. The evening light is withdrawing: I am overtaken by melancholy, by one of those trite but terrifying intimations of mortality. Was Cosimo, too, pursued by this realization of the brevity of human life—his life? But I do not know why I should be melancholy. For Cosimo, forceful and dynamic, lives still in the Tuscan cities whose faces he changed. He is, with all his sins and faults, immortal with this world's limited immortality. If I were the Elbans, I should demand that Cellini's bust of Cosimo be restored by Florence to Portoferraio, for whom it was made, for, as well as Pisa, he rightly dominates the capital of Elba.

* * *

In spite of the Knights' activities in Pisa, over in Portoferraio there were also galleys on the stocks and at anchor—the galleys which Brantôme, who had fought with the Knights of Malta against the Turks, admired so much. Portoferraio was still the best and safest harbour in the dukedom, and as such immensely important to Cosimo. Leghorn, with its seven hundred inhabitants, was

little more than a fishing village, and was awaiting its translation to busy port by Cosimo's son and grandson.

The Knights' motto was *onore et onere*; they were sworn to make 'no pact, no peace with the Infidel'. Their warfare had the double incentive of religion and economy. They patrolled the Piombino strait when they were not engaged in larger and more important missions. They fought at Lepanto, and they played a large part in restoring confidence in the islands.

* * *

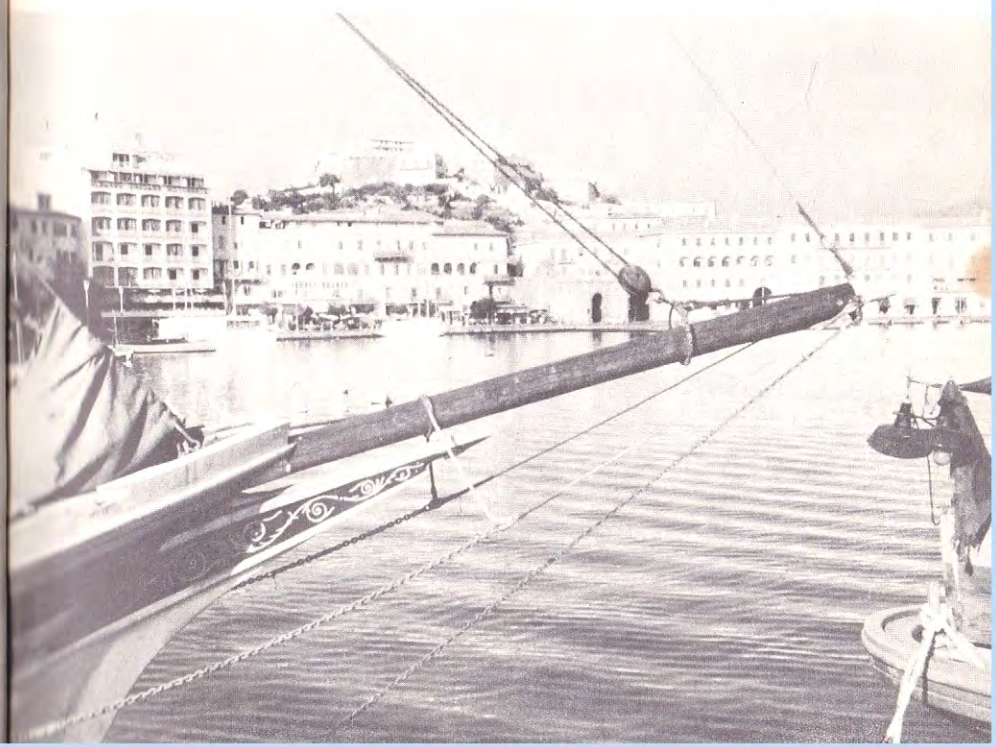
And what of the Appiani? They are rarely mentioned in Cosimo's letters.

When Philip handed Jacobo back his principality like a clipped coin, the Prince of Piombino must have lost heart and hope. With Portoferraio and its suspiciously elastic radius of influence ruled by the Medici, Rio and its mines to all intents and purposes a Tuscan colony, with Longone arbitrarily reserved for Spanish defence, and Spanish garrisons in control of all his mainland castles; bereft both of the traditional centre of Elban rule and without access to the new foci of power, he was left with the mountain villages from which to choose a capital. Why did he not choose Capoliveri? It was readily accessible from Piombino, and for centuries it had shared with Rio the centre of Elban administration. Was it because of its reputation? Did he mistrust the Capoliveresi? The documents I have seen shed no light on the matter. As it was, the Appiani came to their house in Marciana. Exactly when Jacobo ceased commanding Cosimo's galleys, I do not know. But there is evidence of strained relations between the cousins. Jacobo resented the movement of his subjects into the Portoferraio zone, and Cosimo ordered the governors of the port 'to do no homage to the Princes of Piombino'.

Jacobo appears to have come less and less to the old house in Marciana. Built twelve hundred feet above the sea on a buttress of Monte Capanne, Marciana's situation is magnificent: facing Corsica, dominating the superb capes and bays of the north coast. Strategically it was better placed than Capoliveri. Backed closely by the three-thousand-foot rock wall of Monte Capanne, with sheer-dropping woods to the sea-level vineyards and fields, its main gate was approached by a granite-paved mule-track between the mountain side and the eyeless backs of the closely built houses,

Portoferraio from le Grotte

The Waterfront, Portoferraio



lterraio from Portoferraio

Portoferraio from Volterraio

dominated by the square-towered fortress. Perhaps the reason why the Appiani had established a mint there was that it was more defensible than the other little Elban towns.

In spite of the courtesy of most of the inhabitants, I find Marciana oppressive, the village sullen and depressing. I go back and back, always armed with reasons for liking it better, but always I am overwhelmed by its dark-grey character. Poggio, on the level spur across the valley, has an entirely different character. It is strange, for architecturally the two little towns are much alike. But while Marciana is coiled like a surly watch-dog round its hilltop, Poggio is cosily curled like a sleeping cat. They are curled for a purpose: their streets making inner lines of defence, one upon another—in Poggio, round the polarizing church-fortress. This gives the streets a low, lop-sided look, for on the outer curve, the street-level doors are on the top floors of the three-storeyed houses. But the Poggiese appear to have been no less bellicose than were the Marcianese; between them 'were always internecine disputes', Coresi del Bruno tells us, 'and in time past armed encounters were frequent'. He has not much more to say about Marciana (except to describe the violet-scented church), but whatever face they turned—or turn—to the Marcianese, the Poggiese give one the impression of quiet contentment, of friendly community. Poggio was always smaller than Marciana, which, like Sant'Ilario and San Piero, had a population of about five hundred. (Portoferraio's population in 1594 was 1,341.) In the eighteenth century there were seventy houses, five of which 'were derelict and uninhabited but capable of restoration, as are the roofs and balconies of others. Another five are being built now, two of three floors and three of two floors.'

That might be the description of Poggio today. The Poggiese are proud of their charming village: to a far greater extent than the Marcianese, they put flower-pots before their doors, grow geraniums, round shiny papyrus leaves and creepers, which they water daily with great care from one of the village wells. They are scrupulously clean, but they seem strangely unaware of the derelict and dilapidated houses in their midst, their owners curiously indifferent to their fate: 'they have other houses to live in,' a Poggiese told me, as if that were sufficient explanation. It is all part of the Elbans' disregard for money, which is so refreshing.

It is the same indifference that allows them to let the chestnut

crop fall and rot in the valley of the Rimercoio—the most lovely valley in all Elba.

The Rimercoio is most beautiful in early autumn when the scented dwarf cyclamen drift under the trees, the clearings smell astringently of stripped bark and new-cut stakes, and the leaves of the old twisted chestnuts are golden green against the shadow thrown by Monte Capanne on the far side of the valley which is the wall of Monte Perone. As one follows the old mule-path steeply down, the silence encloses one like water, and the ripening chestnut husks float among the still leaves like water-green sea-urchins in depth upon depth of blue-green shadow. At the valley-bottom, on the old grey granite bridge which carries the path over the narrow torrent, it is utterly quiet. A few birds call, a few brimstone butterflies fly slowly over the erica and arbutus. Traveller's Joy feathers the trees by the water. The flies are the only irritation. Kept at bay with a frond of bracken, they become tolerable.

Beyond the bridge the path turns towards the sea. I went last autumn in the crystal-edged air along the sandy track, where the hoof-polished stones of the mule-path stop, through head-high heather towards the blue, tramontana-flecked sea. At each turn the valley walls fell away like an opening fan disclosing another segment of that brilliant blue water, filtering in a breath more wind. I came on a blackbird suitably eating blackberries: his chittering made little rifts in the silence. I ate the fruit he had left; it was seedy and sweet. I tried, without success, to envisage Madame Mère, Jacobo d'Appiano or, for that matter, Saint Cerbone walking or riding this way. It seemed wasting the splendour of the afternoon, and, after all, they lived on the Marciana side of Poggio—Madame Mère and the Appiani in Marciana itself, while the saintly bishop, exiled from Africa, lived uncomfortably in a grotto up in the steep woods between the two little towns, where now lies his empty shrine. After Africa, the cold mountain mists must have chilled him horribly.

Near by, at the shrine of the Madonna del Monte, Napoleon met Marie Walewska one stormy night. Would she have come this way? But why spoil one's enjoyment by imagining the wretched woman in the wet wild woods? I rejoined the Marciana road, but the enchantment of the valley was broken.

Emerging on the splendid banked-up curve, ears violently

assailed by the clanking and grinding of road-making machinery, I was bitterly reminded that the Perone road is due to be widened and asphalted, to be groomed and dressed into yet another of the horrible Panoramic Roads the Italians admire and build so superbly. The whole island lies defenceless, awaiting a Panoramic Petrol Age, ushered in by fleets of motor-coaches. Will the small-holders who own this lovely valley resist the land-speculator? Will the Elban's attitude to money change? Will he unwittingly sell his proud independence? I must admit to myself that no one here deplores the roads. They think the smooth blue granite chips, the hair-raising curves, cut in the cliffs, beautiful. The road to Marciana—formerly a quiet green tunnel which reminded me of Vallombrosa—is being transformed by tons of granite, and beyond Marciana's gateway it winds along the reaching headlands, each one sliding more steeply into the sea, until Punte Nera makes one precipitous dive into the water, and the road, scored into its flank three hundred feet up, makes an elbow-bend apparently into blue space. The road will circle the island, join with the road running from Campo to Seccheto. This year it stops at Pomonte, a humble little fishing village of the Appiani's principality. 'Very rustic,' as the grocer's wife at Poggio remarked. (As a child she and her parents walked the twelve miles by mule-path to visit her grandmother, and thought nothing of it.) So insignificant that when Barbarossa destroyed it they did not trouble to rebuild it. And so I follow the road's binding and enslaving course, with no hope at all. For, alas, there are no problems of contour or geology which deter the Italian road-builder.

After Genoa or even Piombino, Jacobo must have felt isolated in Marciana, confined to the hill, where the fortress was built on the bare screes and the streets and gates were narrowed against attack. Today the keep's square bastions enclose a little garden and vines, sheltered from the winds that blow hard up there. I can offer no suggestions as to how the later Appiani occupied their time in Marciana. As to Madame Letitia, she stayed with Cerbone Vadi, the mayor, where Napoleon visited her daily. From members of the Mellini family we have it that in August 1814, when he and his staff camped at the Sanctuary of the Madonna del Monte, the Marcianese gave him and his mother an unimaginable welcome. Madame Mère was borne in a litter through streets carpeted with flowers, fluttering with home-made Elban flags, resounding with

church-bells, and whose walls still displayed the mayoral exhortation to pay homage to 'His Majesty the Great Emperor Napoleon' and to 'render him unlimited devotion'.

'Camping' is a misleading description of the great man's stay on the mountain slope, for only his bodyguard was under canvas. The two custodians of the shrine were transferred to the pilgrims' stable and their hermitage transformed into bedrooms and a study for Napoleon, Bertrand and Bernotti. Marie Walewska, apparently, was given a tent when she visited her former lover, who possibly thought it more discreet.

Madame Mère's stay in the Vadi house is commemorated by a plaque, as is her son's at the hermitage.

The Appiano house is in one of the narrow alleys; it has no pretensions to grandeur. Unlike the Medici, the Appiani did not have a personality that has endured, although there is a street named after them. 'Where are you going when you leave here?' Eleonora Brizzi of Giglio asked me, and when I told her: 'To my friend Donna Nerina Medici,' she asked: 'What! Our Medici?' and nodded in the direction of the Castello, where she was born under Cosimo's escutcheon. But when in Marciana I asked for the Appiano house, two kindly old Elban ladies, sitting in the sunshine by their potted fuchsias, declared that they did not know about the summer visitors.

Perhaps, too, in Jacobo's day, the younger Marcianese would not have recognized their Signor. For in Genoa Jacobo had not only a wife, Isabella di Mendoza, but a mistress of the same family by whom he had a bastard daughter and five bastard sons, the eldest of whom had been legitimized by the Emperor and given the right of succession; and he spent a lot of his time and revenues there.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VII

The Magona files, already mentioned, contain all the details of the iron concessions and negotiations.

The case of the debt-contracting doctor is to be found in Reg. di lettere del Duca Cosimo, F.36, 376.

The new biscuit factory and the various instructions regarding the encouragement of settlers and the control of pigs are also to be found in the same letter-files.

Moisè, loc. cit., gives population figures, and on p. 457 of his MS. there is an interesting list of the householders of Portoferraio in 1574.

The Knights of S. Stefano (Pisa, 1928), Guarnieri's definitive history of the Order, is the main source of my information, but he does not mention what Cosimo's letters reveal, namely that he (Cosimo) had intended the church at Portoferraio for the Knights. Vasari tells of the request of the Knights of St John for the architect, Genga.

The order to the governors of Portoferraio: in Sagreteria di Stato, F.618.

All documents are in the Italian State Archives in Florence.

The details of Napoleon's stay at the Madonna del Monte are to be found in various books, and are quoted by Edmondo Rodriguez-Velasco in a semi-fictional reconstruction of the visit: *Napoleone alla Madonna del Monte di Marciana* (Pisa, 1924), and by Dom Enrico Lombardi in his booklet on the sanctuary published in 1954. L. Damiani also wrote a life of Rosa Mellini, who was lady-in-waiting to Madame Mère, entitled: *La Vita di Rosa Mellini damigella d'onore di Letizia, madre di Napoleone* (Rome, 1921).

VIII

THE ISLAND OF THE LILY

I DO not know whether Eleanor of Toledo ever visited her Island of the Lily. It is, I think, unlikely. When she bought it from the Duke of Amalfi, with Castiglione della Pescaia thrown in, for thirty thousand scudi, the sea surrounding it was dangerously infested with Turks and Algerian corsairs, and by the time the Knights of San Stefano could have given her adequate protection she was dead. She and her two younger sons, Giovanni and Garzia, died in 1562 while Cosimo was inspecting fortifications and building projects which he had initiated in the Maremma, Leghorn and Pisa. The Florentine exiles—the *fuorusciti*—accused him, quite falsely, of killing them, but Eleanor suffered from haemorrhage of the lungs, and the boys, who had been with their father in the Maremma, probably contracted malaria.

Cosimo legally occupied Giglio in his wife's name in 1558. The beautiful island was utterly poverty-stricken. It had never recovered from the Turkish raid of 1544, when Barbarossa had taken half the population into slavery. According to Matteo Villari's *Chronicle* of 1554, during the Middle Ages Giglio was perpetually repulsing raiders and survived countless minor piratical incursions, but Barbarossa had succeeded in capturing the greater part of the able-bodied population, and the island badly needed settlers to restore its primitive but vital economy.

Cosimo sent Vinta to report on the conditions in Giglio. From his long letter we know that the Gigliese archives were all destroyed in the fires kindled by the Turks. The island's only revenue, Vinta wrote, derived from the fines imposed on law-breakers: therefore the Gigliese particularly begged him not to condone any offences. It sounds as if Cosimo had proposed a general amnesty as a popular gesture.

The archives must have held a long record of turbulent or lethargic overlords, and again, as in Elba, from the sources still available to us, one discerns in the Gigliese smallholders' enforced independence the measure of their self-reliance, which preserved them and their descendants from the servility of a subject race.

Giglio is marked only on the larger maps of the Tyrrhenian coast, and it was on such a map that I first found it ten years ago. No travel agency in those days knew anything about it, except that it belonged to the Tuscan archipelago, had an inn of sorts, and was reached by boat from Porto Santo Stefano. I could find no pictures of it beyond a blurred one of its little walled mountain village—which might have been anywhere. None of my Italian friends had ever been there; one, after inquiries in Rome, wrote assuring me that it was 'absolutely uninhabitable', another that it was full of convicts. So I wrote to the mayor of the island, because I did not know to whom else to write, and through him engaged a room at La Pergola, the inn of which it turned out he was the keeper.

'Signor X,' wrote Demo Cavero, the innkeeper, 'also lives in London, and he would tell you all you want to know about us.' That letter settled it, summarizing as it did Giglio's attitude to the rest of the world. Mr X, who had found himself on the island during the war and, spellbound, had returned to build a little wooden shack in one of its coves, was enthusiastic about its beauty, so that when, eventually, I met one Tuscan—Franca—who had once landed on Giglio and found it to be beautiful and unspoiled, I accepted her testimony merely as a corroboration of something I already knew.

For Giglio, ten years ago, if one were motor-carless, one had to leave the main Rome line at Orbetello—as one still does—rattle in an old bus out between the lagoons to the harbour of Santo Stefano on the Argentario peninsula, and embark in the *postalino*—the little mail boat which still leaves each afternoon for the island.

The lagoons glittered with promise that May morning when I hurtled out to Santo Stefano. In the sadly bombed little harbour the water was a gay glass-green, silver-splintered with fish and tin cans. There was no mistaking the Giglio packet; she lay tied up alongside the quay, alone among the fishing boats. She looked squat and solid enough, but 'Ai, she dances, does that one,' I was told, and rolled like a porpoise too, I discovered later when we

were in the big swell off the point. She took an hour and a half to reach the island.

Giglio is the top of a submerged granite mountain, thrusting itself fifteen hundred feet out of a sea without shallows: blue-black under the rocks, a startling purple-streaked emerald-green in the sandy coves. A wonderful sea: clean, cold, clear as crystal. Giglio Porto is simply a crescent of houses built on the sandy shore where the big shoulder of the mountain behind comes steeply down to flatten into two small rocky headlands linked by the slip of sand. It has become a harbour by the addition of a couple of elbow-angled jetties, to which the red, green, blue, and grey fishing boats are tethered, the odd schooner moored. Between them, almost on top of the houses, are the barques pulled up for careening, and the boat-builders' stocks. At one end the squat barrel of a medieval watch-tower gives weight to the little string of ochre and blue houses, and at the other a granite pavement and a few little tamarisks separated them from the sand. I use the past tense because Renato Cavero's new hotel has shut off the end of the bay, where the agaves and tamarisks grew. I found three minute general shops, a ticket-office for the boat, a wine-shop with a nasturtium-covered wooden terrace, and a cave-like room, mysteriously decorated with glass battery-jars, where an elderly Gigliese, who looked like an alchemist, sold stamps and presumably dealt with the mail, for it was the post office. Set back from the sea was a small convent and a big modern church. Behind, olives and a few dark chestnut groves softened the steep mountain-side. Beyond the southern headland the land sloped more gently to the sea from the sharp spine of the island, but it was left entirely to the goats, the flowers, and the scented maquis.

More than half of the two thousand people who inhabit Giglio's twenty-one square kilometres live in the port, but it is only for the last century and a half that any islander has dared to settle by the sea. Before that, for hundreds of years, the Gigliese lived on the island's summit inside the bastioned walls of their fortress-village, and, although it is a breathless hour-and-a-half's climb by mule-path from the harbour, it was, when I first went there, still the official centre of the island's life. Telegrams are still sent from there when the station is working; when it is out of order the messages are flashed from the walls by hand, weather permitting. The only priest lived there. The Sacrament, protected by St

Mamilian, is kept there in the church with its Aragonese inscription. But now there are two communes, two priests and two parishes.

The exact history of St Mamilian, Protector of all the sailors of the archipelago, is vague, but he figures prominently in the life of the islanders. A fifth-century Bishop of Palermo, he and three of his monks were exiled to Africa by Genseric, King of the invading Vandals. He escaped in a small boat and tried the hermit life in Sardinia and Elba before settling in a cave high up on the slopes of Montecristo, whence his reputation as a holy and wise man spread throughout the archipelago. When he died, he told the islanders, a cloud would rise from the mountain-top. From the habit of self-preservation the Gigliese, alert to signals, were the first to spot it, and hurried over to Montecristo to take the body of the saint back with them. Protected by a storm from their rival Elban Christians, they brought Bishop Mamilian to Giglio, and his tomb is recorded to have remained there for six hundred years. Then his bones were taken to Pisa. But the Gigliese kept his right arm, and still celebrate his feast on September 22nd. The arm is encased in silver and hung with votive offerings, which include a bunch of Turkish coins. Holding the relic in the windswept little church, I wondered what those coins represented in relief, anxiety or gratitude? Were they taken from the body of a dead invader? Or were they the gift of a domesticated corsair? For, apparently, in Giglio friendly relations were not infrequently established between Turks and Gigliese, which speaks well for the islanders' kindliness and tolerance. There is corroborating evidence for this in types and names such as that of our friend Clemente Rum (of whom I shall write more). The name obviously derives from the Turkish *Roum* or Roman, but Clemente says he knows nothing of its origin. His eyes are light-greenish, but those of his granddaughter are large, liquid, dark, and set odalisque-wise in a fat white face. ('You should just see her appetite,' Clemente says with pride.)

I finger St Mamilian's coins and look at the up-ended Corinthian capital which has been scooped out to hold holy water, and wish tritely but sincerely that objects could talk. When Sommier, the botanist, came here in 1893 or '94, he talked to a very old woman who as a child remembered the Turkish raid of 1799. Her mother had hidden her in an oven among the drying figs. According to her, and to the manuscript account of one Pini, a Gigliese who defended

the tower at Campese, the Gigliese carried this shining, tinkling arm round the walls, and swarming bands of attacking Turks trying to scale them were fixed, straddle-legged, and could go neither over nor down. But someone irreverently suggested that the new wine which the invaders found in the *palmenti* outside the walls, had something to do with the invaders' plight.

And the marble capital? Whence had it come? From the big, ruined, Roman villa which, with its system of lead water-pipes, the traveller Pecci tells us, still stood on the headland beyond the harbour in the mid-eighteenth century? No one knows.

Like Elba, the history of Giglio is involved. Briefly, it is supposed that the Etruscans followed the Ilvates as settlers on the island. From the ruins and from the references of Roman writers from Julius Caesar onward, who knew it as Aegilium, we know that the Romans used the island and neighbouring Giannutri both as places of enjoyment and of refuge. The Aenobarbi family owned it, and probably it was they who built the villa on the headland to the south of the harbour, as well as the ones on Giannutri and the Argentario peninsula. The ruins of the villa, with columns and capitals still standing, and of the Roman brick mole were described by eighteenth-century travellers, but there are no traces of them today. However, the islands have not been excavated. Whether the fifth-century poet Rutilus Claudius Numantianus had personal experience of the Gothic invasion, or shared the Roman panic as Alaric advanced down the Adriatic, I do not know. He was 'of Gaul'. But in his *Itinerium* he wrote *Eminus Igilii silvosa cacumina miror*, and one can imagine the Romans of Honorius's day, with what Gibbon calls 'their immoderate wealth', fleeing to the comparative remoteness of the islands which they had hitherto used only for rustic holidays.

Following the Roman decline, the islands share in the unillumined obscurity of the age. Then Giglio reappears when Charlemagne and Leo III agreed to give it to the Abbey of the Three Fountains in the Roman diocese of SS. Vicenzio e Anastasio. This transaction is complicated for the historically curious by the Benedictine Cluniac Order which occupied the Abbey, being succeeded, according to the terms of Pope Innocent III's will, by the Cistercians, who became the Gigliese's overlords in the twelfth century. The monks found it quite impossible to defend their possession and offered it to the powerful Aldobrandeschi

family, who accepted it but, in their turn, put themselves under the protection of Siena. Through a series of complicated domestic events, which I do not propose to recount, Giglio was owned by a series of rich families of the mainland: Pannocchieschi, Caetani, Orsini. In the thirteenth century it was held by Siena, in the fourteenth by Pisa, in the early fifteenth by the Florentines. In 1448 Alfonso of Aragon took it and settled fifty Neapolitan families there. In 1459 Pius II, creator of Pienza, bought and gave it to his nephew, Antonio Piccolomini, who promptly gave it to his brother the Duke of Amalfi, who, as we know, sold it to Eleanor of Toledo. By a papal Bull, however, Pius had confirmed Giglio as a feud of Siena. This was not inconvenient for Cosimo when he retained Siena after the treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis, but in the past it had led to fierce disputes with the Cistercians, who refused to recognize Siena's suzerainty and who, raising their sheep and cattle on a vast tract of the Maremma, were a powerful economic force in the region.

The medieval and Renaissance owners of the small islands of the archipelago appear rarely, if ever, to have visited them. They may have gone to Giglio for hunting expeditions, or sent a representative to allay any curiosity they may have had, but the islands were regarded more as a source of revenue than as a place of residence. We know that Giglio, like Elba, exported granite and wood. Unlike the Romans, they left no tradition of luxurious villas with baths, piped water, frescoed walls and mosaic pavements. There were the ubiquitous round towers on the beaches, the rough, sparsely garrisoned keeps on the hill-tops dominating the closely huddled dwellings of the smallholders, who presumably paid their taxes to an officer sent from the mainland, and otherwise fended for themselves. One would have thought a determined fatalism almost inevitable, even in the most religious. The islanders were completely at the mercy, not only of the corsairs, but of their overlord's enemies, who constantly varied with the arbitrary disposal of their island. How they preserved any sense of continuity, any tradition, I cannot think.

The thousand-odd Gigliese, fishermen and smallholders, were apparently indifferent to dynastic changes, rather as they appear to be today. It was only the Barbary corsairs who were a constant menace, against whom successive overlords failed to protect them. For two and a half centuries they knew no security from raids and

pillage. Up in the minute square of the medieval fortress, where the main gateway bears an inscription to Ferdinand of Aragon as well as the Medici balls, a plaque commemorates the repulse of the great corsair attack in 1799 and ordains the anniversary of it as a public holiday. The holiday is still kept. One day perhaps the Gigliese will put up another plaque to the memory of the young man who, shaving at his window in 1944, was killed by the machine-gun of a passing German plane.

Up in the fortress the people live very much as they have always done, emerging at daybreak from their crevice-like streets to till their fields and tend their vines on the western slope outside the walls, and to draw water in splendid brass and copper pots whose shape has remained unchanged for centuries, and, until a very few years ago, withdrawing behind the walls at sunset, barring the gateway behind them.

Down in the port, however, I discovered that life was already becoming sophisticated. At dawn the whispering silence of the sea was shattered by the explosive motors of at least a third of the fishing boats, and at night, from eight o'clock until midnight, there was electricity for lights and radio sets. But the generating plant, housed in a building beneath the 'Saracens' ' tower, was temperamental. Sometimes darkness would fall and still no lights sprang up round the harbour, and there would be an atmosphere of expectation, a faint tension. A clot of small boys at the power-house door, encouraging the electrician, would dissolve, every now and again, to relay progress reports and official exhortations to patience round the harbour till they reached the inn. Just as we would be beginning to fumble for our wine-glasses, a thin *aah* of triumph would come across the water, and simultaneously we would be dazzled by the bare brilliance of the bulbs festooned in the leafy roof from which the inn takes its name.

Before Renato built his hotel, the Pergola was simply the last six pink-washed houses of the harbour, with a bit of tamarisk-and-olive-planted sea-wall, divided by a gate and a fig-tree from the angle where the granite flagging turns up inland as a cobbled path. A long whitewashed passage links the first-floor rooms, but the ground floor still retains its windowless vaults, each opening on to the sandy terrace which serves for all social purposes. When they were built, more than a hundred years ago, they were storing places for ships' gear, wine, pasta and flour; some of them still

are, but one is a kitchen, and a couple more have benches and trestle tables for food and wine when the weather drives family and guests from under the pergola or off the granite wall above the sea.

I found the Pergola unique: it belonged to no category. It was, in fact, the entirely personal and private concern of a family of seamen. Febo's old friend, Demo, the patriarchal owner, at seventy-eight, blue-eyed, white-haired, and still upright and limber, typical of the old sea-captains of the islands, was Giglio's leading citizen. With Corinna, his wife—who was over seventy—he was up and out on the sea-wall every morning at daybreak with his telescope under his arm. There was no need at all for this: it was a combination of habit and preference. At dawn there was always much more going on than at other times of the day. The big and small fishing craft slid or chugged out into the quicksilver sea, voices and rattlings came from the bowels of the *postalino* that sailed, and still does, at six in the morning; hens scattered squawking among slithering sandy ropes, and the children were everywhere—on the jetties, in the boats, in and out of the sea, carrying gear, untying painters, or simply laughing and shouting. So at dawn the old sea-captain watched the harbour, and Corinna banged her handwoven sheets on the granite cistern-edge as if her life depended upon it. And, as I said, there was no need for it at all, because the old couple had four sons, two daughters-in-law, a daughter and a son-in-law to share the work of the household, and only sometimes, in the height of the summer, or when the *postalino* brought an unexpected week-end party of exploring tourists (more often now when the excursion boat advertised in Rome arrives), did the family have to work at full stretch. Then one son was over the sea-wall for more fish, another two tied on aprons, their wives laid tables and made coffee, and upstairs Corinna achieved prodigies of bedmaking. But usually the rhythm of life was easy, with plenty of time for a talk, a smoke, or a song. The family, an astonishingly handsome one, treated one, like all the islanders of the archipelago, with the courtesy of good breeding: they expected one to accept the hospitality they could offer—perhaps 'expect' is not the word, because acceptance is taken for granted—and put their house and service at one's complete disposal. 'Ask for anything you want,' they said, and meant it.

The rare people who came to Giglio then did not generally

demand more than it could provide and, for all I know, today the good-natured excursionists and quantities of foreign tourists are no more demanding, for the Pergola vies in popularity with Renato's modern hotel. Scrupulous cleanliness, comfortable beds, a cold shower, or a soup-cauldron of charcoal-smelling hot water, brought with great, if puzzled, goodwill; for breakfast: coffee, poor, sourish island bread, a pot of jam, and a tin of butter set down by the tumbler of lilies and geraniums; and, for the rest, as much lobster, langouste, red mullet, and every sort and size of squid and prawn as one can wash down with the sherry-coloured local wine. At first, after the mild, well-bred wines of the Tuscan mainland, the strong rough wine of Giglio shocks the palate. But taste it with the white juicy flesh of a fresh young langouste, and you will believe that a benevolent Providence created them especially for each other—and for you.

All Giglio is like its wine. The people are clean, vigorous, handsome; their talk has colour, a racy tang to it and a straightforward and unequivocal bawdiness. Its shores are of granite, rough, but neither spectacular nor savage, dipping great smooth-washed flanks into the sea, heaving enormous sun-warmed surfaces out of the turf that one wants to pat like the backs of huge, friendly animals. The sand in the coves is coarse and crystalline, like brown sugar, the flowers grow with a lavish and unrestrained ebullience right to the sea's edge. In the spring mesembryanthemum makes a flaring magenta carpet on the headlands; the hillsides are waist-deep in toothpaste-pink cystus, in violently scented saffron broom; the thickets of lavender have outsize royal-purple flowers.

After a day walking the goat-paths, above the peacock sea, along cliffs which seemed to me like the creation of a millionaire rock-gardener, of scrambling down to an empty white cove to swim and sunbathe and swim again, to return to a deck-chair at the Pergola, prop my feet on the sea-wall, and watch the sea and sky darkening, sniffing the good smell of vegetable minestrone and of broiling lobsters or red mullet frying in oil, was a satisfaction as rarely to be matched as the eventual meal under the vines and the sleep which followed it.

But Giglio's character has been carved and toughened by the winds and the rains as well as by the sun and the sea. On scirocco days the islanders up in the fortress cling to door-jambs and shut

their eyes as the wind blasts the dust or the rain through their funnel-like streets. Outside the walls it is often hard to keep standing. Down below, in the port, doorways are deserted, the younger women drink camomile infusions 'for the nerves', and at the Pergola the family sits at the trestle tables gossiping with the local *carabinieri* or one of the schooner-owners having a *grappa*—probably on the house. The talk in the islands is nearly always of ships and the sea. All the Cavero sons are merchant sailors, although they used to take months or years off to help at the Pergola, and Demo owned barques of his own, trading pasta and flour from Genoa round the islands. One day two of his sons sailed out of the harbour in one of the laden barques. On the horizon he and Corinna saw their ship and their sons sucked to destruction in the black funnel of a whirlwind. They told me in the harbour that, after a great wail, the family went into the house, and without a word the old man took his fiddle and broke it across his knee, Corinna took her concertina, stripped off the ribbons, hung it on the wall, and her tall, red-haired daughter fetched her mandoline and hung it beside the concertina. That was years ago, but, although they will laugh and sing to other men's playing, and by the oil-lamp in winter Corinna will tell her endless, richly spiced sagas of the island, they have never made music any more.

That is the life of Giglio and of the little islands of the archipelago, a life that stretches back unchanged through the centuries because it is made up of fundamental human experience. But now the electric lights wink round the black pool of the harbour, the radio voices mix with the voices of the young fishermen singing to their guitars out on the jetty in the star-pointed darkness, and I dare not ask if anyone has bought a juke-box, so beloved of the fishermen. Someone has built, and is still enlarging, another hotel, *pensioni* are springing up on the hillside, and, over on the other side of the island at Campese, where an iron-ore mine scars the valley round the glass-green bay in which Ferdinand I built his tower, new villas are clustered on the low cliff above the bay, and the tower itself houses summer visitors from Milan. When I was there, there was no public transport to link Campese with the outside world, and a single aged motor-truck rattled up the stony road from the port to the fortress once a day; a young islander had bought a second-hand motor-scooter. The islanders proudly pointed to all this, for it was Progress, they said. 'All we need now,'

they added, 'is money from the Americans to develop the island – and then ... '

The bay of Campese was the starting point of my second and quite fresh experience of Giglio ten years later.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VIII

G. Adriani, in his contemporary history, describes Barbarossa's raid and gives the sale of Giglio to Eleanor: *Istoria de suoi Tempi* (Florence, 1583).

Vinta's report on conditions in Giglio is in Arch. Med. 1558. For a history of the Abbey of the Three Fountains (Le Tre Fontane) in the Roman diocese of SS. Vicenzo e Anastasio, see Moroni's *Diz. di Erudiz.*, Stor. eccl., vol. XIII; Orlando Malavolti's *Historia dei Fatti e Guerre de Sanese* (Venice, 1599).

The botanist Stefan Sommier's books on the flora of the islands are a mine of information, for he was keenly interested in history as well as botany. His bibliographies are without exception the most comprehensive I have found.

I have also found the following articles useful:

'Cenno Storico dell'Isola del Giglio', by A. Brizzi. *L'Ombrone*, nos. 31–51, and op. cit., nos. 2–22 (1899).

'Notizie Storiche dell'Isola di Giannutri', op. cit., nos. 21–9 (1900).

IX

GIGLIO 1960

'WHEN you arrive, ask at the port for Clemente Rum. He will take you to the villa.' That was all Dr Ugo Baldacci had written. The name had an improbable ring. An Arabian genie? A Saracen slave? A lamp to rub? A clap of my hands? No, just: 'Ask at the port.' The whole of my return to Giglio was of the stuff of fantasy. I was going to stay at the unknown villa of an unknown host (a friend of Gino's) who would not be there, but had ordered all to be prepared for my arrival, and warned two of his friends, who were already staying in the house, that I was to break in upon their solitude.

The sense of unreality had begun as the boat drew in to the harbour, my arrival coinciding with the advent of a visiting band from the mainland. The members of the company were dressed in medieval costumes of slashed and parti-coloured blue and yellow cotton. They gathered in the bows to play the ship into port. On the quay was mustered Giglio's band, the mayor, various functionaries and a guard of honour of Gigliese virgins in white blouses, presenting oars. Behind was gathered what seemed to be the entire population of the island. Where, I asked myself, should I find Clemente Rum in that crowd? And who would listen to or hear me ask for him? The two bands now struck up; greetings and pleasantries were being shouted across the intervening strip of sea. The notes bombarded the ship, the jetty, the near-by houses. The drums thudding were like cannon-balls falling. The two tunes the musicians played bore no relation to each other, unless as an expression of welcome and the joy of living. The crowd shouted and clapped, the blue-and-yellow musicians leaned far over the bows in a paroxysm of virtuosity, the Gigliese responded *fortissimo*. The seamen tried to clear the cluttered cables, the engine-room

bell shrilled. The German tourists called purposefully to one another as they stowed the remains of ham rolls in bulging bags. The Swiss took photographs and impeded ropes and rachets. Where was Clemente Rum in all that sea of faces?

Well, I decided, I could always go to the Pergola and find a Cavero, if I did not see one of them on the quay. I struggled down the gang-plank with my bags. The local aides to burdened travellers were fixed entranced and immobile by the visiting Orpheans. Opposite me stood a harassed but good-tempered carabineer. With no hope of success, I shouted in his ear:

'Signor Capitano [which is always safe and usually flattering], can you tell me where I may find Clemente Rum?'

'At once, Signora. I will call him.'

It had worked! Privately I apologized to Dr Baldacci for my doubts. It was undoubtedly a dream. For there before me, backed by a beaming and breathless policeman, rather like a good sheep-dog, stood a broadly smiling Clemente Rum. He was big, stout, in his fifties and wore a panama hat. He greeted me with warmth: 'Any guest of the Doctor's ... ' He was an old friend. He supervised all the affairs of the property on the Franco. The car was waiting; he would take me out himself. The crowds had prevented it from coming nearer.

We left the bandsmen and the young ladies now standing to attention with swaying oars. On the harbour paving, now widened, I noticed, a motor-car was waiting, and a second man, who shook hands with me and told me that he was Carboni, the Doctor's game-keeper out at the Franco. We went up behind the church on the Castello road. Nothing seemed to have changed: there were only a few more houses, I was glad to see, and we met no traffic on the road, though the driver told me with pride that there were now seven motor-cars on the island and two buses plying between the port, the Castello and Campese.

'Where are we going?' I asked.

'There's the boat waiting at Campese,' he said.

The sky ahead was turning pink and orange at the edge of the gold-flecked sea. A boat sailing into the sunset. It was at this point that I ceased to speculate. What was the good? My imagination was already outstripped. I didn't even ask: 'Where to?'

As we drove, Clemente told me the news of Giglio since I had left it. Demo Cavero was dead: old age—just faded out. Corinna—

she was a cousin of his—was still at the Pergola; they still took guests. Renato's hotel was different: modern and luxurious. There were still some who liked the old Pergola best. He said it with impartiality, but I felt he was proud of Renato's achievement. He told me that he was the son of a shipwright. His father had built most of the boats for the island, but he had found the work too hard and had turned to shore carpentry. All the joinery in Renato's new hotel came from his workshop. The shutters and doors at the Franco were all his work. I gathered that he was what is known as a 'cosy man'; he had built his daughter a new flat in his own house down at the port. He had another in Massa where he and his wife wintered. He had, too, ecclesiastical connections: his son was a priest and secretary to the Bishop of Massa.

He was immensely proud of Doctor Baldacci's confidence. He had, he said, transported all the hewn granite for the house on the Franco and disbursed the very considerable sums it had cost. I had the impression that he drew vicarious kudos from working for a rich man. It gave him status, it also obviously gave him the opportunity to indulge his lavishness, his free-spending instincts.

'What about this taxi?' 'I [or the Doctor] will take care of that,' and, during the whole of my stay, that was all I could ever get from him when it was a question of payment. Lordliness sat well on him.

Campese Bay lay like unruffled opalescent silk in the sunset, plum-purple in the shadow of the great rocky headland—the Franco—which bastioned it against the southerly winds. The empty, sleeping sea seemed barely to breathe. The foreshore, too, was deserted. Though I knew it of old, Ferdinand's tower looked different and romantic, caught up in the still enchantment. I wanted to pause and enjoy the quiet, the exquisite colouring, but there was nothing quiet about my genial genie. With extraordinary nimbleness for one of his bulk, he was out of the car heartily conjuring a beautiful brown lad from a boat drawn up in the pink shallows and urging me—rather, I felt, as he would have done a horse—with firm, hospitable words over the white sand to the water's edge. I took off my shoes and waded out to the boat. The water was cool; I half expected it to stain my feet pink. The boat, like all boats, smelt of salt and paint: a good smell. The brown boy gave me a hand over the gunwale. Clemente came splashing behind. A feeling of complete unreality seized me. I had no idea where the boat was

taking me. These friendly, helpful men had the inevitability of figures in a dream. I surrendered to time and place. I was enjoying myself very much indeed. With a great splutter the boy started the engine, and turned the boat south across the bay.

The purple shadow of the headland was suddenly cold. We were making now, I could see, for a little granite jetty, dwarfed by the cliffs, rising, ilex-topped, some five hundred feet above it. There was no sign of any human habitation. As we chugged nearer I could discern figures beside a jeep, and an apparently perpendicular rocky track, leading into the cliffs.

Cinzia d'Antona, my charming deputy hostess, little Giovanna, the housekeeper's daughter, and Adalgiso, who drove the jeep, were there to welcome me. Clemente hailed them heartily. There was an untroubled deliberation, a mutual enjoyment which was infinitely soothing after the cynical sharpness, the noisy pace of the Florentines. We all climbed into the jeep except the brown boy, who lay down in the boat to await Clemente's return. I was given the seat of honour next to Adalgiso. Jolting and swaying over enormous boulders, we climbed perilously. I held on to the side and looked round surreptitiously: my companions were completely at ease. Far below, the circle of the bay was contracting. On each side, the *macchia* was giving way to ilex trees. To the left, across a valley, I discerned the Castello, still above us and already light-pricked. Suddenly we stopped at a steel-posted wire fence. It was at least twelve feet high and curved inwards at the top. On either side it stretched away among the trees; in that lovely, twilit landscape it halted one as effectively emotionally as it did physically. I was all in favour of privacy, all for excluding those perils of the archipelago: the eager, sun-reddened, hairy, Leica-slung, little-straw-hatted contents of large Mercedes motor-cars with D or a red cross on their number-plates. But this protection seemed excessive, since the Franco peninsula could be approached only by boat or the two-mile mule-path from the Castello.

'It goes all round the estate,' said Adalgiso, 'rather like a concentration camp, isn't it?'

I thought so, too.

Carboni got down and unlocked the gate and we drove through into a level tunnel of ilex leaves. Carboni locked the gate behind us.

'It's for the moufflon,' he explained, 'they'll jump any ordinary fence.'

My absent host, a passionate hunter, I learned, had imported the moufflon from Corsica. They had increased, and now Turridù, the big buck, lorded it over twelve females and young.

'Giovanna won't go out on the cliff path alone, she says Turridù will chase her,' they said.

'He's fierce,' Giovanna warned me.

'Only when he's with the herd,' said Carboni, defending Turridù.

'Who's going to wait and see?' retorted Giovanna, with spirit.

We were emerging from the night of the ilex drive on to the top of the headland, blurred in the last reflected glow of the sunset, and there, among young fir trees and flowering shrubs, set snug under the lee of the cliff's last lift before it plunged into the sea was, not a traditional Mediterranean villa, but a delightful, long, low, granite and Roman-brick house, with big windows, a welcoming housekeeper in the big porch, and the sea, away below, on three sides of it. It was so far below one did not hear it.

* * *

At night, when one woke, the silence seemed tangible. It was not only the absence of traffic, but of the thick, close-textured noise woven by summer insects, night birds, rustling leaves. My room looked across the dividing valley, the Val dell'Ortana, to the Castello. Leaning out I could see the sea in Campese bay to the left, and to the right a flash of blue water under the cliffs of the Cala del Allume, dominated by the fifteen-hundred-foot bulk of Monte Pagana.

The slow slopes to the Castello are covered with vines and the little huts called *palmenti*, erected over basins and channels cut in the living granite to hold the grape-juice pressed on the spot.

The reforming Grand Duke Peter Leopold ordered all the land in Giglio to be divided among the peasants with the exception of the Franco, where, from time immemorial, the Gigliese had the free right of wood-cutting. How, I asked Clemente, seeing that this was so, did it fall to the private owner from whom Dr Baldacci bought it? 'Weren't the people indignant?'

'Why no,' said Clemente, as if this question was too simple to ask. 'It was the mayor who bought and sold it.'

This simple *sine qua non* had to satisfy me. So here, one hundred and fifty hectares were enclosed by the high wire fence, the water piped at great cost from a spring away across the valley, the

moufflon let loose, and, where hitherto had stood only a little old farm, the whole miniature complexus rose on the rocky saddle. The house, the separate games room, the hunting lodge (with big feudal-looking hall and six visitors' bedrooms, bathrooms and kitchen), Carboni's cottage, the stables for the donkeys, the granary and the wine-store, the latest thing in manure heaps, the power-house, the water-tanks, the rain-gauge, the bronze moufflon wind-vane, the laundry on a drying yard the size of two tennis courts—and tennis courts they probably would have been had the owner been English or American. Of this new, superbly equipped kingdom Carboni was proud viceroy. He showed it with loving respect, and displayed the baby donkey's long-lashed eyes like a proud father. The wind, he told me, was the worst enemy he had—that and the rabbits and the hares, which the Doctor preserved as game. Despite the full troughs of golden maize he was ordered to provide for them daily, the wretched creatures ate the young vines and all his plants. So he had made a little nursery garden, protected from wind and livestock by a thick brushwood hedge. Inside were carefully tended flowers and saplings, salad leaves and herbs, for the housekeeper, Eleonora, to use in cooking.

The house was Eleonora's domain. She and Giovanna, who is her daughter, administer it from an enchanting kitchen of pink and deep-blue flowered tiles. The architect had built a traditional Tuscan kitchen containing an open brick cooking hearth with, to one side, the charcoal pit—which gives meat or fish grilled over it a delicious, distinctive flavour—and a benched alcove with refectory table. But the sink is in purdah behind a delicate-grey plastic venetian blind, and the old-fashioned bread-oven is closed, not by rough black iron, but by a metal-backed plaque of polished oak with an arabesque of solid brass for handle. The chimney canopy, too, is gleaming copper instead of homely brick. No wonder it still seemed a palace and a heavy responsibility to them.

My room was floored with pale yellow marble. The perfectly draped curtains and the bedspread matched. The bathroom was tiled in pale green, the furniture was old Tuscan, painted pale-green or stripped down to the wood. There were five other similarly equipped rooms, each in a different colour-scheme. It was all very beautiful and unmarred. I longed to give it just a little kick, an infinitesimal scratch, or, better still, wished that my absent host or his wife and four children had set the seal of their personalities upon that perfect house. Bruno Vangelisti, the Lucchese antique dealer, had been charged with the décor, Cinzia told me, 'but Ugo inspects every piece before he buys it.' Vangelisti was not accepted as the ultimate authority. Nevertheless, one felt his hand in the superb library, where I worked on the manuscripts I had come to see; with its huge granite fireplace, its rows of beautifully bound sporting books, the armour, the trophies, the antique pistol inkstand, the electric lights concealed in polished horns, it was all kept speckless and shining by Eleonora and Giovanna.

Bruno Vangelisti made his name by the décor for the film of *War and Peace*, and a beautiful spectacle it was. His expanded galleries in Lucca are much visited by both Italians and foreigners, and he still has some enviable and expensive objects. The furniture in the Franco was charming and suitable, but aloof and non-committal. I looked in vain for a clue to my host's character, to that of his family: there wasn't even an old coat, a sun-hat, a child's scratched pair of sandals in the hall. Not a broken, weathered toy among Carboni's pudding-shaped rosemary bushes.

'Tell me,' I begged the d'Aconas, 'what is Dr Baldacci *like*?'

But, perhaps because, becoming part of oneself, one's old friends cannot be objectively analysed, they could only tell me that he was a kind, quiet, very busy man. He still personally directs the pharmaceutical laboratories which he inherited from his father. It was, however, from the affectionate loyalty of the Gigliese that I discovered more of Dr Baldacci's good nature, his generosity and his love for the island. For the islanders sum up a man with the clear-eyed, intuitive perception that children possess, and they are not impressed by wealth alone. That he was genuinely and selflessly hospitable I learned for myself. But I still feel that he eludes me, and to this day the Franco and its owner remain a dream, with all the lacunae and inconsistencies that, dreaming, we accept, and only question when we wake.

Social intercourse is an integral part of island hospitality, so that when Eleonora had cooked and fed us, Giovanna had waited upon us, washed and ironed our clothes and finished her hundred-and-one self-appointed tasks about the house, and Adalgiso had put the jeep in the garage, they would severally or together join us for conversation on the long, granite-pillared and benched loggia. They have complete social ease, a courtesy which is gracious and sincere,

and at the same time a delightful innocence which is by no means immature or unintelligent. They talked about the island, and I followed their narratives on the superb majolica relief map which is let into the loggia wall. They explained why so many of the vine terraces are now empty. Since the phylloxera attacked the vines five or six years ago, the owners had not replaced them with the 'American grafts', which were resistant and gave a good yield, because they wanted more return for the hours of labour absorbed by viticulture. They were now producing enough wine only for their own needs, or were even buying it, and seeking employment in the pyrites mine or as labourers on the mainland.

But all over Italy there is surplus wine production. Of the 4,800 million gallons of wine produced in the world today, about half comes from Italy and France, and of that Italy produces 1,300 million gallons. According to the statistics, her home consumption, including the making of alcohol and aperitifs and together with her exports, is about the same amount. In 1958 and 1959 the country produced 1,480 and 1,430 million gallons, which meant an unsold surplus. Since most of the wine is ordinary, it cannot be stored in bottles, and the peasants need their casks from year to year – a big cask is costly. Unlike France, Italy has no control over vine-planting, no effective protection of trade-marks.

I wanted to know why the vineyards were not used for other cultivation. The answer is: it does not pay.

Domenico and Cinzia d'Antona, who are landowners, shared my regret at this evident decline in the Italian smallholdings, and also in the *mezzadria* system. They attribute it to mechanization which, in the fertile fields and orchards of large enterprises in the north, is yearly gaining ground and increasing production. Machines are expensive: the peasant and the small estate-owner cannot afford the capital outlay. There is, apparently, lack of co-operation in sharing them, yet the purely manual agriculturist cannot compete in markets of any size today.

Giglio is poor: no wonder the Gigliese, like the Elbans, fasten their hopes on the tourist trade. Up at the Castello with Clemente, I noticed how the ruins had increased. The breach in the medieval walls was larger.

'Hè, Barbarossa!' called an old woman at the well.

Clemente smiled sheepishly. 'They used to call me that,' he explained.

The figures of the islands' history are still very much alive.

* * *

Eleonora is a widow, born and bred in the Castello, where she owns one of the medieval houses. From her one gathered the sense of a mountain community at the same time governed by the sea. The sea had taken toll of her family, as it had of so many of the island families. Giovanna has never left Giglio, but her social competence and poise would not be out of place in a London drawing-room. She is small and dark. Adalgiso, also island-born, is fair, blue-eyed, sun- and wind-reddened. He is engaged to Giovanna.

'He has an English name,' she told me and pronounced it proudly.

'Write it down for me, Adalgiso,' I said, not recognizing it on Giovanna's lips.

Adalgiso took my pen and wrote among my notes in large capital letters: BROTHEL.

'See, English,' said Giovanna, as if she was conferring an accolade on her betrothed. 'It is an English name? You know it? Is it rare, or common in England?'

Let no one, I prayed, ever tell her. 'Yes, Giovanna,' I replied, 'a very rare English name indeed.'

She smiled at Adalgiso.

'Do you hear that?' They beamed at each other.

Giovanna and Carboni usually accompanied us for our evening walks. Dr Baldacci had built his house round the old farm, which faced out to sea but was sheltered from the westerly gales by the rise of the cliff-edge, so that from the loggia the water was not visible. But in order to enjoy the sunset over the sea he had had, on the sea-side, a level road blasted and cut in the steep *macchia*-scented cliffs, from which the golden floor of the sea three hundred feet below stretched away to the blue-grey shadow of Corsica. The whole coast-line to the south, with its steep-walled bays, its wild promontories, its overhanging screes, turned rose-coloured in the summer evening, glowed briefly, miraculously, then, as the sky faded to green, died to its own granite blue, later to be transmuted, in its turn, to shining steel under the rising moon.

Beauty lay not only in colour but in a crystalline atmosphere, in the thin, pure air and, above all, in that silence which is bound up

in my mind with the Franco. It was a silence that demanded respect, an immense cosmic silence with a healing quality which made one lower one's voice as in a church which has been sanctified by prayer. My companions shared this compulsion, so that, when we were not listening to Giovanna's chatter or to Carboni's constantly voiced preoccupations with the moufflon, which remained persistently invisible, we would fall silent, and Domenico d'Antona would climb out to a boulder and sit contemplating the sea, and Cinzia and I would follow and sit, each on our separate stones, drinking great draughts of peace.

The cliff-side in the midday sun was a different place.

'Where do you bathe?' I asked Cinzia.

'Down there.' She indicated a shingle-filled inlet between the rocks. It seemed just below our feet. I could discern the rudiments of a path zig-zagging at a perilous angle through the scrub.

'Isn't it rather an exhausting climb up in the sun?'

'Domenico does it, but usually the jeep comes to fetch me,' she replied.

'The *jeep*?' I said faintly, hoping I did not look as frightened by the appalling prospect as I felt.

'Yes, it's so convenient,' she said tranquilly.

I must confess I never got used to it. Tilted over the Mediterranean at an angle of never less than one in three, and usually all but vertical, rocking with a forty-five-degree list over granite boulders, I simply shut my eyes and commended my soul to God. At least, I seriously thought, it would be a lovely time and place in which to leave my body. But the instinct of self-preservation was strong, and I found myself sighing with relief when Adalgiso had backed round the last sheer-edged hairpin bend above the cove.

Clemente Rum extended our host's hospitality beyond Giglio's shores. When I expressed my determination to fulfil my ten-year-old ambition and get to Giannutri at all costs, and the d'Antonas shared my ambition, he made one of his expansive gestures and his usual reply: 'Ci penso io', which is the equivalent of: 'Leave it to me.' He was a superb and brisk organizer. Thus, we found ourselves one sparkling morning being shepherded on board the weekly tourist ship out of San Stefano for Giannutri, by a regretful Clemente with Domenico's straw topi (which he had admired and received as a present) tilted over his twinkling eyes.

'You must excuse me for not accompanying you,' he apologized, as if he felt that he was failing in his duties as proxy host by not doing the honours of the island for which we were bound. 'But it is small and you will find the Roman ruins quite easily. There are no houses there, except the little summer-house of the Ruffos, but luncheon is served on board. The boat is due back here in the afternoon and I'll meet you with the car. Buon divertimento.'

We sailed out into the brilliant blue morning, waving to the sweeping straw topi on the jetty.

A sense of triumph swept over me: I was bound for Giannutri at last. To get there I willingly became one of a band of tourists; indeed, with my delightful companions, it hardly mattered that we did not have our own vessel. Until the previous summer, the little island had been unattainable except by privately chartered fishing barque, which had been beyond my pocket.

Giannutri is the smallest island of the archipelago. Its two and a quarter square kilometres lie fourteen kilometres south-east of Giglio and about as far from the Argentario promontory. It is low and undulating, less than three hundred feet above sea-level. Like the Argentario, it belonged to the powerful Roman family, the Aenobarbi, who built a villa there. When the Roman buildings fell into decay, early Christian hermits sheltered, I suppose, in the ruined honeycomb of *opus reticulatum* walls, which still stands behind the patrician halls. The corsairs followed the cenobites, using the minute circular harbour and the Roman brick quay; then the little island was abandoned to the winds—not even used, as were all the other islands of the archipelago, as a place of exile, a prison. 'Some time before 1914,' Clemente told us, 'Giannutri was sold to the Ruffo della Scaletta family for twenty-five thousand lire.' They have done nothing on the island but build a small, barge-boarded dwelling and wooden outhouses, which are admirably simple but cannot be commended for architectural merit. Fortunately, being behind some old, twisted stone-pines, they are invisible from the ruins of the villa.

The owners are obliged to allow the public to visit the ruins, which come within the category of National Monuments, but a human watch-dog was landed with us to see that we did not infringe the privacy of the rest of the island. This young seaman circled the flock, patiently pursued down the tangle of cliff-paths the more independent of the visitors, repeating adjurations to

Keep-to-the-Path, for which the noble proprietors, if not ourselves perpetually straying, must have been grateful. But he was infinitely preferable to a barbed-wire fence, his admonitions to notice-boards.

Two small rocky headlands, in which traces of masonry seemed to be embedded, held a harbourage of vivid, emerald-green water, so clear that I almost expected it to crack and flaw as the boat edged alongside a small quay, half natural rock, half cut granite. Beside it, thin red Roman bricks made a broken slip-way and shored up the earthy cliff.

There is no publication, as far as I know, about the Roman remains in the archipelago, and I gather that practically no field work has been done. Giannutri is untouched. We felt the lack of some expert to interpret to us, who had no knowledge of domestic Roman architecture, the bewildering number of walls flanking the beautiful, fine, black-and-white mosaic path—upon which I felt we should not be walking—between the turf banks, the rocky outcrops, the pines and clumps of *macchia*. It appeared to us to be a street of little houses. Had they belonged to servants? Slaves of the household? To poor relatives? To free civilians settled there? I should like to know. But when, up a flight of marble steps, we finally reached the ruined villa itself, its broken columns and capitals set against the blue sea, our curiosity was momentarily overwhelmed by sheer delight. From another mosaic pavement, one pillar rose intact among its shattered fellows. It was a superb situation. From the tessellated floor the Aenobarbi could sit encircled on three sides by the green- and purple-streaked sea, set in gleaming pillars; snuff up the fresh cool winds, enjoy the silence and the solitude. But did they? More probably they were temporarily relieved of worry about plotting enemies on the mainland —perhaps they plotted themselves.

But, standing there, I did not speculate. I was silenced by beauty. Why were these silvery, stricken pillars so moving? The single, slender loveliness on the headland above the sea so poignant? In retrospect, their physical beauty was not so remarkable. Does their power to stir lie, like that of flowers, in their transience? The regret their ruin rouses in our mortal human hearts? *Sic transit gloria mundi* is almost a cliché, but what are clichés but well-worn and too-familiar truths? Certainly with me, who have read my Gibbon, it cannot be association. The patrician families who inhabited that small palace were, in all probability, decadent and cruel, the fine mosaic floors swept by homesick slaves. But out there, on the headland, where only the pine-filtered wind broke the silence, enclosed in that crystalline essence which is indefinably light and air, soft and sharp, soothing and invigorating, delight defied analysis.

* * *

My last night on the island I was the guest of Renato in his new hotel, for the boat left at six o'clock in the morning, and to set out from the Franco would mean disturbing the household at four. Renato, courteous as ever, with the grave grace which had struck me so forcibly ten years ago, had, it transpired (for I had, at his request, 'left it to' Clemente), no rooms vacant, but he had given me his son's room in his own private quarters. Earlier I had visited his mother and sister at the Pergola, where only the square, white-haired figure of Demo was missing. Corinna wept when we talked of him, but smiled proudly through her tears at Renato's achievement, which, however one regrets it, is considerable and deserving of respect.

Renato's hotel, with its big wooden terrace built over the sea, was delightful—if one was inside it. I ordered an aperitif at the bar and sat watching the young visitors in the ultra-modern 'lounge'. I tried to pay for it, but was told, 'Renato says there is no charge.' He took my order for an excellent dinner; going to bed, I begged a bill to save time in the morning. Renato said gravely, 'There is no bill.'

Certainly, I cannot ever repay my Giglio friends in money for their hospitality.

X

THE GRAND DUCHY

COSIMO had no intention of remaining Duke of Florence and of sharing the lordship of half a dozen small islands. He had made dynastic marriages for the Medici and he was making a position for himself from which he could rise to rulership of a Grand Duchy, recognized as a power in Europe.

Eleven years had passed since he bought Giglio and put an adequate garrison into the castle. Portoferraio had its growing pains but was firmly established as the chief Tuscan naval port. Tuscany itself was strongly placed athwart the never very peaceful territories whose overlords watched each other with suspicion. At the particular moment, 1569, which Cosimo chose, the attention of these powers was engaged in their own troubled affairs: France was coping with the Turks in Hungary; England was at war with Spain and the Pope was choosing a circumspect path in the labyrinth of European power-politics.

The only man who had the right to create him Grand Duke was Maximilian II. Cosimo knew that the Emperor, like his uncle, Charles V, would not for a moment entertain the idea of raising to reigning monarch a man of the Medici's bourgeois antecedents. There remained the Pope: Pius V was fanatically anti-Protestant. Cosimo, to his eternal shame, bought the Pope's favour with the life of his friend and adviser, Carnsecchi, whom he handed over to be condemned to burning by the Inquisition. What else he did to achieve his ends I do not know; no doubt there were private political agreements, but he was crowned Grand Duke of Tuscany by Pius in Rome in 1570, after the Pope had issued a Bull announcing his decision to do so, 'owing to his [Cosimo's] many good offices to the Papal See'. Germany and Spain naturally refused to recognize Cosimo's new title; France and England, whose policy

was always to oppose Spain, accepted his new rank. Gradually the smaller countries followed suit. Grand-ducal crowns appeared in paint and stone. In modern idiom it might be said that Cosimo was master of the methods of suggestion, for we find the 'Grand Duke of Tuscany' figuring almost everywhere in place of 'the Duke of Fioranza', and in 1576, two years after Cosimo's death, the Emperor Maximilian, presumably realizing that he could do nothing short of using force against the presumption of the rulers of Tuscany, himself conferred on Francesco, Cosimo's heir, the title of Grand Duke and went one further by officially pronouncing Tuscany a Grand Duchy.

Whether Cosimo regarded this as the culminating point of his career, or whether his phenomenal activities had exhausted his energies, he becomes a less clear-cut figure in Tuscany's history in the last four years of his life. He retired to his home at Castello with a mistress, Camilla, and subsequently married her. He was succeeded by his second son, Francesco I, a passionate scientist. Francesco took a mild interest in the islands and renewed his father's lease of the Rio mines for ninety years at thirteen thousand ducats yearly. He seems to have been carried forward rather by the impetus of his father's administration than by any initiative of his own.

According to the auditor of Piombino, the Elbans, Jacobo's subjects, were in a bad way, despite the abolition of duty between Portoferraio and the rest of the island. The Turks and pirates were still making spasmodic raids on the island, as we know from the letters from Capoliveri. Relations, never of the best between the Medici and the Appiani, were further strained over the question of who should fortify Montecristo and Pianosa. Why the Spaniards neither acted nor were asked to, is puzzling. Since the battle of Lepanto in 1571, in which the twelve ships of the Knights of San Stefano had signally contributed to Don John's great victory (and kept the shipyard at Portoferraio busy with repairs), the fleets of the Mediterranean raiders had been deterred by the Knights' increasing renown. Spanish-Italian relations, however, had not been improved by Philip II's assumption that, as their overlord, he had a right to the service of the Order's ships without paying for it. This may have had something to do with the reluctance of Francesco and Alessandro d'Appiano to give the Spaniards yet another foothold in the archipelago. Francesco sent a detachment

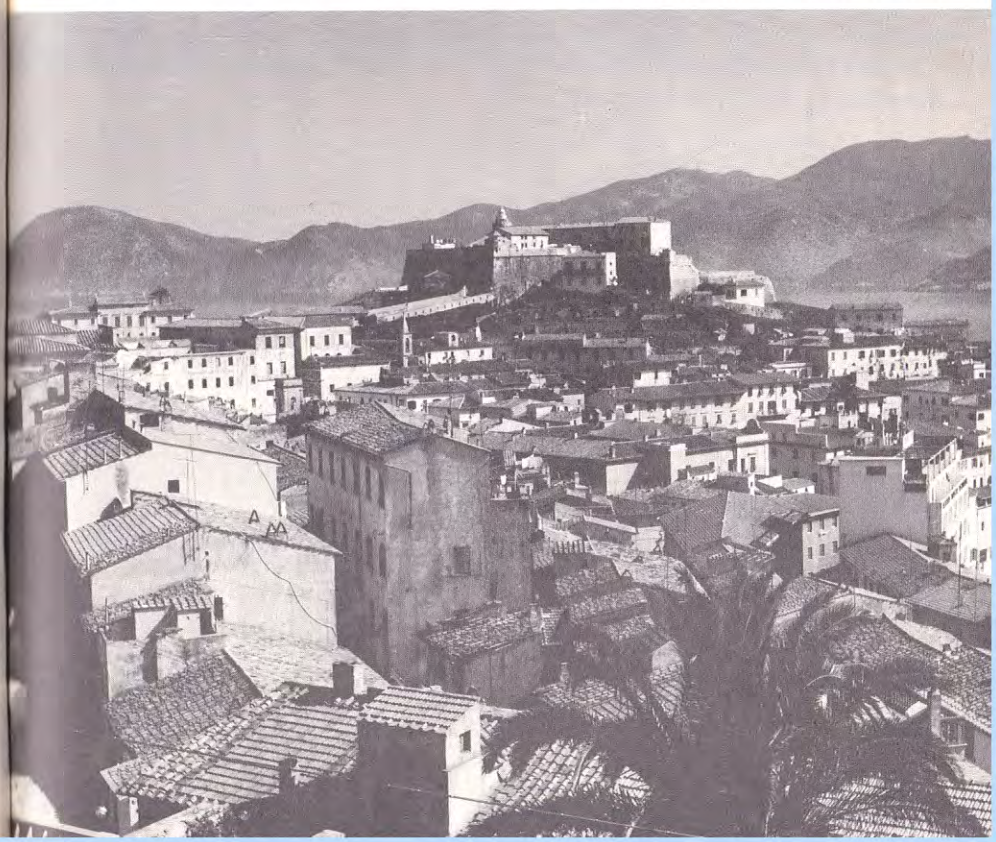
of soldiers to Rio to protect his iron interests, which made more bad blood when the Spanish garrison turned them back and took possession of the iron revenue.

It was not the further fortification of Elba nor political alliances on the continent which interested Francesco. Fascinated by the alembics and retorts of his laboratories, by the sparkle and sheen of crystal, tourmalines, lapis lazuli, porphyry and serpentine, he regarded the Rio mines as a source of supply for the costly products of his *pietra dura* workshop in the Uffizi. They yielded deep-rose-coloured beryls, large aquamarines and quartz, and crystal formations described by one of the *Relazioni* as 'spectacular'. The quarrying of the coloured granite—red, grey, honey, green—and the pink and grey *brocatello* (which was used in St Peter's and the Duomo at Pisa) were not his concern, for they were in the western part of the island, in Appiano territory.

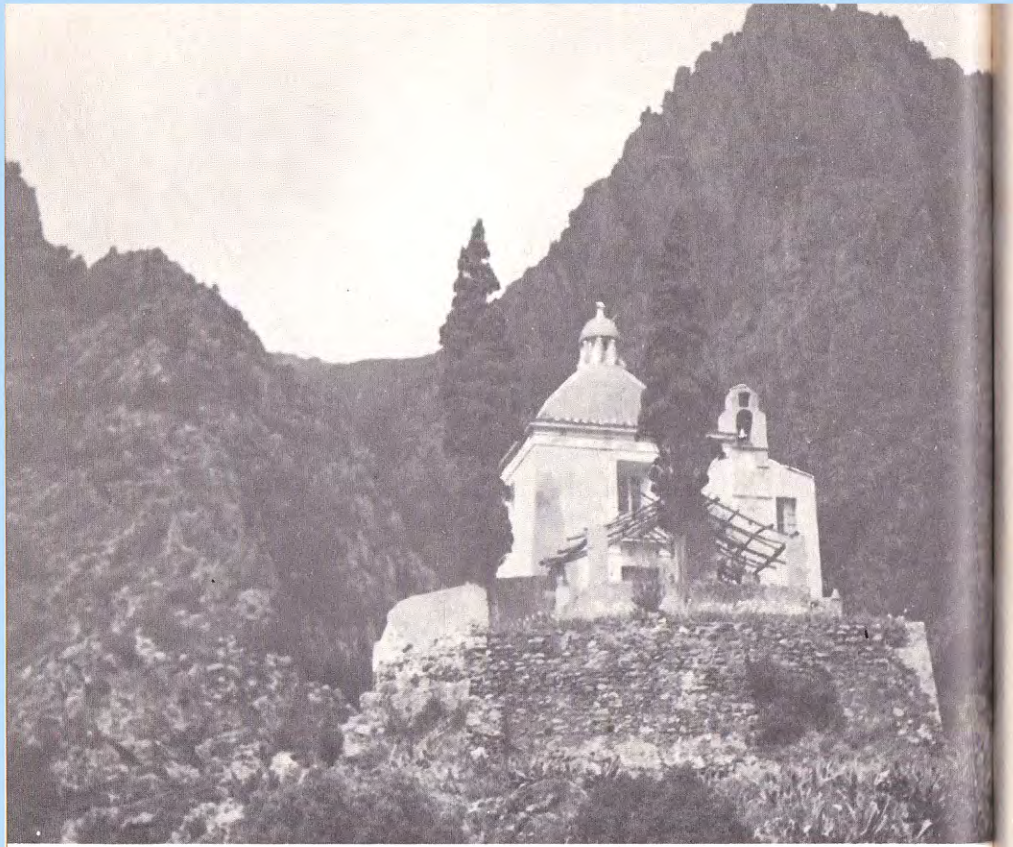
Francesco's craftsmen and the artists of what became, in his brother Ferdinand's reign, the Royal Manufactory, used countless varieties of stone in the intricate mosaic designs and pictures which they built up with infinite patience. It was the idiosyncratic, the rare colour-combinations and markings upon which they depended for their sets of wine-cups, their cabinets, their figures of saints. Saints in stone robes, in lapis-lazuli girdles—in the Pitti Silver Museum one can see them, their polished feet set on serpentine pedestals. Was it, I wonder, Elban serpentine from the savage screes, groomed into this tame sophistication? The rooms of the Medici palace are full of these rich objects: jasper and chalcedony cups and more cups, gold-set reliquaries, shrines, crucifixes—ingenuity run riot and petrified. Stone mocks silk, mocks flesh; tortoise-shell, amber and precious stones mock the simplicity of the carpenter's Son.

There is, too, much elaborately worked crystal: crystal made into reliquaries and chalices, into fish, banded and collared with gold, carved cups and coffers. Crystal was much in demand in the sixteenth century. The gem-engravers of Florence were given rank with the painters; there was John of the Cornelians, Domenico of the Cameos, who used a giant ruby for a portrait, Valerio Vicentino and his daughter who excelled in carved crystals and who were greatly patronized by the Medici Pope, Clement VII. For him they made the famous crystal casket engraved with scenes of the Crucifixion which he presented to Francis I, and 'some lovely

Volterraio



Fort Stella and Portoferraio roofs



The Sanctuary of Monserrato

The mountain with the iron cross from Barbarossa's Cove

figures of Peace and a marvellous crystal cross ... ' Antonio de' Rossi, who carved cameo portraits of Cosimo and all his family; Ludovico, son of Il Marmita, who carved the lovely crystal ovals for the silver casket a Salviati Cardinal gave to Eleanor, and a score more. The Florentine workshops glinted with quartz dust, sparkled with refracted light. Francesco experimented in melting crystals to refashion into vases.

* * *

When I linger in the little shops of Elba where clusters of crystal specimens from the mines and quarries, lying among the common man-made shapes, give me a peculiar shock of delight, I regret Francesco's wasted time. Did he really think he could achieve greater beauty? Do his vases in the Pitti hold a hundredth part of the fascination of the complicated creation of the inorganic world left to its own devices? Crystals, with their laws of rationality, of constancy of angles, have always delighted and fascinated me: perhaps because, with their satisfying planes of symmetry, they incorporate, like music, that mathematical balance and constant harmony which we all seek and which we call happiness – when we mean satisfaction.

Rafaello Foresi, of the Elban family who did so much to preserve and record the various aspects of the island, made a collection of local minerals. The collection was described by a nineteenth-century visitor to Portoferraio. It must have been beautiful, but no one can tell me where it is now.

* * *

Francesco was fortunate in his governor of Portoferraio. The Montauto family had served Cosimo in the archipelago, and later, at least, there are records of its members holding land in the island. Both Giulio and Francesco were admirals and Knights of San Stefano. Francesco de' Medici had relied almost exclusively on the Knights of San Stefano and let the galleys deteriorate. But in 1574 the Turks were out again in force, and he took Don John of Austria's advice to improve his defences. From Francesco Montauto's letters it appears that he was continuing the strengthening of the fortresses and the raising of their walls, 'so that an armed man could not jump down'. He also had a mole built to take the boom of the port. Together with the engineer Buontalenti, he was

building more aqueducts and water mills, and in the year of Francesco's death, 1587, he had reinforced the bastions between the Linguella and the Stella and strengthened the garrison as a precaution against Hassan Pasha, who was buccaneering in the Mediterranean.

Two years before this, Jacobo d'Appiano had died. His death brought more trouble to the unfortunate Elbans, who, hungry though they often were, were at last enjoying a precarious peace. The heir to the principality was Jacobo's legitimized son, Alessandro. Like his Medici namesake, he was a vicious young man, hated by the Piombinese but, strangely enough, not by the Elbans. Perhaps they had less experience of his outrageous behaviour, or felt that kind of loyalty for the Appiani which reserves the right of criticism to itself. In 1589 he was assassinated in Piombino with, it was said, Spanish connivance. There is no direct evidence in the Piombinese archives that this was so, but Don Felice d'Aragona, the Spanish military governor, certainly was elected Signore of Piombino, although the Piombinese had wanted a republic.

The Elbans, however, had strong views on the subject. Mellini, Medicean man of confidence, wrote from Portoferraio to the Grand Duke Ferdinand (who had succeeded his brother, Francesco, two years previously):

> They are resolute in wanting neither Spanish nor Piombinese. Piombino sent over a Commissioner: the Riese wanted to kill him but were dissuaded and so drove him away. Moreover, they have sent word to the Signora [Isabella di Mendoza, Jacobo's widow] to remove the Spanish garrison from the Giove Tower, in order that they may man it for their own Signore and, if the Piombinese have been traitors, they want all the more to show their faithfulness. And they can take the fort, for the garrison have only one day's victuals.

On pretext of keeping order Ferdinand sent a detachment of soldiers to Rio.

According to precedent, Felice d'Aragona retorted promptly not only by driving out the Tuscans and reinforcing the Giove tower with his own men, but by manning the tower on the harbour as well and taking possession of the iron ore and revenues. He was preparing to send men to all the Appiano strongholds in the island, but the Tuscans at Portoferraio forestalled him by 'arming and

victualling all islanders averse to the new régime and sending contingents of soldiers to Rio (both up and down) and to Capoliveri'.

Ferdinand must have felt himself in a strong position, thus openly to challenge Spain in the person of the Viceroy of Naples. The elders of Rio were equally bold. Conscious of Rio's worth, they were, true to their tradition, outspoken: 'Your Excellency, we assure you that we hold firmly to our devotion to our rightful Lord of the House of Appiano. We have sought help of munitions and men from the Grand Duke in order to defend our Lord.' If, as he had objected, the Riese had refused to supply the Spanish garrison with bread, it was because, being short of grain, they had had already to borrow from Portoferraio. They would not, they asserted roundly, have any truck with the Piombinese, 'nor see nor hear them mentioned'. They refused to allow the Piombinese ships to load any ore.

As in the past, Rio won. The powerful Viceroy of Naples, virtual ruler of the whole of the Spanish Southern Command, sent ships and men to arrest the usurper and to remove the Spanish garrisons from Rio. Nothing was said of the Riesi's refusal to cooperate with the Spanish troops.

The Riesi must always have had that impressive quality of authority and dignity which I admire in Lidia and her mother.

The Spanish ships took Don Felice in chains to Naples, leaving Jacobo VI's young son, Cosimo, installed as Jacobo VII of Piombino, under the regency of his mother, and a strong garrison 'to keep order'. Isabella promptly left Piombino for Genoa, followed, we are tantalizingly told, 'by all sorts of scandal'. Meanwhile, Ferdinand was preparing for the day of the weakly Appiano's death. The Emperor would have to be propitiated, as he was now obviously the arbiter of Piombino's fate. Together with large sums of money he sent Rudolf I a request that, in the event of the last Appiano's demise, the feuds of Pianosa and Montecristo might devolve on him; to which the Emperor replied 'in his own hand' that, with reservations, Ferdinand would be favourably considered for Piombino 'at the next vacancy'.

In 1603 Jacobo VII died at the age of twenty, and the Conde de Benevente, the new Viceroy of Naples, was secretly instructed to take possession of the state and dispatch troops to Elba. He forthwith drafted seven companies of Spanish infantry from Genoa, under Captain Joseph de Pons, to Longone. Piombino's population

was decimated by malaria and bullied by tyrannizing Spaniards, and the state had no predictable future save as a colony of Spain or a part of Tuscany. Could it have been the incidence of recurrent malaria, sapping as it does all vitality and initiative, which was at least in part responsible for the apparent supineness of the Piombinese and its rulers? They revolted, it is true, but Spanish agitators were behind them, and Appiano rule, if hitherto not oppressive, had always been inefficient.

From the more stimulating ambience of Genoa, however, Isabella now conducted a fierce campaign for the succession of her daughter and namesake, who had married a Mendoza uncle. The Principality was once more at the cynical disposal of the great powers: Spain supported the claim of Carlo Sforza, whose title, as a descendant of Jacobo III, had been usurped by Alessandro, and whom the Piombinese elected as Signore; the Emperor Rudolf I, who a few years previously had reasserted *de jure* his feudal rights, opposed Sforza and Spain, contending that Piombino and its islands was a fief of Austria, that the Emperor Maximilian I had invested the succession in Jacobo IV and his sons, and that, in view of this and the Salic law, it should revert to the Appiano female line. An Imperial contingent marching in to enforce this ruling was stoutly resisted by the Spanish garrison.

For nine years the Piombinese did not know who was their lawful ruler. The Medici did their utmost to secure the Principality and the islands, without avail. Isabella spent the greater part of the rent from the Rio mines on legal advice, and on preparing her case to be heard in Vienna. Then, in 1610, it was decided between Madrid and Vienna that the Appiani should have their own state back on payment of 100,000 gold ducats. No sooner had this been agreed than the Emperor changed his mind and reinstated Sforza. Isabella and her officers refused to abandon the government. Sforza waited a year, then resorted to force, whereupon the Viceroy of Naples had him arrested. The hearing of Isabella's case in Vienna was pure mockery. The price of an Imperial decision in her favour blatantly went up from year to year. She was very nearly ruined. Finally, the pressure of European events led Austria to recognize Piombino and Elba as fiefs of Spain.

But Austria had not renounced the policy of extorting money from Piombino. For four years Isabella had been left in peace. She, in the meantime, had married one of the powerful Orsini of

Bracciano, whose influence in Rome and the Maremma was considerable. This annoyed the Spaniards, ever watching the balance of power in the territory immediately surrounding their Southern Command, so that when, in 1626, the Emperor Ferdinand II took up the attack and decided that Belisario d'Appiano should have Piombino on paying 800,000 ducats, the Viceroy of Naples, secretly briefed, refused to allow him to borrow the money from the Grand Duke of Tuscany, declaring that the Appiani could not mortgage state revenues to a foreign prince. Spain then proceeded to put forward her own choice. Possibly to curry favour with the Vatican, the Spaniards chose Niccolò Ludovisi, nephew of Gregory XV, and brother of the influential cardinal. He was the widower of a rich woman and had married as his second wife the younger Isabella's daughter, Polissena Mendoza; he therefore ranked as one of the family.

The Ludovisi 'dynasty' was established unopposed.

All these changes, these barterings of the Piombinese and the Elbans, disrupted the economy of the Principality and not least the Elban iron trade, and financially the Medici were the principal sufferers.

NOTES TO CHAPTER X

For this chapter I have drawn largely on Moisè (loc. cit.), Vasari, Colonel Young for the Medici and Florence, and the excellent *Miniere e Ferro dell' Elba* (op. cit.) for the affairs of the Appiani and of Rio.

For the Knights of San Stefano, G. G. Guarnieri is always the authority.

Francesco Montauto's letter is in Carte del G. D. Francesco, F.95.

The letter from Mellini (Misc. Med., vol. 903, 27) and those from and about the elders of Rio (loc. cit., vol. 809, 205, and loc. cit., vol. 205, 89) are quoted in *Miniere e Ferro dell'Elba.*

All the MSS quoted are in the State Archives in Florence.

The sending of Spanish troops to Elba from Genoa is reported in the correspondence of Don Francesco de Herrera, Conde de Benevente; Naples, Legajo E.1099 and E.1099–6 (Simancas).

Joseph de Pons appears in the contemporary records as Josepe Ponce, Jusepe Ponce or de Ponce. I have used the spelling found in his will.

The Spanish State Archives contain several letters dealing with the question of the Piombino succession and the rights of the Appiani. The complicated story can be pieced together in: Naples: Legajo E.1099, 101, 102; Longone: 5809, 258 (33), 260 (13); 166 (4); 264 (28) (Simancas).

XI

FERDINAND I

IT IS said that Cardinal Ferdinand de' Medici refused to doff his armour and his sword in the Vatican and that he never entertained the idea of taking orders; which, if pontifically disapproved, was just as well for Tuscany in 1587, where the dynamic administration generated by Cosimo was patently slowing down.

Ferdinand, Cosimo's fourth son, succeeded his brother in 1587. All the Medici were versatile, but each one revealed to the world one wider plane of a many-faceted personality. Ferdinand was demonstrably grandson of that great fighter, Giovanni of the Black Bands. He was determined to build up Tuscany to the proper power and status of a Grand Duchy. In Elba he gave priority to two things: iron and ships, and to protect both iron and ships, fortifications.

In Florence there exists an anonymous memorandum which gives one a good idea of the state of Portoferraio in the last decade of the sixteenth century. The Grand Duke, it suggests politely, wished to augment the population, but without subsidies and with the heavy yearly expenditure on the upkeep of the fortifications—things were beginning to wear out and needed replacement—it was impossible to attract immigrants. There were the ships and men for transport, the salaries of the salt-pan officials, the twenty-odd maintenance men in various posts, the Brothers of San Salvadore (whose expenditure, according to the writer, was 'very great, seeing that I believe their annual cost is nearer 700 scudi than 600'), and there was no industry, nor any means of importing it. It was, in fact, a vicious circle: to get settlers there must be employment, to get employment there must be settlers, creating new work. The local treasurer 'is continually tormented by those ministers who, desiring to carry out His Serene High-

ness's wishes ... want to introduce anchovy fishing as well as that of other species, but they cannot succeed if they lack the wherewithal to build boats and make nets.'

It was the same with the tannery they suggested: 'Nobody had the initial capital to spend on hides. It was the same with everything ...' and the writer baldly reports that the Duke's expenditure in Portoferraio was very—he implies too—high, and therefore His Highness was not inclined to spend more. The outgoings had to be covered by the government sale of imported grain.

The arrangements for the flour supply for Portoferraio were so clumsy and uneconomic that one looks for some ulterior reason for them. All the grain for the port was sent over from the mainland at the rate of three thousand sacks a year. The mills were quite inadequate for grinding such a quantity, and therefore it was sent back to the continent for milling and returned through the various gabelles, growing more and more costly in its progress. For a Medici enterprise this seems incredible, but we have the memorandum to confirm it. The writer suggests exploring further the possibilities of Marciana, where he understands there are milling facilities. Incidentally, this shows how little communication there was at this time between the Appiano territories and that of the Medici. He also suggests the sending of flour instead of grain, and a free-trade agreement with Corsica so that the corn could be sent there to be ground. The selling of the grain and flour was a state monopoly. There was a state bakery, and not till 1655 were the citizens of the port permitted to buy grain where they chose and bake their own bread. The revenues therefrom were allocated to the upkeep of the forts. But, reading between the lines of the memorandum, one suspects that the money stuck to the various hands through which it passed and that the people were the sufferers, and they were far from accepting passively the prevailing conditions. Whether in fact Ferdinand acted on the writer's recommendations and thoroughly reviewed the financial situation in Portoferraio, where the fortresses and the salt-pans alone were costing him about ten thousand scudi a year, is not revealed by the files, but it certainly must have come under his strenuous re-examination and revision of Tuscany's economy.

Portoferraio is still largely dependent on the outside world. When the blast furnaces lay in ruins after World War II with no prospect of rebuilding, the industrial problem and unemployment

recurred. But this time, as I have said, it was tourism, not tanning, which was proposed as a solution and vigorously adopted, fostered by the money of the state Cassa del Mezzogiorno.

* * *

Ferdinand I regalvanized the Grand Duchy. A rich and recognized state already, it was not, he realized, of sufficient military or naval strength to dictate terms to the European powers. With astonishing vigour he attacked the problems which Francesco had left him. He drained the potentially rich Val di Chiana, put the Pisan plain under cultivation, built the Naviglio canal between Pisa and Leghorn, and initiated the plans which, in his son's reign, were to turn Leghorn itself from a little fishing port into a well-fortified harbour and a flourishing, cosmopolitan, commercial city, ranking second only to Genoa. An Englishman was largely responsible for the naval side of this 'masterpiece of the Medici dynasty', as Montesquieu described it.

In 1605, Robert Dudley, son and heir of Queen Elizabeth's favourite, Leicester, deserted his wife, Alice, and arrived in Italy accompanied by a beautiful page who proved to be his mistress, Elizabeth Southwell. He ignored an order to return to his family, was outlawed, and had all his property confiscated. He took service with the Medici. Ferdinand de' Medici died in 1609, and the Earl of Warwick and Leicester, Duke of Northumberland, did his most valuable work for the heir, Cosimo II, in whom he found an ideal patron. The Grand Duke gave him lavish practical encouragement and the opportunity to indulge to the full his passionate enthusiasm for ships and shipbuilding.

His famous book, *Dell'Arcano del Mare*, was to be published in Florence; he was to experiment with the raked mast, with a new type of fast, manœuvrable vessel; with new methods of ship-building and equipping in the harbour of Portoferraio, and in the docks and yards which he himself designed in Leghorn.

If the fame of Cosimo II's docks was in great part due to Dudley, his father Ferdinand owed his renown in the Mediterranean largely to the Knights of San Stefano, who under his rule reached the peak of their prowess. Their galleys shared the honours of Lepanto; they scoured the Mediterranean and, by the number of their Turkish and Moorish prisoners, gave point to the Grand Duke's nicknames of the Grand Devil and the Turk-tamer. To commemorate these deeds Ferdinand's bronze statue by Bandini was erected at the entrance to the harbour, and later, Vasari tells us, the sculptor Tacca set the monument upon the naked backs of crouching captives modelled from life.

Today, Leghorn is chiefly a new town, risen in concrete cubes from the bombed ruins of the last war, but recently, in a spectacular thunderstorm, I passed the great bastion of the fortress which guarded Ferdinand's harbour, still standing against an inky, lightning-torn sky, shell-scarred, red-gleaming and impressive in the rain.

With the Medici, business acumen was never far from enlightened behaviour—or should one say that they recognized the material rewards of certain moral acts? By his decree of universal toleration in Livorno, Ferdinand drew to the city 'the persecuted of all religions'. With them the Protestants from France and the Netherlands, and the Jews from Spain, brought their skills and their valuables. The protective charter Ferdinand gave to the Jews was not altogether popular in Tuscany, but nevertheless, objectors had to admit that with their coming, as ever with the Jews, commerce was greatly stimulated.

His friendship with the French was also received with mixed feelings, since it was a complete reversal of the policy so long and carefully fostered by Cosimo. Ferdinand had married Catherine de' Medici's granddaughter, Christine of Lorraine, his wedding festivities in 1589 being splendidly held in Florence with pageants of Turkish defeats on land and sea. His niece, Marie de Medici, married Henry IV. But even more effective than the French marriages in consolidating the Franco-Tuscan alliance was the vast amount of money Ferdinand lent Henry IV. We hear of 'waggon-loads of specie' sent to France. In spite of Henry's Protestantism, Ferdinand openly supported him against the League, and managed to gloss over this fact to the Pope by expressing the hope that Henry could be influenced to become a Catholic, which he eventually did. But, in order to have a foot in the third powerful European camp and, as we have seen, because of Piombino, he arranged to marry his son, Cosimo, to the Archduchess Maria of Austria, sister of the Emperor Ferdinand II.

* * *

Though it is impossible to consider Elba and the archipelago

out of their context in seventeenth-century European history, I am well aware of the danger of the background becoming the foreground and obscuring the prospect of the Tuscan islands in a lowering welter of dates and alliances. Briefly then: in the first decades of the century the ruling contemporaries of Ferdinand de' Medici and Isabella Orsini of Piombino were Philip III of Spain, Henry IV of France, James I of England and the Emperor Rudolf of Austria, with their enmities, treaties and wars. Philip had reduced Spain's enemies, made peace with England, allied himself with the Emperor against the Protestant princes; but his country was yearly growing poorer, and the prestige of Spanish fighting men was diminishing throughout Europe. France was never long to be trusted, and the Medici were hand in glove with the French. The Spanish eyed their expanding influence with misgiving. Ships lying at Leghorn and Portoferraio could practically control the south-eastern approaches of the Mediterranean, or cut off Naples at will, and were within striking distance of the Spanish and French coasts. Philip, therefore, resolved not only to safeguard Piombino from his potential enemies, but at the same time to drive a wedge between Tuscany's two naval bases by implementing his father's agreement with the Appiani, and in 1603 began to build a fortress at Longone. There was nothing surreptitious about it.

> The Marchese S. Croce, Captain of the Galleys, came in person to see the foundations laid. He came with 12 Galleys and 9 vessels and other craft commanded by Don Garcia and with [?] three companies of Fusiliers, building materials, victuals, a quantity of masons and pioneers. The pretext for the building of such a fortress was that the bay was a shelter for pirates. The Politicians, however, judge it to be in emulation of Portoferraio, a stronghold whose fortifications were such as to awe the whole island.

The advent in Elba of the Spaniards as settlers rather than as temporarily appointed defenders was, it seems, accepted passively by the islanders ruled by the Princess of Piombino, but with great annoyance by the Medici and their subjects. The Spaniards did all they could to impede the proper functioning of Ferdinand's iron production at Rio. They challenged the validity of his lease, and Isabella, hard-pressed for money, broke her contract with the Medici by selling ore to Genoa. Production was falling, although

the opencast mining and new foundries had begun to prove their worth. Ferdinand tried hard to renew his lease, but Isabella, no doubt with tempting offers or veiled threats from Spain, refused. Another anonymous memorandum on the state of Piombino in the year 1627 shows that the Principality was in a bad way.

> One must confess the State revenues were far greater in the past, because the State was much better governed. Then, the Signori had an eye not only to the maintenance but to the increase, exactly opposite to the Lady Duchess of Bracciano, who for seventeen years has destroyed and laid waste, always trying to wring the greatest possible profit from the country. Particularly she has destroyed the woods so that the income is down by 1,800 scudi a year.

She could hardly have done otherwise, driven as she was to find ready money to pay agents and costs of her litigation.

NOTES TO CHAPTER XI

Moisè (loc. cit.) gives the text of the anonymous memorandum on the economic state of Portoferraio in full. He gives the ref. no: Carte Strozziane, F.14, 188 (*Arch. d. Stato*, Florence).

An account of the flour and bread situation in 1655 is to be found in: Affari di Portoferraio, F.27 (*Arch. d. Stato*, Florence).

The description of the Spaniards' arrival in Longone is in Fazzi (loc. cit.). He was mistaken in the number of troops: see Spanish State Papers, Naples, E.1099 (Simancas), quoted in ch. X.

The report on Piombino is in Misc. Med., vol. 944 (*Arch. d. Stato*, Florence).

XII

THE SPANIARDS AT LONGONE

FROM the balcony I can look down at the turf and the earth-blunted foundations of the Conde de Benevente's fort, crowned by the neat white oblong of the modern prison. Recently it was the subject of an inquiry. I have not obtained the ministerial permission required to visit it or the open prisons of the islands. But I read *La Grande Promessa*, the magazine of an unusually high amateur standard, written, edited and printed by the prisoners—the 'detained' as the Italians prefer to call them—whose patrons range from the Pope to the Naval Academy at Leghorn. It is strikingly reflective, and while there are pages of a regrettably false sentimentality, the general note is one of sincerity and a pathetic nostalgia. The Italian, good or bad paterfamilias, is still very much part of his family, and being cut off from it is one of his chief penalties.

* * *

Joseph de Pons, the infantry captain who became first Spanish governor of the fortress, was also a nostalgic man. He had a villa in Madrid, but his home was in Barcelona with its great, lacy-spired cathedral, its Catalan Gothic courts. He was rich and pious, and he built and endowed a shrine not far from the fort to house a replica of the famous miracle-working Madonna of Montserrat. The Spaniards, proud and ascetic though they were, gave great love and veneration to the Virgin. It was as if, in their harsh lives, they needed the gentleness and understanding of the Mother of God. The sanctuary of the Black Virgin of Montserrat—'The Rose of April, the Dark One of the Mountain'*—is set in the pinnacled

* *Rosa d'April, Morena de la Sierra.* From a Catalan hymn written by a monk of Montserrat.

mountains thirty miles from Barcelona. It is a wild spot, but even today young newly-wed couples come to the Benedictine monastery, watching over the holy image, to be blessed. Throughout the Middle Ages, invocations arose at Montserrat at every threat of peril (and they were many), every heroic campaign, every great undertaking. It is said that Pedro IV, the fourteenth-century King of Aragon, borrowed the Virgin's rings when he led an expedition against Majorca. Both the Emperor Charles V and his son, Philip II, died with candles from Montserrat in their hands, and although Don John of Austria brought offerings to the Madonna of Guadelupe, where Columbus had worshipped and left treasure from the Indies, he asked to be buried at Montserrat. St Ignatius Loyola left his sword on her altar and vowed to serve God. The tradition of Montserrat was woven into the warp of a Spanish soldier's life. Possibly the wild little valley with the jagged red peaks reminded de Pons of the setting of the saw-toothed mountains, the Mons Serratus of his native country.

I was told in Elba that de Pons's shrine is a replica of the church at Montserrat, but from the photographs I have seen, Monserrato bears no resemblance to the great Spanish church of pilgrimage as it is today.

* * *

I had heard much of Monserrato from Franca. It is romantically, almost dramatically, set at the head of the neighbouring valley, and I had first seen it from the prickly *macchia* of the saddle which links our iron-cross peak with the big pineta and tapers out by the road to Barbarossa's cove. I was for ever trying to find a short cut down the steep mountain-side to its cypress-pointed terrace. Its history, too, eluded me. I visited Dom Lorenzo, the parish priest, in the little sacristy of San Cuore di Maria, which is next to the parish church of Santa Maria del Carmine down in the port, within sound of the sea. He told me that the archives of Sant'Iago, the church which the Spaniards built inside their fortress, were theoretically kept with the parish archives, but there was nothing about Monserrato or the seventeenth-century Spaniards among the dusty papers he brought out for me.

But, to digress a moment from the Spaniards, I was fascinated by the kind of devotional log-cum-scrap-book which his much-loved predecessor, Dom Carlo Geri, had kept for close on thirty years.

The paste-stiffened pages and browning ink evoked for me all the life of the little community. From this, and the parish records, account-books and letters going back to the Napoleonic era, I found that most of the church property, consisting of vineyards and other fields and farms, was sequestrated in 1866, which cancelled all Masses in perpetuity such as that stipulated in the will of Governor de Pons. In 1861 the benefice of Monserrato was combined with that of the military chaplain of the fort, which was not at all what de Pons intended. Dom Lorenzo told me that it was unusual, but had probably been done for economic reasons. Service chaplains today are appointed by the state, not by the Vatican.

Nevertheless, there seems to have been a resident priest in charge of the sanctuary until 1866. That it was in general use and much frequented in the eighteenth century is borne out by the account books, which show that the priest paid up to a hundred ducats a year for wax candles. His stipend was one hundred and eighty-eight ducats a year. Today, the shrine is only opened on the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin—September 8th to the 15th. Since it was built, this has been the week of the great pilgrimage. From all over the island, the Elbans came to pray before the unveiled picture of the Dark One of the Mountain, which the donor had had copied from the original. Like the fourteenth-century Aragonese Queen Violante at Montserrat, penitents came barefoot, cutting their feet on the sharp rocks. The valley is narrow, enclosed, like an oven in the midday sun. Kindly old Dom Carlo Geri provided food and drink for the pilgrims, and someone built a vine-trellis for shade. In 1938 Cavaliere Berti, who was then mayor, had an earth road for wheeled traffic made almost to the foot of the actual pinnacle upon which the shrine is built.

My next search for the Monserrato records took me to the Commune on the sun-drenched harbour. I had an appointment with Commandant Carpini, the mayor. He is a handsome sea-captain, equipped to deal with the affairs of this seafaring, sea-conscious people. He told me that there were few records in his keeping: after a fire which had destroyed many of them, the remainder had been sent to the mainland. (This was before I had traced the Appiano archives to the Uffizi.) He took me to his office on the first floor, handed me a typewritten list of documents and told me that any of them was at my disposal upstairs in the muniment room, I only had to tell his clerk which ones I required. My eye skimmed

the paper, like the gull out beyond the window searching the limpid harbour for fish.

Nothing. Then, my discouraged attention hovered incredulously, dropped plummet-like, and my heart soared, as it always does when a search is rewarded, like the gull with the silver fish in his beak. 'The Book of Monserrato, 1616–1747.'

The clerk was all attention.

'This, please, number—there are two numbers, why is that?'

'One is a provisional one.' His face seemed to flicker as the water-shadows from the sea, racing and wriggling, caught the room in a golden net.

'One may ask why?'

'It is for convenience.'

Afterwards, I regretted forbearing from questioning him upon this Machiavellian axiom as applied to cataloguing, but I was avid for the book, I wanted to carry it away to devour undisturbed, as the gull was even now taking the fish up, up towards Capoliveri, for quiet and undisturbed consumption.

'Which number is it, Signora?'

'Well, which number are you using?'

'It depends,' he said rather loudly and clearly. He looked indulgent. I gave him both, and followed him up two flights of echoing stairs to a stifling, file-lined attic under the roof.

I stood by the dusty table. The clerk came back with a bulging parchment folio. I could tell at a glance it was not my quarry. 'This,' I said, reading the label and wondering why he had not done so, 'is "Nineteenth-century Court proceedings".'

He looked incredulous.

'Will you try the other number, please?'

'Ah, yes, it is just here.' He pulled out another folder of manuscripts, blew on it and handed it to me, happily nodding his dust-nimbused head.

'This is "Minutes of the Commune for 1895".' Disappointment made me terse. I pointed an accusing finger at the ink scrawl on the cover.

He was quite unabashed: 'There is the number,' he retorted a shade sulkily, 'it *must* be it.'

'But I tell you it is not,' I snapped. But I recognized the type at whose hands defeat comes, and quickly swallowed my exasperation.

I became ingratiating: 'Never mind, Signore, please do not put

yourself out any more. This looks most interesting; would you allow me to study it? I could come early tomorrow morning and, in order not to disturb you—if you could leave the key with the Guardiano?'

'I'll find that book if I have to take down every file in the room,' I was saying, but not aloud.

And find it I did. Behind locked doors, in the dusty heat, I started at one end of the stacked shelves and, by the grace, perhaps, of the Rose of April Herself (for I am April-born), I found Monserrato's record in the fifth row that I emptied. By some recondite economy, its number corresponded to the second number on the list.

In it was a contemporary copy of Joseph de Pons's will, in Spanish, dated May 7th, 1616. The Governor dictated it to Michaelis Rodrighes and the executor was Gaspar de Pons. He charged them and his heirs 'always to maintain a priest at the Hermitage which I built for the invocation of Our Lady of Monserrat'. The priest was to say a thousand daily Masses for his soul. For this purpose the monks of St Augustine at Capoliveri should be paid eight hundred ducats 'of rent' (presumably from the land de Pons owned in the district). 'If, however, the said Brothers should prove remiss and negligent in accomplishing this in my memory, then it is my wish that the Lord Bishop of the said Island and the Governor of Plombin [Piombino] choose persons to say the said Masses in the said Hermitage, and see that they are paid with the eight hundred ducats ...'

Monserrato was well endowed; besides de Pons's will, there are copies of many seventeenth-century Spanish legacies. The bequests are written in Italian, and many of them begin by declaring that the will was made 'spontaneously and not forced'. Perhaps the Church initiated this to protect the monks from the accusations of indignant, greedy relatives. They are chiefly bequests of vineyards, carefully surveyed, with exact boundaries. Much of the slopes of Capoliveri must have been willed away. Among the donors is a Mandriques, possibly Franca's ancestor. In 1668 he left a vineyard and a house at Mola to the sanctuary, as also did one, Rodrigues, while a certain Donna Girolama di Capoliveri left her own house and vineyards to Our Lady. Many of the legacies were to pay for Masses in perpetuity.

There were pages of accounts and records of gifts in money and

also grain. It would seem that the sanctuary was served by the Augustines, but although there are living-rooms attached to the shrine, there is no tradition of an actual monastery there. The hermits of the Madonna del Monte were always laymen and enjoyed certain rights in their district. During the vintage they took their goatskins into the local vineyards and collected the peasants' tribute of wine.

I never found the path across the saddle to Monserrato, but when I went round by the road it was pointed out to me: I had tried too high up. The shaly track winds up from the Rio road opposite Barbarossa's bay, through tilled fields, past the Spanish well with the single date-palm. The Spaniards, wherever they made a well, planted a palm—all over the island one may see them. This, I think, must be an Arab heritage, as are so many of the habits and customs of the Spaniards. The road becomes rougher and redder, then, at a giant stone-pine, it dwindles to a thread between ox-blood-red rocks, their edges unsmoothed by time or weather. At the head of the valley, thrown up by a tremendous spasm of the earth's crust which bent and twisted it and finally flung it vertical, are the peaks which guard the pinnacle upon which de Pons built his sanctuary.

The path passes a small farm on the left, shaded by old chestnut trees; to the right stands a dilapidated but still gracious Spanish villa with its own chapel—as most of them have—and the forlorn but romantic ruins of a terraced and walled garden, with a waterless fountain, and orange, ilex and cypress trees. It would have enraptured Swinburne. The villa has been empty ever since I have known it, perhaps because it is sheltered from every wind, which is good for the garden but, in summer, sweltering for any inhabitants. No one can tell me its history. Cavaliere Berti said it once belonged to his family, but he does not know who built it. I would like to think de Pons owned it, but have found no ground for believing that he did. Beyond the farm, where the key of the sanctuary is kept, the path crosses a little stream spreading itself thinly over the flat rocks, and then, under the blue spears of the agaves, becomes a series of cruel rock steps, blood-coloured as if they have been stained by the lacerated feet of the pilgrims. Enclosed by the peaks whose flanks are lovely in the spring with yellow and white cystus, soon scorched to russet—a wonderful foil for the brilliant gold lichen on the rocks and the sullen purple-red of the cliffs themselves—the shrine is dwarfed by its surroundings.

At a distance it appears a minute chapel stuck like a swallow's nest against the rocks: in reality, mounting the last steep turn to the cypress-sentinelled terrace in front of the entrance, one is confronted by a fair-sized church, its walls encrusted with several living-rooms rising from the sheer rocks.

Inside the sanctuary, the Virgin's picture is veiled in white. Above her, the star-encircled dome, like the bare walls, is cleanly chalk-washed. The front of the inlaid baroque altar is crudely painted in simple patterns. Votive offerings used to enliven these bare, whitewashed spaces with pictures of terrifying storms in which sailing vessels, half-submerged by inky waves, are lividly illumined by lightning. Here, the donors could re-live past perils and thank the Madonna for escaping them, and their womenfolk could still bring little bunches of wild gladioli and love-in-a-mist to thank the Mother of God for sons and husbands spared. Now, the offerings have been hung in the sacristy; many, according to old Elbans, have disappeared.

At the Madonna delle Grazie, too, there are storms, and silver arms and legs and eyes, and down the new road people come to look and pray; but Monserrat has the melancholy of abandoned love. In the seven sad and empty rooms stretching into the living rock, young lovers have signed their names inside hearts drawn in charcoal from the wide, deserted hearths. Up the stone stairs, where another seven rooms look out on the foreshortened cypresses, the spray of the flowering chestnuts and a blue streak of sea, the damp is coming through the roof. Outside, the little aqueduct's earthenware pipes are broken and the spring water spills over weedy grass. Sitting on the little stone parapet of the terrace between the huge old cypresses, I heard nothing but the nightingales, the trickle of water and the rustle of oleander leaves, and I thought that the Preacher might have written the last chapter of Ecclesiastes here.

Monserrato is a deeply peaceful place where, one feels, prayer was once valid—perhaps it still is.

* * *

Franca has pointed out to me how each district of Elba has its own characteristic Marian shrine: Marciana's Madonna del Monte, high up among the woods, green-shadowed in a green world, built at the end of the sixteenth century to shelter a miraculous rock-

painting of the Virgin and, until 1800, tended by two blue-habited hermits chosen by the Prince of Piombino; the wide seashore of L'Acona with its chapel to the Madonna of the Snows, 'well-built of hewn stone without mortar', set starkly and alone in the stony, sun-drenched, windswept plain, stretching from the sand to Monte Orello and Monte Barbatoia; the Madonna delle Grazie below Capoliveri (now accessible by the new road), facing the brilliant sea, baroque-domed, set among the golden rocks, with a cave behind it to shelter the pilgrims' asses. Its brightly painted beams are according to local taste, but ill-assorted with the inlaid marble altar presided over by the fair Virgin from the sea, holding the Christ-child, already a thin little boy. Coresi del Bruno tells us that this shrine was

> a church built by the Divine will, and this followed because a certain ship's captain found several pictures with various paintings upon them floating in the sea, which later they knew by report to have come from a Sicilian ship captured by the Turks, who, finding on board various merchandise, took all and the Christians as well, only throwing overboard the pictures for their being images of the saints. These, soaked by salt water, were spoiled, the only one found intact and immaculate being that of the Blessed Virgin ... Hardly had the sailors recognized it than arose a fierce storm, and fervidly recommending themselves to Her, they made to take the picture to the Mola beach ... but they disembarked instead at the little cove of Pinelli and, in a barefoot procession, started to bear the picture towards the village [Capoliveri]. But hardly had they gone a musket shot, to where the valley finishes and the ascent begins, than they were rooted to the spot. The people of the village, thinking this an accident, also attempted to take the picture in procession, but all in vain, it remained immovable. They therefore built with slabs a little tabernacle out of which presently grew the church, which is still growing and to which a great concourse come from all over the island ... often witnessing miracles.

On the slopes between Poggio and Bagno, by a bend on the old mule-path to Pila, is the chapel of the Madonna del Buon Consiglio, and, farther on, the shrine of the Madonna Serrapinella. Then there is the little church at Porto Azzurro, dedicated to the Sacred Heart

of Mary, built by Don Diego d'Alarcon, an eighteenth-century governor of Longone and, of course, Monserrato.* There were, too, many shrines dedicated to saints. St Catherine was popular, and in 1761 a request by the Riesi to reopen the Sanctuary of Santa Caterina was granted. During the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century wars many little consecrated buildings and private chapels dotted over the island were used by deserters and soldiers as places of refuge, and so much of an embarrassment did this become to the carefully neutral governors of Portoferraio vis-à-vis their Spanish counterparts in Longone, that in 1718 they pulled down the ancient chapel of San Rocco, which came within Medicean jurisdiction.

* * *

The Spaniards had only built one line of fortifications at Longone when the French took the port.

The wars of seventeenth-century Europe were practically continuous. History makes horrible reading: slaughter, civil wars, broken treaties, betrayals, intrigues; and Mazarin, the Sicilian, his royal mistress, the French Regent, Anne of Austria, and his pupil in cynical statecraft, Louis XIV, were responsible for most of it. What strikes one most forcibly is the appalling suffering of the peasants and the common people, who not only saw their livelihoods destroyed by the wars, but were severely taxed to pay for them.

France and Spain were almost constantly at war. In the first decades of the century Richelieu and Olivarez, the prime ministers who virtually ruled their respective countries, kept the feud alight, and, fanned by Louis XIV's territorial ambitions, Hispano-French enmity again alternately glowed and blazed. In the dispute over the Mantuan succession, the French occupied Susa and the Imperial troops Mantua, so that Tuscany, while holding aloof from the quarrel, was obliged to keep her troops mobilized.

Mazarin first came to France as papal nuncio when he was thirty years old. He was clever and soft-spoken, inordinately ambitious and unshakeably persistent. He based his policy, he said, on 'Time and myself'. Being Mediterranean-born, he was very conscious of the politics and potentialities of its shores. One would have thought that he would have had enough to occupy him with civil war in France, the implacable opposition of Condé and his followers and

* It is curious that the Elban spelling omits the 't' in 'mont' of the Spanish version.

the formidable Cardinal de Retz, the costly campaign against the Emperor, the siege of Dunkirk and the Spanish campaign. Certainly, the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 relieved the strain on the French armies and gave France most of Alsace, control of Lorraine, and a foot-hold in Piedmont; but Mazarin was only playing for time to plan his future policy. He determined to take Naples from Spain. This would put France in a position to control an acquisitive Pope, and threaten the Spanish Presidii. To attack Naples he needed good bases for his fleet, which was commanded by Thomas of Savoy. The obvious harbours were in Elba.

For twelve years, Niccolò Ludovisi had enjoyed himself as ruler of Piombino and the islands. He never set foot in his territories, but lived lavishly in Naples, Rome or Frascati, and showed himself completely indifferent to his subjects' welfare. However, he was not uninterested in Rio, from which he derived fat revenues, and in 1642 he dealt severely with abuses in the sale of the ore which, instead of being weighed, was measured 'by eye', which led to extraordinary variations in the optical faculty. Across the island at Portoferraio, Cosimo II de' Medici had been succeeded by his son Ferdinand II, for whom, until 1628, his muddle-headed grandmother and mother had governed as regents. Ferdinand, finding that he could no longer buy Rio iron at a favourable price, turned to Giglio, and the mining at Campese, below the Franco, henceforward produced a steady but small quantity of ore, probably for his cannon-ball foundry at Campiglia. He cast about, too, on the mainland for new sources of supply.

Ferdinand, with all his French, Spanish and Austrian connections, saw his peace menaced by both France and Spain. Furthermore, his inclination to tranquil scientific study with his two brothers, and to the beautifying and enlarging of the Pitti palace and the Uffizi gallery, was frustrated by the predatory Barberini pope. Not only did Urban VIII involve Tuscany in war, when he attempted to seize the Duke of Parma's territory, but also took possession of Urbino, the inheritance of Ferdinand's bride-to-be, and encouraged the ecclesiastics, with whom Florence swarmed, to an overt flouting of grand-ducal authority. Therein lies the reason for the peaceable Ferdinand's concern with the fortifications of Elba.

As for Piombino, he never dreamed of helping either Elbans or Piombinese to preserve such independence as remained to them. With the Spaniards at Longone and the French threat to it, the

only prudent course was in a rigid neutrality: Portoferraio must be maintained as a strongly defended harbour, for therein lay, he knew, his most valuable bargaining counter should he be unwillingly involved in the power-politics of the day. In 1614 Orazio Borbone, the Governor, sent a discouraging letter to Cosimo II regarding the fortifications, which, he wrote, 'were rather a name than a fact, everything being faulty ... the flanks being very weak as are the shoulders. The parapet is non-existent. The moat has been planned but never constructed, although the stone has been quarried for it ... ' Bastions were crumbling, the main ditch was filled with earth and detritus. It would seem that the worst of the defects were dealt with, for we have the names of two engineers working in the fortresses in 1616 and in Ferdinand II's reign in 1624. Nevertheless, the same letter shows that the little town round the two great fortresses was slowly growing. Between 1617 and 1620, Borbone founded the church and hospital of the Carmine. (In Cosimo III's reign it was enlarged piecemeal and was the subject of much correspondence, since the architect forgot to plan a staircase.)

The peasants, Borbone reported, were prosperous and diligent and the land yielding well. Grain harvests had been good and the last vintage had yielded two hundred and eighty butts of wine. Cotton was being sown, reaped and woven in abundance. The population was growing. In eighteen to twenty families there were a hundred children. Later, in celebration of his marriage, Ferdinand honoured these signs of maturity by raising Portoferraio to the status of a city. An inscription was placed over the main gate which runs: 'DUX ETRURIAE PERFECIT AN.DOM. MDCXXXVII QUO VICTORIAM URBINI PRINCIPEM DUXIT UXOREM FOELICI OMINE.'

Ferdinand was a kindly, cultured, artistic man; he and his two brothers had been pupils of Galileo. He took a great interest in the new sciences, and his social experiments ranged from creating an enlightened Board of Health during the plague in Florence—for which he got no support and was censured by the Pope—to importing camels for breeding in the grand-ducal reserve of San Rossore. Galileo had come to Florence from Padua in 1610, but when in 1634 the Inquisition demanded his trial in Rome, his royal pupils made no attempts to protect him. He returned to Tuscany aged and nearly blind and settled in the little village of Arcetri overlooking Florence, where he died in 1642.

Ferdinand was not interested in political intrigues, although, urged by the two princesses, he repeated their sporadic and ineffectual attempts to get Piombino from the Emperor. He occupied himself attending the meetings of the Accademia del Cimento, the scientific society founded by his brothers, Leopold and Giovanni Carlo, those of the Philosophic Conversations which he held at the palace—thereby incurring further papal disapproval; and in forming a large new palace library. He spent a great deal of money on it and upon expanding the *pietra dura* industry, and raising the already superb standard of the craftsmen by importing the Frenchman Louis Siriés. He never wholly threw off the influence of the two Grand Duchesses at the Pitti. Presumably he occasionally visited Elba.

Two years after the death of Ferdinand's enemy, Urban VIII, the French threat to Elba became apparent. Early in 1646 the French fleet, under Thomas of Savoy, sailed down the Piombino strait carrying an expeditionary force to attack Orbetello. At the first news of the fleet's assembling Ferdinand had put Leghorn and Portoferraio in a state of siege and had mobilized 10,000 soldiers to man his coastal defences; whereupon a French envoy had arrived at the grand-ducal court with assurances that the French fleet would attack only Spanish fortresses, and that His Most Christian Majesty would at all times strictly observe the Grand Duke's neutrality. A treaty to this effect committed Ferdinand to giving French ships free entry into his harbours, the right to victual and to water, and, if necessary, free passage for French troops through Tuscany. This, however, he countered by giving the same rights to the Spanish. The French, when they had taken Talamone and San Stefano, were decimated, however, by Carlo della Gatta, aided by the fever-breeding mosquitoes which, even today, attack with unparalleled viciousness, as anyone who has cause to wait on Orbetello's railway station will testify. Spanish galleys completed the French defeat by engaging the invaders and killing their commander, Admiral de Brezé.

But Mazarin was not deterred, and by September of the same year a reinforced fleet under the Marshals Mellaraye and du Plessis-Praslin 'set sail with a favourable wind from Marseilles ... and on the 27th day of September made the Island of Elba under the fortress of Longone ... The which [fleet] having anchored beyond cannon range of the fort, the galleys and ships and other

vessels in a short time disembarked soldiers, and munitions necessary for a siege, and prepared to entrench.'

The French commanders had been given the alternatives of trying to take either Orbetello and the Argentario, or Piombino and Longone. According to their information, Longone was weakly garrisoned—and indeed, Fazzi tells us that the fortifications were only in their first stages, and that Piombino was hardly stronger, and under mediocre officers. They also knew that the Spanish fleet based on Naples was unprepared. Piombino fell after a four-day siege, but Longone put up a gallant resistance. The French landed cavalry and infantry, took Capoliveri, Rio, San Piero and Sant'Ilario, and finally Poggio and Marciana. Then they bombarded the Longone defences, 'but the besieged Spaniards gave as good as they got with cannon, bombs and sorties, harassing the French and destroying all their earthworks ... but after a siege of 37 days the French made a big breach in the walls and took all the bastions, and with the most honourable conditions of war, Longone surrendered to the French.'

For four years the French used Longone as a base for their privateers. Then, in May 1650, the Spaniards appeared in force: 'the fleet', an anonymous Italian diarist tells us, 'commanded by his Serene Highness Don John of Austria, making good under the scirocco, deployed in battle order and headed straight for the Island of Elba. The said fleet was preceded by a vanguard of 13 galleys ... five of these galleys made for Longone, the rest towards Calamita point.' They were followed by the main fleet consisting of '24 fighting ships and a host of tartanes, galliots, feluccas, transports and rowing boats full of food'. It was evident that the Spaniards planned to encircle the fort from the rear. According to the diarist, they landed troops as far apart as the Lido, beyond Capoliveri, and the Ortano, half-way along the coast to Rio, which is confirmed by a Spanish sketch-map preserved in Simancas. They must have come down from the saddle and either passed along by the stable and dropped down and taken the mule-path from the Lido, or lain down at Mondello, for the diary says that these detachments 'began trenching towards the sea'. As well as the cannon-ball, Angiolino's father found a big jagged piece of iron there, which he used as an anvil for many years. It would seem that the missiles were fired by the French at their assailants.

The Spaniards found the French determined fighters. During the

four years of their occupation they had built more fortifications, and from them the governor himself led a sally, and with his thirty-five men routed three hundred entrenched Spaniards. The Spaniards found their communications cut, their detachments ambushed, their sappers carried off—picks, shovels and all—into the fort. They were bombarding the fortress from three sides, but the French returned their fire. They fought with drawn swords on the beach, under constant attack they built a boom, as I told Febo, to prevent the Spaniards from landing reinforcements. The Spanish landed 'six bronze cannon' and demolished several buildings inside the walls, and their ships, which had been patrolling the island's waters, returned to turn their guns on the battered fortress. There was much blood shed on both sides before a truce was concluded at the end of July, the Spanish commanders climbing over the rubble to which they had reduced Longone to be offered 'a sumptuous banquet' by the French. But they resumed hostilities the next day, and it was not until the first week in August that the French capitulated.

Piombino had also been regained, and once more the unfortunate Elbans settled down to care for their ravaged fields and vineyards. In nearly a century of peace they became used to the Spanish rule, which was certainly more real to them than that of the absent Ludovisi.

NOTES TO CHAPTER XII

The sources of information about Monserrato are:

Libro della Venerabile Iglesia de Monserrat de Longone. 1616–1747. (The date on the cover is given as 1654–1744, but I have given the actual dates covered by the contents.)

Documenti relativi alla Cappella della Madonna di Monserrat. (Both these are in the Archives of the Commune of Porto Azzurro.)

Archivio Monserrato is in the church of the Madonna del Carmine, as are various account-books, scrap-books, letters and permits of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the permit to reopen the sanctuary of Sta Caterina.

The Deliberations of the magistrates for 1816–70, and the various official Instructions and Orders, and the Capoliveri files for 1743–70 in the Commune Archives yielded a few details of social and economic interest.

The deserters in the chapel of S. Rocco, and its subsequent destruction, are referred to in Affari di Stato e di Guerra, F.83 (*Arch. d. Stato*, Florence). Moisè (loc. cit.) quotes the correspondence about the church and hospital of the Carmine.

Moisè (op. cit.) gives Orazio Borbone's letter in full.

The accounts of the French and Spanish attacks on Longone are taken from the diary included in Coresi del Bruno's *Zibaldone* (loc. cit.) and the later account of Fazzi (loc. cit.).

The Italians' accounts correspond to the Spanish documents in most respects, but the anonymous diarist estimated that 'at least fourteen thousand troops landed'. This seems a very large number for the period and the operation, and we have the official Spanish report of the dispatch of 'Seven Companies of infantry' and no more. (Naples, Legajo E.1099–6 and E.1099 [Simancas].) Allowing for the variation in the number of men in a company, the landing force would seem to have been much smaller. The Spanish map (MPyD=XV–2 [Simancas]) indicates only the figures for the disembarkation at Lacona, which was, presumably, the main force.

XIII

BETWEEN GENERALS

SEVEN years after the French had been driven out of Elba, Louis XIV's galleys appeared in force and put in to Portoferraio. Immediately the word spread that they intended to retake the island. They probably did, but a galliot brought news of a Spanish fleet off Provence, and we are told that 'the French ships hastily up-anchored and went back the way they came'. Meanwhile, 'all the subjects of the Prince of Piombino had already brought their most precious chattels into the town for fear that the French would take the island'.

This was constantly happening and a frequent cause of strain for the governors. Portoferraio was the one point of steady and strong government upon which the islanders could rely: it fulfilled all the social and moral functions of a capital. The moment danger threatened, the people flocked under the walls and begged asylum. They were not allowed inside the fortresses, but since the whole of Portoferraio was controlled by a military governor—indeed, there was no other—it fell to him to find food for the unwelcome refugees from the Piombinese part of the island. I have never found evidence of the refugees in Elba being turned or driven away. The Medici policy had always been to befriend the Appiani's subjects in anticipation of the day when the Principality of Piombino would be theirs. Possibly the governors' tolerance was the outcome of political expediency rather than of kind hearts. But although the port was still ruled much as a fortress and the military governor's word was law, the civilians' voices were beginning to be heard, and Serristori, the governor, had successfully advised Ferdinand to rescind the laws governing the baking of bread and the government grain monopoly, and to free wine-selling from irksome restrictions.

The French alarm was followed by a pirate scare, when in 1659 Barbary ships appeared off the island. But local defence seems to have been well organized; possibly the Elbans had learned more of the art of defence from the professional soldiers who for so long had disputed their soil. At all events, we are told that 'the men of Elba, numerous and well-armed, posted themselves in certain well-chosen positions, drove the raiders off and forced their ships out to sea again.'

That same year, the islanders discerned a promise of peace and better times when France and Spain signed the Peace of the Pyrenees and an imminent marriage was proclaimed between the Grand Duke Ferdinand's son, Cosimo, and the Princess Marguerite of Orleans. Since France and Spain were no longer at war, the Medici would run no risk of being penalized by Spain for strengthening their bonds with France. They also knew that France's sun was in the ascendant and that Spain was weakened by the troubles in Portugal and Catalonia.

Cosimo III had succeeded his father in 1670, and once more the Portoferraio files are full of evidences of expansion. In 1685 it was suggested that the parish church be enlarged, since it could not hold one-third of the parishioners; likewise the Carmelite hospital was too small to accommodate the number of sick in the town. Three schools were opened where the children were taught by the monks of San Salvadore and, three years later, by the secular Brothers of the Order. Volterraio, which was so uncomfortable and unpopular a fortress that the garrison had to be changed once a fortnight, was given a walled stone stair to replace the ladder-like wooden one, and later 'a chapel, a platform for artillery and a new wall, and a new drawbridge to cover one of the easier approaches'. Mario Tornaquinci, the governor at this period, sent pages of accounts to his master. He gives me the impression of that invaluable man, the permanent under-secretary. He spent a lot of money on the fortifications and on a new drawbridge, 'fearing war,' as he confessed, 'and seeing no safety in neutrality.' He, at least, was not deceived by the ducal marriage. Tornaquinci was a man who obviously knew the value of money; he was careful but not cheese-paring. But I wonder if it was on his suggestion, or that of the kill-joy Cosimo, that orders came from Florence to 'close down the casino, there being not enough nobles to permit such a diversion'.

According to Tornaquinci, the communes belonging to Piombino were deeply envious of the Portoferrese. During the French invasion they had practically starved. When the French had taken Piombino, Prince Ludovisi had refused to treat with Mazarin, and later this enlightened self-interest was rewarded when the Spaniards reinstated him in 1650. His son repaired the frayed bonds of neighbourliness by agreeing, in 1667, to renew the Medici's lease of the Rio mines, made in 1577.

There is a curious correspondence in the Portoferraio archives, which proves that Cosimo offered Niccolò Ludovisi 'the Sienese Presidii' in exchange for Piombino and the rest of Elba. But as Moisè comments: 'We have not been able to understand how Cosimo could offer the Prince of Piombino the compensation of the Sienese garrisons unless Spain, to whom they belonged, had given him permission.' From a letter, however, which Cosimo wrote to his commander Conversani, it seems as if he had acted on the old, overruling desire of the Medici, which with him had become, as we shall see, almost an obsession, for he ordered a spy to be sent to Orbetello, Talamone and Porto Ercole to collect information for him regarding the state of the fortifications, number of cannon, soldiers, officers and stocks of ammunition. The spy could go, he suggested, in the guise of a huntsman or a merchant. One, Sarri, was indeed sent from Portoferraio, but since Ludovisi refused Cosimo's extraordinary offer, we shall never know what intrigue he had had in mind.

We can form some idea of the misery to which the Elbans had been reduced from a letter, dated November 1647, to Mazarin from his Intendant. The population of Piombino, reduced as it had been, was begging to be given corn from the garrison stores, as had been done in Longone. But the rest of Elba was in no better case than Piombino. Appeals were coming from Rio, with its three hundred families, and from Marciana and Capoliveri. 'Il est certain,' wrote the Intendant, 'si on n'assiste pas ce peuple dans la necessité de grains, qu'il y a presentement il faut ou qu'il meurt de faim ou qu'il abandonne cet estat pour aller chercher du pain ailleur.'

The Elbans did not die or leave, but in the following year a letter from the French Intendant shows that they had lost heart after the long years of foreign fights which ravaged their island. He declares their suffering was caused 'autant par leur fenéantise,

que par la ruine que la guerre leur a causée ... ' and adds, 'On ne faict rien du tout à Rio aux mines de fer.'

It is rarely the Elbans are criticized for laziness, and I am inclined to think that the Intendant should have used the word 'discouraged', which would not, however, have so usefully exonerated the occupying power.

Again, it may have been a boycott of the French imposed by the Elban miners, for in 1649 Mellini wrote to Isabella, still anxious for her inheritance, that more men had arrived to work the mines, and that there were twelve French soldiers turned miners.

To return to Isabella: no sooner was the war over than the Duchess's lawsuit was resumed; it only ended in 1656, when Ludovisi agreed to pay her a large annual sum as her share of the Elban revenues, with which she had, perforce, to content herself. But it was a Pyrrhic victory, since Ludovisi frequently defaulted on her payments. He died in 1665, in Sardinia where he was viceroy, the same year as Philip IV of Spain. His son and heir, Gian Battista, completed the ruin of the state. All he wanted was a great deal of ready money for a prodigal life, and he tried first to mortgage the whole of the revenue, then to sell Elba and retire to Spain. But the Viceroy of Naples kept a firm hand on Piombino, and sent its ruler to be arraigned by the Spanish Corte.

Meantime, Tuscany, too, was declining. Ferdinand II's death had left his son, Cosimo, with a superb palace crowded with precious objects, a half-finished, grandiose mausoleum, a fabulous collection of pictures, to which was added his wife's splendid Urbino inheritance, a gallery of classic statuary, a herd of camels, a poor army, a depleted treasury and outdated fortifications.

Cosimo III, in his reign of fifty-three years, ruined Tuscany. He lived in the greatest ostentation and was as extravagant as his mother, Vittoria della Rovere. He first antagonized his intelligent and promising sons, then, through his arbitrary treatment, drove them to dissipation and degeneracy. He never spoke to his French wife for seventeen years, and she finally defied Mazarin and Louis XIV, her cousin, and returned to Paris. Cosimo was pious, with a bigoted piety that punished the alleged immoral offences of his people with fanatical ferocity. This and his persistent over-taxing of the country made him extremely unpopular with the Florentines. The building in Portoferraio appears to have been in the nature of a necessary expansion pressed on him by Tornaquinci

rather than a planned development, and, for the general reader, the archives are correspondingly dull.

The royal visits were ceremonious and brief. In February 1683, Prince Ferdinand, Cosimo's eldest son, expressed a wish to see Elba, and Nardi, the governor, with only two days' notice, hastily prepared his own quarters in the Stella for the guest, borrowing beds for the gentlemen of the Court. All the cannon were loaded for the royal salute, the walls manned, troops drawn up in the Piazza, the guard of honour waiting at the water's edge, and the governor and the fort commander on the alert. But the ships did not arrive till the evening and Ferdinand would not come ashore till the following afternoon, when to the accompaniment of what must have been ear-splitting salutes almost over his head, he went first to the parish church and then to his apartments in the fort. He was a gay, popular young man, admired for his defiance of his father, the counter-activities of his band of young noblemen to a gloomy, priest-ridden Court. Portoferraio was delighted at his attention. Too often in the recent past their rulers had shown little interest in them, and a visit from any of the Medici was a rarity. They put thousands of oil lights in their windows, so that the whole town flickered and leapt with little tongues of flame. They let off any firearm they possessed in rattling *feux de joie*, and shouted 'Viva!' each time the young man appeared. They were genuinely over-joyed to see him, a mood which the young prince must have found a striking contrast to the Florentines' attitude to his family, which was growing daily more sullen. He stayed in the island a week and was welcomed 'con allegrezza grande' at Rio, where he visited the mines; saw a regatta in the harbour, and a game of *Calcio* especially organized for him by the peasants; and left in a hail of benedictions from the poor and dowerless, for whom he had left generous donations.

Cosimo III did not visit Portoferraio till 1700, and then only on his way to Rome. He arrived at three o'clock in the morning and, unlike his son, went ashore forthwith in his launch. The arrange-ments for the Grand Duke's progress to the top of the Stella further taxed the unfortunate governor, for the eight horses and two carriages brought over in the ducal ships were found to be unfit for the task. 'All had to be mended, the horses having been badly stowed.' However, Cosimo was extremely affable, hailing him with: 'Goodnight, Sir Governor, you are not coming to see

Us, We are coming to see you,' and, we are told, was carried by two slaves in a scarlet-garnished chair up to the Stella between rows of soldiers. At the gateway he looked back over the illuminated town and amiably remarked that he had no idea that Portoferraio was so beautiful a place. Tornaquinci was then handed a candelabra by his secretary and ceremoniously lighted the Grand Duke to his room. But the good impression Cosimo had made was somewhat marred when he gave orders that no salutes be fired and no more illuminations be set out (an injunction which the Elbans completely ignored), and instructed the accompanying officers to forbid their troops under penalty 'to take God's name in vain'. Next day he visited all the churches and heard Mass and walked back up the hill, pausing to examine the mills and to inquire how much grain they could grind in a day and a night. They told him three hundred sacks, but no reference was made to the milling at Marciana, so presumably nothing had come of it. In Florence it was one of the most bitter popular grievances that flour was still a grand-ducal monopoly and bakers were forbidden to mill even enough flour for a loaf without obtaining a permit from the—usually rapacious—contractors.

After dinner Cosimo inspected the docks and the arsenal. Before he left, with his accustomed lavishness, he presented several diamond rings, alms for the poor, dowries for Christian maidens, and was sped on his way by a procession of twelve hundred Elban women who had attended a Mass for his safe voyage.

Eight years later Portoferraio was to have an even more important visitor in the person of Philip V of Spain, but the Elbans, involved once more in the great powers' quarrels, were probably too anxious to enjoy the illuminations and the official *feux de joie*.

* * *

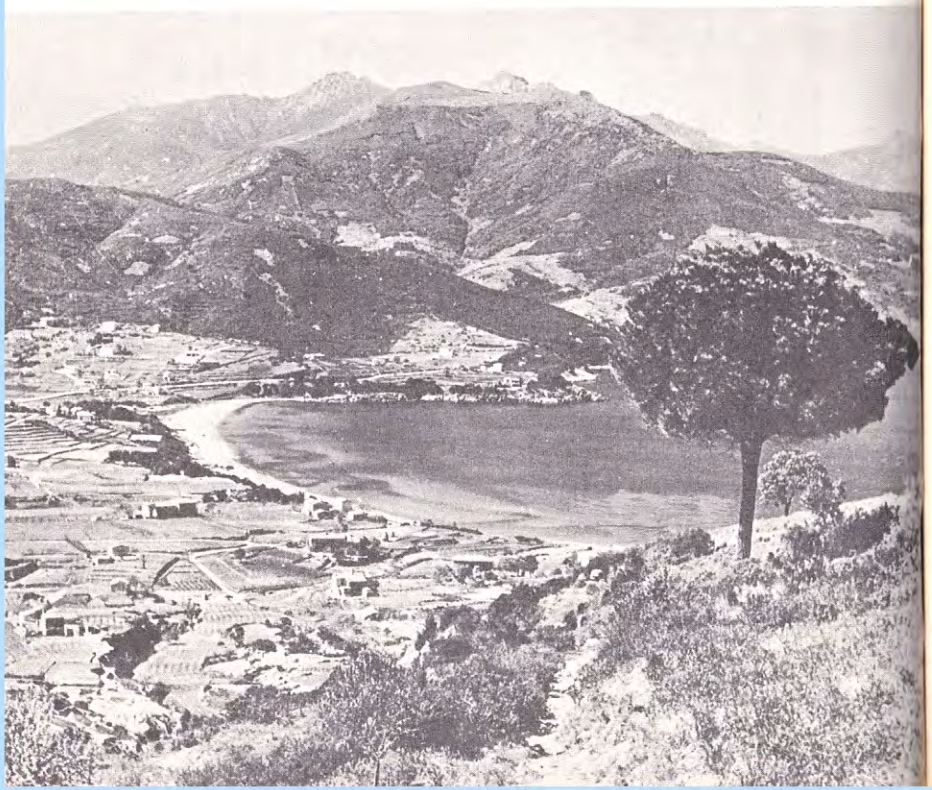
The complicated claims and alliances of the war of the Spanish Succession may be studied in any history book by those not fortunate enough to carry its details in their heads. For the purposes of this book it is only necessary to remember that Charles II of Spain died childless, and both Louis XIV and the Emperor Leopold supported claimants to the throne. Shortly before Charles II's death, William III of England, anxious to preserve the balance of power in Europe, secretly negotiated a treaty with France and Holland, which, in the high-handed manner of the times, disposed

Rio nell'Elba

The Enfola road

ıglieri

Procchio Bay



of Spanish America and the Netherlands to the Electoral Prince of Bavaria (one of the claimants); Naples, Sicily and the Tuscan ports to the Dauphin; and the Duchy of Milan to the Archduke Charles, second son of the Emperor. Charles II, when it came to his knowledge, was understandably angry, and indignantly bequeathed everything to the Bavarian prince, who then died, thus precipitating another secret treaty which need not be considered here.

At the end of 1700 Charles II died, having shortly before nominated the Dauphin's son, Philip of Anjou, as his heir, on condition that he renounced any claim to the throne of France. In no eventuality, ran the royal will, should the Spanish realm be dismembered or the crowns of Spain and France be united. This clause was calculated to allay Imperial misgivings. Louis XIV, who had every intention of uniting France and Spain, forthwith dispatched his grandson to Spain with the title of Philip V; the Emperor declared war, and England and Holland formed the Grand Alliance to help him.

Tuscany's loyalty was, as usual, claimed by both sides, but Cosimo III was obstinately neutral. In 1701 Prince Eugene, commanding the Austrian army, blockaded Mantua and invaded Ferrara and Parma. He was driven back by the French who put eighty thousand troops into Italy under the Duc de Vendôme. As Harold Acton has pointed out,* Florence was 'fortunate in being geographically situated beyond these French and Austrian activities'; but not so Elba, whose Spanish fortress at Longone, uncomfortably near to Portoferraio, was soon to be the object of enemy attack.

After war broke out, Philip V was sent to Naples by his grandfather to gain experience in active campaigning, and when Cosimo heard that the Pope was sending a nuncio to meet him, he promptly dispatched his brother, Cardinal Francesco Maria, with an escort of Tuscan galleys to accompany the sovereign. This would have been dangerously compromising had not the Medici cardinal been the Spiritual Protector of Spain. He was with Philip when the King visited Portoferraio with a fleet of Sicilian, Neapolitan, Tuscan and French galleys. The King arrived at midnight, stayed briefly and is recorded as having admired the illuminations. In spite of the supercilious manner in which he treated Cosimo and

* *The Last Medici* (Faber & Faber, 1932).

his family as inferiors, persisting in conversing upon terms of equality only with his aunt, Violante of Bavaria (who had married Ferdinand Medici), the insufferably arrogant Philip accepted the many rich gifts with which the Grand Duke loaded him. It was fortunate in one way that the great powers thought him much richer than he, in fact, was. Cosimo may well have had Longone in mind. Nevertheless, he cautiously counterbalanced his favouring of Spain by maintaining Leghorn as a free port and thus giving the Emperor a useful naval harbour which, he was shortly to find, increased the threat to Elba.

But Cosimo's neutrality was becoming daily more difficult to maintain. In 1705 the Emperor Leopold died and was succeeded by Joseph I, who demanded three hundred thousand doubloons from Tuscany's Imperial fiefs and winter quarters for six of his regiments. Moreover, on threat of punishment by English and Dutch ships, the Grand Duke was required to recognize the Archduke Charles as King of Spain and overlord of Siena. Cosimo managed to evade most of these demands, but they caused him acute anxiety for the future of Tuscany. It is surprising that his refusal to acknowledge the Archduke's claim to the Spanish throne brought no Imperial retribution. Perhaps with the great names of Blenheim, Ramillies, Oudenarde, ringing in his ears, Joseph, to whom Tuscany would have been of comparatively minor strategic value, was content to await the extinction of the House of Medici, which seemed imminent. Meanwhile, his troops landed on Elba and attacked Longone. Yet again the Elban peasants, who for two years had benefited by the abolition of all gabelles (excise duties) on oil, grain and food in the Medicean territories, faced the prospect of looting, burning, requisitioning, the stealing of grain and goods, the ravaging of their fields and vineyards; the old story of hunger and want. Perhaps this accounted for their behaviour to the invaders.

* * *

Naples fell to the Austrians in 1707. Early in 1708, the Imperial troops took Orbetello in the name of the Archduke Charles, and in spite of being harassed by troops sent to Porto Ercole by General Pinello, the governor of Longone went on to take the spineless surrender of Piombino. On January 20th the Austrians, under Count Valles, landed seven hundred troops,

according to one account, three hundred and eighty according to the other, near Rio and, with local support, occupied 'all the castles of the Island except Capoliveri, it remaining always faithful to its sovereign'. And here again the accounts differ, for the anonymous diary says that the Capoliveresi, threatened by Longone's guns, did not dare surrender. The other version is given by Coresi del Bruno, compiled, presumably, in 1729, hence his use of the letters exchanged by the generals. The unknown diarist's description is much more detailed and graphic. It has the ring of first-hand experience about it; moreover, it is borne out by documents in Simancas. On broad lines he and del Bruno agree. I shall, therefore, take the latter's version of the fighting, and include the generals' interchange, of which the diarist appears ignorant. I shall also use del Bruno's spelling of proper names.

Joined by Riese and Marcianese the Imperial troops 'did not fail to display themselves before the Royal Fortress of Longone, declaring, as did also the Riese and Marcianese, that they would soon take Portoferraio, and speaking with such arrogance as to rouse the hatred of the people of Portoferraio.' The situation for the Tuscans was extremely delicate. The little town was crowded with Spanish refugees from Naples, who not only imperilled Tuscan neutrality, but also heavily taxed its resources of food and accommodation. The Countess of San Stefano, the Spanish viceroy's daughter-in-law, had been there with her ladies since September, and had found lodging in the house of a certain Franceschi. With the three Sicilian galleys that escorted her came Spanish officers and their families, who were crowded into whichever private houses would take them in. But their physical discomfort was outweighed by the necessity of meeting their enemies whenever they went out, for Count Valles, with the handsome Major Faber and his staff, having endured the snow and frost of a phenomenally cold winter before Longone, took an apartment belonging to a well-to-do Elban, Signor Vantini, below the Carmine and adjacent to the Stella. This caused a lot of nervous speculation and the improbable reason for the transfer from before beleaguered Longone as the need to seek better air was given little credence. 'But the true reason was not easy to discover, the said gentlemen being of few words, and very secret.'

The harbour was full of the ships of both sides and it says a great deal for the diplomacy of the governor, del Nero, that he kept the

peace in Portoferraio. The situation was complicated by the hostility of the Riese, who had now openly joined with the Austrians and showed little gratitude for past help from the Portoferrese; but the Riese women, regardless of their husbands' allegiance, and loaded with their possessions, were flocking in as refugees, adding to the already overburdened economy of the port. Food was scarcer than ever, since much livestock had been killed by the severe weather.

It must have been an extraordinary situation with the bitter hand-to-hand fighting going on five miles away, with provision ships of both sides, feluccas with dispatches, predatory privateers, and men-of-war all cruising in island waters. Yet Elba was by no means cut off from the outside world. Indeed, news of European events seems to have been easier to come by than that of the happenings on the other side of the island.

Meanwhile, the Capoliveresi with two hundred and fifty armed men surrendered to a night attack of eighty Austrians, at the instigation (it was said in Portoferraio) of a priest, Giovanni Gelsi, who had formerly been put in prison by the Austrians in Rio. The Imperial troops, however, inexplicably withdrew to Rio next morning. The local and Spanish officers of the fort appear to have escaped the Austrians, only to be imprisoned at Longone by the Spaniards for surrendering to the enemy. They were subsequently exiled, together with Father Gelsi, whose house and possessions were burned. They all took refuge in the island—on Tuscan territory. Capoliveri had its walls and main gate pulled down and all its arms taken to Longone. The same day the Spaniards intercepted a boy from Poggio carrying a letter to the Austrians in Rio, telling them that Poggio, Marciana and Campo (which in those days included Sant'Ilario and San Piero) were holding three hundred men ready for the service of Charles III. Pinello, 'very angry with the people in the said places, sent out a troop of 150, which arrived in the plain three hours before dawn'. They were presumably riding, for they appeared before the first sentry post of San Piero in the dark, and when the sentry refused to believe that they were Imperialists, took him with them and, still in the dark, made the long rough path to Sant'Ilario. There, too, the sentinels, probably in the tower of San Giovanni, were disbelieving and made off to give the alarm to Sant'Ilario. By this time it must have been getting light, and I can imagine the troop

in the grey dawn coming under the grey granite walls of the keep (walls that today have a warning notice among the ivy to say that they are unsafe), abandoning pretence and hammering at the gate for admittance.

The elders asked for time; the Spaniards piled brushwood, making good their threat to burn the great, nail-bossed door down. Two men were killed by the defenders' arquebuses. 'But,' the diarist writes, 'frightened by the fire and the grenades they finally abandoned the position and withdrew, some into the church, some flying into the *macchia*.'

* * *

I can picture this only because the church at Sant'Ilario is unlike any other I have seen: its apse is entirely surrounded by the fortress walls. I am irreverently reminded of a friend's monumental carthorse which, having bought it, they discovered to be too big for the stable, so that, facing his manger, his rump jutted out of the door. According to Gibbon, fortified churches were fairly common in the first centuries of Christianity, and I have seen them in Castile, but the merging of fortress and church that is to be found in the Elban hill towns is unusual. At one time there must have been some protective wall stouter than the undistinguished baroque façade today presents. Facing the bleak, grey-paved little piazza, it looks unchanged, but I often try to find the traces of another architectural plan whereby the church's western wall would be less vulnerable. Certainly in its present form it would be no refuge for the citizens.

* * *

Having terrorized the inhabitants, who presumably had guilty consciences, the soldiers from Longone contented themselves with taking twenty-five of the Campesi's horses and returning the way they came, loaded with loaves of bread and loot. With the shortage of foodstuffs this must have been a heavy loss for the people of Sant'Ilario, but they had at least survived. The Spaniards, however, were far from condoning their intended perfidy and, after the Austrians had been driven out of Elba, together with Marciana, the Campesi were fined fifteen hundred scudi (which was half the sum traitorous Rio was forced to pay), and their elders and parish priest put in prison.

It is astonishing how Elba managed to feed the swollen population at all. The Austrians were trying to blockade the island, but with little effect. The diarist, who is obviously a Tuscan, tells us that two Turkish galleys brought supplies of oil, grain, flour and money to the Spaniards in Longone. 'Only to Longone,' he says, as if he felt that the Spaniards were rather mean, especially as the ships took away with them the Countess of San Stefano who had been enjoying the hospitality of Portoferraio for months. 'She left at midnight in secret and incognito, having sent her ladies and the rest of her court another way.'

'At this time,' writes the diarist, 'news came from Florence that the son of King James of England had been acclaimed by the Scots and been sent there [Scotland] on the 7th of March with 8,000 men, many volunteer Cavaliers. He was accompanied by the [?] English Prince, the Scots having first sent to France 8 of their leading noblemen, among others the son of the Grand Chancellor. This news greatly disturbed Count Valles.

'On April 21st a ship brought news from Leghorn of King James in Scotland on March 23rd, with 40 ships commanded by Monsieur di Forbein [*sic*] and of a corvette of the said fleet returning from England with a letter for the King of France.'

The news had not taken long to reach Elba, but it had become somewhat garbled in transit. One wonders, judging by the consternation it caused the Imperialists, whether the French had not deliberately circulated this rosy version of Louis XIV's attempt to cause a diversion in Scotland. Louis's plan to raise a Jacobite rebellion had in fact been entrusted to Forbin, one of the best of his sailors, who was to take James Edward on board at Dunkirk and land him with four thousand men in the Firth of Forth. But Forbin found the Pretender suffering from measles, was delayed a week, sailed into Byng's sixteen ships which were lying in wait for him, and was chased ignominiously back to France with James Edward still on board. Though the attempt was a complete failure, the Jacobites struck a medal to commemorate it.

The news, our diarist tells us, spurred Count Valles to give all his attention to prosecuting the siege of Longone. All this side of the island was plunged into civil war. No one knew whom his neighbour supported. From here on the hill, the Elbans watched the Austrians, French and Spanish, supported by a confusion of galliots and feluccas, fight for the Foccarda where today the sun-

flayed Swiss tourists lie beside the neat little *pensione* on the beach. There were skirmishes outside the walls of Capoliveri, sallies from the fort to seize prisoners. Meanwhile, within his fortress, defended by inner and outer walls, by the bastions he had built, the 'half-moons', the redoubts, 'the crown-works and other very handy fortifications', the Spanish general was bursting with fury. He, who had 'learned the profession of war for forty years in the States of Flanders – the battle school of the whole world', had received a letter from the Imperial commander, Count Valles, addressed to: 'The Enemy in Longone', and signed by a secretary. He had never been so insulted in his life. A drummer was sent post-haste with the brief retort, 'Let the Enemy learn Manners if he requires a reply.' But this did not satisfy the General's spleen, nor did it answer Count Valles's question about the sending on parole of one of the prisoners taken in a raid on the Focardo, to receive necessaries for himself and the other officers. One can imagine Pinello mulling over in his mind all the things he might have said and finally, the impulse to teach Count Valles manners becoming irresistible, dictating a letter to 'The Most Illustrious' Colonel Faber – a pointed reproof to Valles in itself. 'In view of the lack of chivalry the Commander's troops showed in their inhuman treatment of the Spanish at Gaeta,' the letter ran, 'I consider that I owe not the slightest obligation towards, or regard to the prisoners held in this fortress.' Then came the piece about his service in the Low Countries and the compassion he had learned there, followed by gracious permission for the Colonel to send his own surgeon to his wounded brother, 'notwithstanding he is receiving every attention here'. He would likewise permit access to the other 'German' prisoners and the few prisoners of neutral countries he held. He would have written all this to the Signor Count Valles himself, had the Count known 'how to treat with persons of my character, but from the first, when he set foot in the island I recognized that he was ignorant of the fact that war does not eliminate reciprocal courtesy between Generals'. He suggested that the sending of an improperly addressed and unsigned letter and the omission of his name, 'as if he were not in the fortress', was a habit 'learned, perhaps, of the Turks'. For his part he would have the illustrious Colonel know, that he would observe every courtesy and be ready to consider and meet any of his demands.

Faber returned a harmless letter to 'the Illustrious Signor', but

evidently it did not conform to Spanish ideas of polite usage among generals, for it was returned to him minuted: 'This letter is returned, as it is not addressed to me and lacks all the courtesy which might have been learned from my letter. Therefore I desire no further communication with the German Commanders.'

While this exchange was taking place, the skirmishes continued on 'the hills of Longone' and between Rio and Volterraio, which brought hostilities near and often actually inside Medici territory. At Capoliveri the Imperialists had thrown up a bastion to guard the gate. Two galleys brought to Longone veteran Spaniards, escaped from Gaeta, from whom no doubt Pinello had heard of the behaviour of the Imperial troops, and these experienced fighters made savage sorties and inflicted heavy losses on the enemy which they could ill afford. Then, on the night of May 14th, Spanish patrols set the hills ablaze, encircling Capoliveri with a wall of fire. The peasants fled from the flames as the fruit of a year's work vanished in smoke. One only has to watch a carefully controlled *macchia*-burning today, to realize how immediate destruction on these hills can be. Four days later the Spaniards retook Capoliveri. General Pinello himself led a force of five hundred men up the hillside, breached the new earthworks, killed fifty Austrians, took eighty prisoners, and routed the rest.

Pinello did not repeat the error of leaving the heights unguarded, and once Capoliveri was strongly held by one hundred veterans, he knew that he could hold Longone indefinitely. All over the island, where the woods still stood, the Elbans found parties of fugitive 'Germans' hiding. They hid in the shrines, one, even, under the staircase in a priest's house, where Faber's mistress was also discovered. Nearly the whole Imperial force lay dead, stinking in the sun on the charred slopes, stolidly regarded by a hungry peasantry.

The end came more swiftly than Pinello expected. On May 16th he rode out of Longone at the head of four hundred of his men towards Rio, intending to challenge Valles and his Riese supporters and retake Rio; but when he got there he found that Valles had embarked for Piombino on the previous night, leaving forty miserable Austrians holding the Giove with two pieces of cannon. He took them prisoner and called upon those of the terrified Riese who had not taken to the *macchia*, or fled to try to gain entry into Portoferraio to ask pardon. He would allow no looting, and a soldier who was seen pillaging a Riese house was made to return what he had stolen and given a beating.

'The day of May 17th, 1708, day indeed memorable in the church at Rio and likewise at Longone, thanks were rendered to the Lord God for delivering the island from the Germans. And there was also given there [*sic*] a splendid banquet. On May 19th ... General Pinello published a general pardon and this brought peace to the souls of many Islanders.'

The elders of Rio were clapped into jail, and the diarist tells us that many of the leading citizens had their possessions confiscated. The walls of Rio were blown up, and a mine and eight barrels of gunpowder were set in the church. But as two attempts to fire the train were unsuccessful, it was hailed as a miracle: direct divine intervention was respected, and the church was spared.

Thus ended Elba's experience in the war of the Spanish Succession. The Treaty of Utrecht, by which Philip V retained the crown of Spain, gave Naples and Sardinia to the Emperor. As to Piombino, in the interests of clarity it is best to state here that, after the almost continuous fighting of the Polish and Austrian Succession wars, when it was the battlefield for Imperial and Spanish troops, it found itself Austrian, except for Longone, until 1738 when, by the second Treaty of Vienna, Philip's younger son, Charles, became King of Naples and Sicily under the title of Charles III, and founded the Neapolitan Bourbon dynasty. The Spanish, however, retained the right to garrison Piombino and the Elban forts, excluding Portoferraio. So that to the Elbans the ultimate authority was Spanish, while the immediate and personal rulers were still the Princes of Piombino.

In 1701 the last of the Ludovisi died and the Piombino succession passed through the female line to Ippolita Buoncompagni, from her to Elenora Buoncompagni and, in 1745, to her son Gaetano, by whose time the Rio mines had been enlarged to four working levels. He died in Spain some twenty years later and was succeeded by his son Antonio, destined to be the last Prince of Piombino.

* * *

Elenora, the second Buoncompagni Princess of Piombino, was forced to acknowledge her Imperial overlord on the one hand and Spanish military command on the other, but was permitted by the two giants who used her possessions a free hand in matters of

internal jurisdiction. She took her administration with great seriousness, devoting her attention to every detail of the long reports sent her by the civil governor in Elba, whose headquarters were once more in Capoliveri.

Big bundles of her letters are in the Piombino archives, some in her own large, impulsive handwriting. She had observations to make on the duties, the salt revenue, the upkeep and pay of the garrisons, on reafforestation (which was becoming a serious matter), on poor relief, the frauds of the iron miners, the turbulence of the alum workers, the criminal cases and the sentences imposed. She acquiesced in fierce sentences to the galleys, yet pondered the fair penalty for the 'affair of the kiss', which, she wrote to Angelo Felice, her governor, she thought might be 'a sort of old custom to render negative promises of marriage by finding out that the bride had been kissed. A case of Mortification.'

The Princess had two ruling preoccupations, which are summed up frankly in a letter to Felice: 'We have always desired good relations with His Excellency the Governor of Longone, with due regard, however, for the Government of Tuscany.' The Spanish soldiers were an immediate thorn in Felice's flesh, for they were apt to bully the Elbans and take their win and grain on pretext of official requisition; fell wood without permit, and generally disturb the civil peace.

The Princess was constantly stressing the need to keep on the right side of the Spanish commanders: 'We are very glad to hear,' she tells Felice, 'that you took Longone on your way and complimented M. the Count ... on his return. And at the same time intimated that we will do all in our power to maintain friendly relations.' And again: 'Not only do we approve of your sending His Excellency of Longone a little game, but think you did *very well*, and that you should do it again.'

But suspicion of Tuscany was a bitter tradition inherited from the days of Jacobo IV.

NOTES TO CHAPTER XIII

This chapter has presented some difficulty, since Coresi del Bruno (loc. cit.) has given one version of the fighting in Elba, and an unknown diarist, whose journal is in the Foresiana and who would seem to have been an eye-witness, gives another. As I have explained in the text, I have compared the two versions, which agree broadly, and used part of both. The only contradiction I have found is in the behaviour of the Capoliverese. Also the diarist gives the date of the Austrian withdrawal as May 16th, while Coresi del Bruno puts it a few days later. Both narrators spell proper names in an entirely arbitrary way—which is not unusual for the period. The Spanish commander figures in del Bruno's account as: General Francesco Pinello di Morris, and Pinelli de Morvis. The diarist gives Pinelli de Moris, while Fazzi (loc. cit.) chooses plain Pinello. Professor Escandell-Bonet of Salamanca University is of the opinion that Pinello de Morvis is the most probable. The Austrian commander figures as Valles, and Vallis, while Faber is nearly consistently so, but sometimes is referred to as Fabbri.

The details of the building in Portoferraio and Volterraio are to be found in Governo Civile e militare di Portoferraio, F.5, 8 and 11; Affari di Portoferraio, F.27; and Affari di Stato e di Guerra, F.83.

Serristori's recommendation is in Affari di Portoferraio, F.27.

The correspondence regarding the exchange of Piombino for the Sienese garrisons is contained in Affari di Portoferraio (loc. cit.) and quoted by Moisè (loc. cit.). All these sources are in the State Archives in Florence.

The French reports are given in *Miniere e Ferro dell'Elba* (op. cit.), as is Mellini's letter to Isabella.

The ducal and royal visits to Portoferraio are all given by Coresi del Bruno (loc. cit.).

The Princess Elenora of Piombino's letters are contained in the bulky portfolios of Piombino, A.5 (*Arch. d. Stato*, Florence).

XIV

THE END OF THE MEDICI

PIOMBINO had good cause to be suspicious of the Grand Dukes. Although Cosimo III saw his state's independence threatened on all sides, he still hoped to get Piombino and the rest of Elba from whichever great power was strong enough to make him a present of it for favours received.

The Spanish, Polish and Austrian Succession wars set Europe fighting for almost the whole of the first half of the eighteenth century—fighting not small frontier skirmishes, but huge battles and campaigns, costly in money and blood. As H. A. L. Fisher says: 'every political appetite was aroused ... At one moment it seemed that Austria would be brought to the ground, at another that France would be dismembered, at a third that Holland and the Netherlands would be annexed by the French, at a fourth that Prussia would be overwhelmed by the Russians and Austrians.'

I quote this passage because it describes the background against which Cosimo and his son, Gian Gastone, lived, the cause of his constant uncertainty as to whether he was on the right side, his efforts to conciliate the Emperor, the French and the Spanish. His situation was made doubly insecure since his line was dying out, and, on pretext of helping him to choose a successor, each of the three was, he well knew, trying to gain control of, if not to annex, Tuscany, while Elizabeth Farnese, Philip V's third wife, was intriguing, with Cardinal Alberoni's help, to get for her two sons the ducal thrones of Tuscany and Parma. In his anxiety to secure the succession, Cosimo forced his brother, the Cardinal Francesco Maria, to renounce the red hat and marry a reluctant young Gonzaga bride. But neither the ex-Cardinal nor his nephew, Gian Gastone, a dissolute wreck, begot children. Ferdinand was a sick man and died in 1713. There remained Cosimo's daughter, Anna

Maria, the Electress Palatine. Despite all questions, suggestions and pressures he firmly held to her nomination as Gian Gastone's successor. But the rulers of Europe would not let him alone. One would have thought that with their boundaries threatened, their countries disrupted, Tuscany would have meant little to them; but, in fact, the addition of the Grand Duchy to any one of the leading protagonists would have upset the balance of power, and none of them could tolerate the idea of any one of the others dominating it. The Emperor, now Charles VI, began to put pressure on Cosimo to settle the succession once for all. The old man let it be known that he would be ready to consider Imperial proposals if the Emperor would grant him Piombino, Elba and the Presidii. But in 1717 his envoy, Bartolommei, was sharply warned that if the Grand Duke obstinately refused to decide upon his heirs (although he had consistently held to his daughter), nothing could be done. The Emperor would not pledge himself to bestow 'a gift' upon one who could not make up his mind. Finally, Cosimo suggested the House of Este and the Emperor agreed, but when Cosimo tried to hold him to his shadowy 'promise' of Piombino and Elba, the Emperor categorically stated that he would never give them up.

The scene now shifts to London, where, in the following year, France, England and Austria coolly decided *inter alia* to adopt George I's proposal that the Emperor should have the free disposal of Tuscany. Cosimo, who had counted on English support, was bitterly disappointed. The Spaniards refused to consider the matter settled, and Spanish troops landed in Sicily, only to see their fleet soundly beaten by Admiral Byng, acting for the Emperor. In August that year the Quadruple Alliance decided, without reference to Cosimo, that Tuscany should go to Don Carlos (later Charles III), Philip V's and Elizabeth Farnese's son, that Spanish Elba should go to Tuscany and that Leghorn and Portoferraio should have Swiss garrisons, Tuscany being an Imperial fief. Gian Gastone and Anna Maria were ignored.

This roused the indignation of Spain, who would never acknowledge the Emperor as overlord. Cosimo, who had tried so hard to persuade the Emperor to dispose of Piombino in the same manner, was furiously indignant and sent protests to all the powers concerned. No one took the least notice. Cosimo was seventy-six, but this final insult aroused in him the last flicker of Medici spirit. He

ordered the raising of troops, the repair of forts, and sent engineers to strengthen the port defences of Portoferraio. But in 1720 Spain signed the Alliance, and Europe settled down to a three-year bicker at Cambray. Tuscany was disposed of on paper in a dozen different ways, but remained an acknowledged fief of the Emperor of Austria. With one final protest Cosimo III died in 1723, and Gian Gastone reluctantly inherited the state and the quarrel.

The new Grand Duke was fifty-three. He had been excluded from any part in the government; he was childless, a homosexual, and a sot, separated from his German wife and almost psychopathically addicted to solitude. Nevertheless, he made an effort to restore his decayed state. He reviewed its military position and discovered that, of the forty-three forts, only Leghorn and Portoferraio were fully manned and equipped. In Coresi del Bruno's report which he prepared for Gian Gastone he gives the inhabitants of Portoferraio as two thousand four hundred and fifty, including three hundred and fifty soldiers. The famous Tuscan navy was reduced to three galleys and a few barnacle-encrusted ships, anchored permanently in Leghorn harbour, with a total complement of one hundred and ninety-eight men. The Order of San Stefano had 'lost the seafaring habit'. Florence, despite its beautiful buildings, had become beggar-haunted and squalid, the Tuscans spied upon and over-taxed. Gian Gastone reduced taxation, abolished extravagant ceremonies; 'there is no town where men live with less luxury than Florence,' wrote Montesquieu in 1728.

How much of this affected Elba it is hard to judge, but while one has a picture of the local administrators absorbed in the price of beans, the punishing of poor little crimes of stolen wood or honey, the whole of Elba was very conscious of the Spaniards. To the Elbans Portoferraio was strong and secure and, possibly for this reason, one finds little interest and speculation or anxiety expressed as to the Medici succession. But round Longone news of Don Carlos's pretensions must have been discussed, although a local rebellion of the garrison in 1713, and the hanging of its leaders outside the fort's walls, probably provided more food for conversation. Gian Gastone's paramount concern was at all costs to prevent Don Carlos from garrisoning the Tuscan forts. He lay low, feigning indifference. The powers, he knew, were only waiting for his death to close in and rob his sister of the Medici inheritance.

But he was not allowed much respite. In 1725 the first Treaty of Vienna between Spain and Austria, confirming Don Carlos in his succession to the States of Parma and Tuscany, roused England, France and Holland, and a fresh, complicated series of disputes started the fighting once more. In 1731 a combined British and Spanish fleet seized Leghorn and Portoferraio, and landed troops; an army of thirty thousand Spaniards occupied Tuscany; and fifty thousand Imperial troops poured over the Apennines by Pontremoli. But just as war seemed inevitable, Don Carlos was ordered to lead a Spanish army against an Imperial threat to Naples, while Austria had been defeated on the Po; and once more the Medici escaped.

Gian Gastone, however, was becoming more and more indifferent. He spent days and weeks in bed, accessible only through his favourite, Dami. The Spanish troops and the youthful Don Carlos himself were neither resisted nor particularly disliked by the Florentines; indeed, in 1732 they flocked to Leghorn to watch the young Infante's arrival. Gian Gastone treated him as a son, and heaped presents on him. But the great powers were still arguing among themselves, and in 1733 the Polish Succession set them fighting again and put Don Carlos on a Neapolitan throne guarded by the Presidii. A new heir to the Medici had to be found, and it was not until 1738 that, at Vienna, they once more, and finally, disposed of Tuscany, without even consulting its Grand Duke. By the Third Treaty of Vienna the Grand Duchy was to be given to the Emperor's daughter, Maria Theresa, to whom Francis of Lorraine was to be married; Tuscany thus became an appanage of Austria. Francis was to cede Lorraine to France, which greatly displeased him, but he also had not been consulted.

The Tuscans detested the Austrians and would have preferred the Spanish. In Elba the Spaniards had so long been accepted, together with the Medici, that they had become identified by the people with its soil. Gian Gastone's ministers protested: once more, no one took the least notice. Two years later, while Austrian garrisons were replacing Spanish ones in the Tuscan fortresses, Gian Gastone died. For six years his sister, Anna Maria, lived apart in Florence, disdainfully watching the Lorrainers administering the government. She had haughtily refused the title of Regent. The new Grand Duke, Francis II, stayed a month in Florence, then returned to Vienna, leaving as deputy an ennobled agent, the

Prince de Craon, and a Council of Regency composed of Florentines and a Senate and Council sworn to fealty. He returned two years later, but stayed only three months.

It was whispered that the Prince de Craon had earned his title by marrying Duke Leopold's mistress, and tutoring his son, Francis II, and that the Princess had caught Duke Leopold's eye as she drove her flock of turkeys. Sir Robert Walpole heard it all from young Horace Mann, the British Minister in Florence. From his account the Craons made themselves utterly ridiculous, behaving as they thought royalty should behave. The Florentines laughed at them, but fiercely hated the Austro-Lorraine officials. The Electress stayed in her silver-furnished room and went out only to go to Mass or for a drive in her coach drawn by eight horses. Her aesthetic sensibilities must have suffered when the Craons re-arranged the superb Medici collection of pictures in the great hall of the Pitti (which belonged to her, not to Francis) on the principle that no painted figure should turn its back to the throne.

Meanwhile, in Elba the governors were busy with the affairs of the island. Sardi, at Capoliveri, was finding it difficult to get bilingual secretaries, nearly broke his neck 'on the icy Rio road', and dealt severely with 'two celebrated light ladies and their noble company of 2 cavaliers'. The Anziani were absorbed in the price of vegetables and complaining about the 'Somma arroganza' of the Spanish soldiers from the garrisons. According to Fazzi, the Governor-General of Piombino and other officials spent from May to November in Rio, thus introducing an element of liveliness and vanity to the little hill-town.

Outbreaks of plague along the Mediterranean shores kept both Longone and Portoferraio alert and busy over questions of quarantine and treatment. But on the whole the island was settling down to peace and to a simple well-being which was given more stability by the Buoncompagni rulers and by the Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo, when he succeeded to the Duchy in 1765.

Peter Leopold was the third son of Maria Theresa and reminds me of the Prince Consort. At eighteen he assumed the government of Tuscany and ruled until he became Leopold II of Austria in 1790. With great seriousness he addressed himself to every kind of reform.

With him the *Relazioni* were renewed, the memorandums, the reports, accounts, plans. He appointed the engineer, Morozzi, to

make surveys, and it is to him we owe the exquisite maps of the islands of the archipelago and of Tuscany which Dr Aldo Olschki owns. Morozzi must have enjoyed his plan-making, for he used charming colours and decorated the maps with *trompe-l'œil* designs, green and yellow arabesques, pink flower-sprays.

Major Giovannelli's report recommended *inter alia* 'bomb-proof barracks, hospitals and arsenals for Portoferraio', while Inocenzo Fazzi's Description tells us that there were now two schoolmasters, two doctors, two surgeons and two confraternities in the town. He also tells us that the mines were producing a revenue of forty thousand scudi a year, but for the detailed technicalities of Rio, I would recommend the published report to Piombino of the Florentine doctor Alberto Buzzegoli, and the *Observations* of Ermengildo Pini which he dedicated to Cardinal Ludovisi, 'brother of the Prince of Piombino'. Pini gives the population of Elba in 1777 as seven thousand. He travelled all over the island, and was offered 'every comfort and facility'. Evidently the relations between the two parts of Elba had greatly improved.

* * *

As I sit in the mimosa grove above the agave-spears, I wonder what exactly were 'the elegant manufactures made from the fibres of their leaves', which so struck Pini when he came here to Longone. Was it like the fine, lacy fabric woven from the same plant by the Mexicans? Did the Spaniards learn from them how to make it, and did they, in their turn, teach the craft to the Elbans?

The absentee rulers presumably read their mass of paper with varying degrees of interest, but, except for Cosimo I and the Princess Elenora of Piombino, no one appears to have taken a personal interest in the Elbans themselves. The islanders are not demonstrative, therefore I never understood the excited, almost rapturous welcome which, from all accounts, they gave Napoleon, until I had learned their history. To have a ruler actually living in the island, the highest Authority under Heaven riding their roads, hearing their pleas, examining their villages, their ground, was the realization of their highest hopes.

NOTES TO CHAPTER XIV

For the history of the decline of the Medici I am largely indebted to Harold Acton's *The Last Medici*, and Colonel G. F. Young's *The Medici*, vol. II.

The Piombino Archives, A.5.574, no. 87, 88, reveal the day-to-day life of the officials in Elba, while Coresi del Bruno and Inocenzo Fazzi (loc. cit.) add many touches to the picture.

XV

N.

WHEN I decided to write about Elba I swore that I would write nothing about Napoleon. The bibliography in the British Museum is immense; in the libraries of France, Italy and Spain and in their archives, there is reading matter for years. Upon Napoleon's daily life, his plans for the iron industry, for Elban agriculture, for an Elban merchant navy, for roads and industries; his meeting with Marie Walewska, his mother's and sister's activities, and his escape, volumes have been written. The Emperor himself put pen to paper, the members of his entourage wrote their memoirs. I dismiss them, not because they are dull or irrelevant – they are fascinating – but because the ground has been covered and the results are nearly all available in print, and to write an account of Napoleon's year in the island would unduly prolong the book. I often wonder if, had the allies treated Napoleon fairly over the money he was to receive by treaty, he might not have stayed in his small kingdom and found scope for his fertile brain in bringing prosperity to the islands.

Certainly, when the golden keys of Portoferraio had been handed over to him, the Elbans' hopes were high. They also hoped that he would not examine the keys too closely nor inquire what doors they unlocked, for they were, in fact, the keys of the mayor's cellar hastily gilded for the occasion. In this book it is my concern and interest to record, if I must, what the Elbans thought of Napoleon and not what he thought of them, although both views are, of course, largely interdependent.

But before the French came as friends, they came, and were stoutly resisted, as enemies. The Grand Duke reiterated Tuscany's doggedly maintained neutrality, but, as Admiral Collingwood wrote prophetically to a friend in March 1796: 'It will be of great

consequence to them [the French] to garrison Leghorn for a certain time and I do not apprehend they will pay much regard to the neutrality of a Prince whose resentment they need not fear.' He was right. 'I believe,' he wrote later, 'that they [the French] were disappointed that the Duke of Tuscany did not resist their taking possession of Leghorn, then they would have had a pretext of going to Florence. The statues and pictures of his famous gallery would have gone to adorn the Louvre ... As it is, he is ruined in another way: the great part of his revenue arising from the trade of the port of Leghorn being now suspended by the blockade.'

During the last years of Antonio Buoncompagni's reign, in the spring of 1799, Napoleon's troops landed at Rio and invited the Riese to enjoy the privileges of the Age of Reason: 'liberty as in the days of the Roman republic, when the mines were a municipal concern', and the Anziani to give 'provisional orders'. Spain, thanks to the gullibility of the royal favourite, Godoy, had been effectively neutralized, and her ports opened to the French; but bases were still needed, particularly as the Emperor's plan to make Godoy Grand Master of the Order of Malta had come to nothing. Portoferraio, therefore, was important to him. By 1801 French rule was consolidated, and Antonio was bereft of both territory and revenue. Yet again Piombino had been bargained away. By a treaty between France and Naples the King of the Two Sicilies 'renounced in perpetuity ... Porto Longone in the Island of Elba and all that belonged to him in the said Island; the States and garrisons of Tuscany, together with the Principality of Piombino to the French government to dispose of at their pleasure'. There appears to have been some secret arrangement whereby the King would be indemnified with other feuds, but he never was. Antonio went to live in Rome, where he died in 1801. After establishing themselves at Rio, the French took Longone and Marciana without local resistance, but the garrison at Portoferraio could not be subdued.

'The Island of Elba ... lies so near to the Tuscan shore ... that troops could with ease be thrown over in calm or dark weather by means of boats, which ships could not at all times prevent ... by reason of the narrowness of the channel,' Admiral Keith wrote to Pitt, and Cosimo I seems to stand at his shoulder saying: 'Exactly what I told the Emperor.' The Admiral continued:

'Portoferraio is extensive and capable of holding a large fleet.

It is well fortified but requires to be much more so ... The island is about 60 leagues from Toulon, and is situated to cover the Levant and an easterly wind which would take a French force down the Mediterranean would serve to carry a following squadron after it ... '

Elba was, in fact, as important as ever in the central zone of naval activity. In 1800 the main British force based on Minorca was blockading Genoa, where Massena with thirty-six thousand troops was holding out against a superior force of Austrians under General Melas. Keith arrived in Leghorn in January, and Nelson joined him there; together they sailed for Malta, presumably to see how the siege was going, for they were both back in Leghorn by March. Ten days later, while he himself was ashore, his flagship, the *Queen Charlotte*, sent to 'dislodge some pirates' from Capraia, caught fire off Gorgona and was totally destroyed with the terrible loss of six hundred and thirty-six lives. In that sinister and notorious black swell round Gorgona few boats or swimmers could survive. The men of Portoferraio, who helped to careen the British ships, including the *Foudroyant*, must have been shocked at news of the disaster both as seamen and as allies. Nelson wrote to Keith:

> It was my wish for you to have allowed the *Foudroyant* to have carried us to Gibraltar where she might have been refitted and returned to your Lordship, but the dreadful accident which has happened to the *Queen Charlotte* may alter any plan of that kind ... Sir William Hamilton has so many cases of his valuable collection to carry to England, that if you can send a store ship to receive them on board, it will be a very great convenience and a pleasure done to our friend.

Nelson and the Hamiltons had to go overland, as we know.

Meanwhile, the Treaty of Amiens was being prepared. When its terms were known, there was much indignation among those who were fighting Napoleon. 'How Pitt,' wrote Charles Lloyd to Keith, 'could be so blind as to agree with Hawkesbury' [who signed the preliminaries in the autumn of 1801] 'that this was an "honourable peace", still more, how St Vincent could have regarded it as "the very best this country has ever made", remains inexplicable.' Certainly, when Keith had orders to evacuate Malta, Elba, the Adriatic ports and Minorca he must have agreed with

Grenville and Dundas that it was 'an act of weakness and humiliation whereby we abandon the proud pre-eminence we had obtained in the Mediterranean'.

In Portoferraio the soldiers and the Elbans had thought so for six months and more, for when the Grand Duke signed the Treaty of Florence in March 1801, ceding Elba to France, de Fisson, the commandant of the garrison of four hundred, flatly refused to recognize any such terms.

This stubborn gallantry had won admiration and made an immediate appeal to the sporting instincts of the British naval officers in the waters of the archipelago. In the Keith papers there is this letter from Captain Manley Dixon, R.N., to the Admiral:

> *July 4th*, 1801 *Port Mahon*
>
> My Lord, I have the honour to enclose for your information, letters from Capt Ballard of the *Pearl*, the Governor of Portoferraio and Messers Grant and Littledale, relative to Elba. The bravery and persevering spirit of its garrison and inhabitants, and their partiality for the English, have all contributed to make me use every effort in my power to assist them, and I have sent Capt Halsted yesterday morning with orders to take the *Pearl* under his command and give every aid and assistance that may be required to drive the French from the Island. I have applied to Gen. Fox [the Governor of Minorca] for an Artillery officer or two, likewise ammunition for its relief. One officer and one non-commissioned officer with a quantity of powder, flints, musquets etc. are sent by the *Phoenix*, but the Lieutenant Governor does not feel himself at liberty to send any soldiers for the want of which will be a tedious business, although from the bravery and determined spirit of Commandant de Fisson, the garrison and inhabitants, and the assistance of the frigates a reasonable hope remains that the expulsion of the French from the island will be accomplished.

General Fox later sent a few men under a Colonel Airey and General Pigott, and two hundred Swiss from Malta. But by that autumn Portoferraio was in a bad way and losing faith in her allies, is obvious from a letter from Captain Leveson-Gore to Keith, written off Pomonte in October of that year, when he, with

three other ships, was blockading the still French-occupied Elba. The French were in force in Piombino, he wrote, and soon it would be impossible to prevent them landing.

> I cannot help representing to you in the strongest manner the melancholy situation of the garrison of Portoferraio, who after defending the place for four months, are uncertain whether we intend to support them, and if it is your intention to conquer the island of Elba. It will be much easier now than in two months hence, as the French in time must get reinforcements across.

But, to quote Leveson-Gore again:

> In the evening of the 11th General Sacquelues, aide de camp, and officers of the French navy came on board from Piombino with letters from General Murat to Sir J. Warren and to the Commander in Chief of the British in the island of Elba to inform them that peace was signed between England and France on 1st October. On the 12th the French General sent to the garrison of Portoferraio to propose a cessation of arms ... the terms agreed on were such as the Governor chose to demand ...

It must have been a proud day for Portoferraio – possibly the proudest since Cuppano saw the Turkish fleet, crippled and unmanned, beat its retreat under the fortress guns. But there had been a prophetic final sentence in Captain Leveson-Gore's letter, which in the moment of triumph appeared superfluous and pessimistic. 'The garrison at Portoferraio,' he added, 'have not above three days powder for a heavy fire and the Squadron have given them as much as they can spare. If there is any idea of hostilities beginning again it will be absolutely necessary to supply them as soon as possible.'

However, when the war did break out again, the gallant garrison had been withdrawn, and Elba became part of Tuscany under the rule of Elisa Baciocchi, already Princess of Piombino and Lucca. Napoleon leased the Rio mining to a French company and gave them permission to build blast furnaces in Corsica. But the English blockade and the yellow-fever epidemic in Leghorn so discouraged the concessionaires that they dissolved the company. Napoleon then presented it to the Legion of Honour until it passed to him

with the rest of Elba, when he took it back, with grandiose schemes for its development.

* * *

After another five years the Elbans, including the Riese, were to welcome Napoleon, the arch-enemy, back as King and strew his path with flowers. (Did anyone, I wonder, uneasily recall the plaque set in the wall of the Madonna del Monte, commemorating the 'subduing of the republican forces of France which had occupied the island', and the piling of French trophies, 'wrenched from the enemy', at the Virgin's feet?) Sir Neil Campbell, the British Commissioner, who had no particular patron to please, no particular axe to grind, testifies to the welcome the Elbans gave Napoleon. He rode all over the island with the new King and witnessed his reception in the villages. According to him: 'Dislike of the French government and Napoleon was outweighed by the hope and belief in the advantages to the island Napoleon's presence would afford them.'

The Elbans were probably also impressed by manifestations of strength. After all, protection enabling them to live their quiet lives was all they had ever asked. Campbell likens Portoferraio at this time to 'the area of a great barrack, being occupied by military, gendarmes, police officers of all descriptions, dependants of the court, servants and adventurers—all connected with Napoleon ... the harbour is constantly filled with vessels from all parts of Italy, bringing over all sorts of provisions.'

Sir Neil Campbell of Duntroon had had a distinguished army career. He had volunteered for the Peninsular War, become colonel of a Portuguese regiment, been twice mentioned by Wellington in dispatches, and been honourably invalided home after the retreat from Burgos. Early in 1813 he became staff colonel to Lord Cathcart, the British ambassador to Russia, who was accompanying the Tsar on his westward drive against Napoleon's armies. Colonel Campbell joined Imperial headquarters in Poland, was presented to the Tsar and to the King of Prussia, attached to a Russian corps, had his horse killed under him at the battle of Bautzen and, after the siege of Danzig, was made a Knight of the Imperial Orders of St George, St Anne and, later, of St Vladimir. Unfortunately, at the battle of Fête Champenoise, the Colonel, in the thick of the fighting, began loudly exhorting

the French, in their own language, to surrender, whereupon he was promptly thrust through the back and slashed on the head by following Cossacks. Everyone, including the Tsar, was very apologetic about the 'Anglisky Pokovnick's unfortunate mischance', and he was taken to Paris, nine days after its capture by the allies, and cared for by the Tsar's own physician, but the 'melancholy occurrence' finished his active career in the army.

Nevertheless, the most dramatic months of his life were still to come for, after the signing of the Treaty of Fontainebleau, he was chosen as one of the four allied commissioners appointed to escort Napoleon to Elba. On April 16th, a letter from Lord Castlereagh ordered him to proceed forthwith to the palace of Fontainebleau, where he would find the Austrian, Russian and Prussian commissioners, and there 'to acquaint Napoleon in suitable terms of attention' that he had been directed to reside in Elba till further orders, 'if he [the ex-Emperor] should consider that the presence of a British officer can be of use in protecting the island and his person against insult or attack'.

Campbell, far from recovered, stayed at Fontainebleau for five days. He was received by Napoleon the morning after his arrival.

At that first meeting it was Napoleon who asked all the questions. Could he have a British man-of-war escort to protect him against Algerian pirates? Better still, could he not himself travel in a British warship? How long could Colonel Campbell stay in Elba? He treated the British commissioner to a ten-minute monologue on military affairs and concluded the audience by affably declaring: 'I am your subject, I rely entirely on you,' and the colonel went off to compare notes with the other commissioners and to agree upon a mutual exchange of information.

On April 28th Napoleon, accompanied by his staff and by the Austrian and British commissioners, embarked for Elba at Fréjus in the British frigate *Undaunted*, Captain Ussher, but only after a sharp difference of opinion with Colonel Campbell over a twenty-one-gun salute. The British officers declared that the royal salute could not be given after sunset, and Napoleon that, if it were indeed so, he would not leave till the morning. Campbell, commanded by Castlereagh to get his charge off French soil with the utmost dispatch, was obliged to beg the shocked Captain Ussher to 'waive the usual etiquette', and finally, in the gathering darkness,

Napoleon stepped on board to the boom of 'the honours he so much valued'.

To the captain and the colonel the voyage presented a variety of situations for which they knew no precedent. Neither Admiralty orders nor the strict, unwritten court codes of Russia and of Prussia, with which Colonel Campbell was now familiar, provided any clues to the exact treatment of a dethroned Emperor who was also a defeated enemy. True, by the second clause of the treaty, the Emperor and the Empress were to 'keep and enjoy their titles and rank for their lifetime', but Elba was clearly defined as a Principality, and Colonel Campbell's orders from the Prince Regent also made it quite clear that in all but Elban domestic affairs Napoleon must accept his decisions. By this time the ex-Emperor was calling him 'Combell' *tout court*, and showing himself ready to answer instead of to ask questions.

One feels at times, judging by their fatuity, that Boswell had to hunt in his mind for fresh questions wherewith to test the wisdom of Doctor Johnson. But Colonel Campbell laboured under no such difficulty with the ex-Emperor. He was in the intoxicating position of being the first to put to the conqueror of half Europe the momentous questions which had exercised all England for so long. Why had he not invaded England? Napoleon answered that 'he never intended to make the attempt without a superiority of fleet to protect the flotilla'. He could have done it if Villeneuve had not gone off to Cadiz and subsequently fallen in with Nelson. He and his army could have been in London in three days. What would he have done on arriving in London? 'That,' Napoleon replied, 'is difficult to answer, for a people with an energy like the English is not subdued even by taking their capital.' Campbell could not resist asking why Napoleon had been so anxious to annihilate the English, but the ex-Emperor retorted: 'If I had been Minister of England I'd have tried to make her the greatest power in the world.' And what of the West Indies and San Domingo? It would be bad policy for France to try to re-establish the colony; better to blockade it and force the negroes to export all their produce to France. France had lost all influence in the West Indies. England had no one to gainsay her for the next twenty years. Napoleon admired the English, but he severely criticized their foreign policy and the way they persisted in treating the Americans 'as if they were still Colonists'.

The captain and the colonel found him fascinating and soon, with a slight loss of perspective, they were recording his most trifling utterances: 'Napoleon said that the Duchess of Bedford was a great dancer ... her mother was a large fat woman,' Ussher reported, and the colonel solemnly wrote it down. He and the captain must have pooled all their information, for their accounts of Napoleon's pronouncements tally almost word for word. Campbell, however, had the advantage of almost perfect French and a wide experience of contemporary Europe against which to measure Napoleon's statements. His journal makes excellent reading.

* * *

By the time the *Undaunted* reached Elba, Campbell's curiosity had been largely satisfied and there was room in his mind to turn over all his doubts upon the wisdom of giving such a man an island so near coasts swarming with his supporters. The Tsar had overridden allied objections, and now he, Neil Campbell, was responsible for keeping an eye on this man, apparently undefeated in spirit, seething with energy and constantly talking of war. Napoleon was capable of 'any eccentricity' on the mainland, he told Castlereagh; but he was assured that Britain had never undertaken to police Elba, and that he was only to stay in the island as long as Napoleon wanted him.

Installed in Portoferraio, Napoleon wanted him all the time. He found 'Combell' invaluable in arranging transport, first for his Guards and then for his furniture, and finally for his mother and his sister Pauline Borghese, and through the colonel went requests and protests to Castlereagh, now at the Congress in Vienna.

He was here, at Longone, when Napoleon paid his first visit, and 'many old women presented petitions', with kneelings and hand-kissing. Napoleon decided to sell the Spanish guns at the fort as scrap in Italy. By that time he was running short of money, and his popularity was decreasing in inverse ratio to his taxes. Months passed, Campbell was given a knighthood, an augmentation of arms and a disability pension, but no more credence for his suspicions. There was an influx of mysterious visitors, and Napoleon was becoming inaccessible. Campbell grew increasingly anxious, yet there was nothing upon which he could put his finger. Occasionally he went over to the mainland to seek relief from his old wounds at a Tuscan spa. Returning from one of these brief

trips on February 26th, 1815, he received disquieting reports at Leghorn, but it was only when he reached Elba, two days later, that he discovered that Napoleon had gone. Elba had lost her king.

* * *

By the Treaty of Vienna Prince Luigi Buoncompagni was graciously permitted to retain all his private property, including the mines at Rio, and Elban salt and fishing rights. Elba and Piombino were to go, at last, to the Grand Dukes of Tuscany. The Tuscan code of Pietro Leopoldo was re-established in the island, thereby abolishing Rio's immemorial rights. Tuscany leased the mines, tried running them directly, and leased them again. Both methods proved unprofitable. Finally, the state put up for auction both the Rio mines and the Giglio workings.

* * *

Standing in the Mulini, where once the soldiers of Star fort played ball-games among the flour-mills, one of a string of sight-seers, waiting to follow the custodian's handsome, grey-eyed wife between the glass cases in Napoleon's small palace, it needs an effort of the imagination to envisage Drouot and Bertrand, Campbell and the Emperor's Polish and French officers, weaving their way through these little ante-rooms. More difficult still to picture the man himself, sitting at that empty desk in his study, in those shining, brass-trimmed chairs, lying in that silk-swagged museum-piece of a bed. Outside the windows, a copy of Canova's 'Pauline', almost indecently white, shivering nakedly among the high, wind-swept parterres, adds to my difficulty in evoking the Bonaparte family: Madame Mère, worrying about money; the clothed Princess Borghese anxious about her shipful of furniture, her health, her future; the travesty of a Court, edges sharpened by constant, inescapable propinquity.

I go out to San Martino, set in its bowl of acacia woods, and use up all the strength of my tired imagination in a colossal effort to overthrow the orange hotel, which interposes its hideous bulk between Napoleon's villa and its lovely, cypress-framed view of the sea. That done, I am barely left with the force to sweep away the monstrously vulgar gallery, built in pious memorial in 1852 by Prince Demidoff, Napoleon's nephew by marriage, to house

Napoleonic relics. It does not even justify its existence by fulfilling this purpose, for the family sold the collection—a tragedy of dispersal—half a century or so ago, and left the pretentious halls to a collection of third-rate pictures of which the Italian Belle Arti should be ashamed.

Finally stripped of its encrustations, the little villa among the ilex trees remains: a simple, uninteresting, rural house where the King of Elba came to escape from his new subjects and, who knows, his old obsessions. But Napoleon refuses to be conjured up, or I lack the secret of evocation. There is not so much as a wraith, a shadow. I am only conscious of the little gabbling girl guide, of the sterility of walls framing spaces whence life has withdrawn.

But here, on the Spanish side of the island, a small, rough-glazed coffee-cup achieved what the Mulini and San Martino failed to do. The talisman which brought the Emperor to life was a cup with that unmistakable N on the bottom. The Emperor gave it to Carlo Perez, the young officer whom he charged with the highly confidential mission of meeting Marie Walewska and her son and bringing her to him at the mountain shrine of the Madonna.

I picked it up from where it stood on Perez's great-great-grandson's table beside Perez's miniature, Perez's green- and red-ribboned medal, the letter from Drouot telling him to report for special duty; the copy of his mention in Cambronne's dispatch; the sweat-stained picture of St Catherine of Siena which he wore at Waterloo. The guides and the glass cases and the tourists faded away, till they themselves were the wraiths and Carlo Perez, being briefed by his Emperor, the reality. I could imagine the young man standing before the paper-littered desk at the Mulini, facing the fat, still commanding lover, see him hurrying through the ante-rooms—bare of the glass cases and picture post-cards—followed by the curiosity of his fellows. The cup was rough in my hands. With its sprigs of blue flowers it was unsophisticated. The N had run a little. The coarse pot showed through the skim-milk glaze. I thought of another coffee service I knew: sleek, creamily glazed, royally gilded, its N wreathed with victor's laurels. 'Surely,' I said to Perez's great-great-grandson, 'it must have been produced at Napoleon's experimental pottery.'

He did not know.

This poor, ugly cup held a pathetic promise of—was it, for the

King of Elba, achievement or failure? His desk and mind were littered with all sorts of projects for developing island industries, and ceramics was one of them. He imported potters from Naples: but the Elbans, he soon found, were not craftsmen. Beyond making the tools of their hereditary callings: tilling the earth, making wine, fishing the seas, their hands do not serve any particular inclination; they do not even inherit the tradition of gaily painting their carts or trapping their mules, like the Sicilians. Perhaps the constant threat of raiders made it seem pointless to decorate their possessions only to make them more attractive to looters.

'Please take some more coffee?' Perez's great-great-granddaughter recalled me to the twilit room. We sat behind closed shutters as much for privacy as for the slanting evening sunshine, for the Perez relics were shown me with deep reluctance and only under promise of anonymity respected.

The Italians have a highly developed sense of history, a veneration for their family records and heirlooms. It is one result of Italy's turbulent past. In a state of continual political flux, a man tends to cling to concrete evidence of his roots, his traditions, and to derive from them the sense of continuity he craves. I think that is why Italy is so rich in documents. Today, custodians of their families' heritage are troubled by a government decree which empowers the Fine Arts authorities to remove from private ownership any paper, picture or object of national historic value or interest if it is deemed to be in danger of decay, dispersal or destruction. From what I hear, the power is seldom invoked, but if the seeker meets with blank-faced denials from the less-informed members of the community, it springs from a fear of this sort of spiritual root-pruning. So we sat in the sun-barred little pink villa in its vineyard at the edge of the barley-fields, Perez's great-great-grandchildren and myself: their great-great-grandfather recommended to Napoleon by Cambronne's minute which I held in my hand, and my great-grandfather commended by Wellington in a letter which I have in my desk at home.

'I remember,' said my host's sister, irrelevantly, looking at me with her great, grave, Spanish eyes, 'my mother giving us, as playthings, beautiful Roman coins which her mother had picked up in the garden ... She told us how her father had lived in Naples and came here with the Spaniards. She told us how our great-great-grandfather rode so hard on that stormy night of the

Walewska's visit that he lost his Légion d'Honneur, and that Napoleon noticed it and took off his own decoration and pinned it on his breast.' She told it almost apologetically.

'At least,' added her brother, 'that is the legend of our family.'

As a matter of curiosity I wanted to ask if officers on duty really rode out wearing their decorations, but feared it might sound rude. I have asked others: no one can tell me, but the consensus of opinion is that they probably did.

* * *

But once more the image of Napoleon was mummified for me: embalmed by distinguished professors of history—specialists in the Emperor of the French, enormously erudite. In the Mulini we all sat facing the distinguished committee, under a portrait of the Emperor lent for the occasion, flanked by two motionless-standing carabineers in dazzling white gloves. This was the first Symposium of Napoleonic Studies to be held in Elba; its aim, to make Portoferraio a centre of studies for, I presume, such aspects of Napoleon and his era as have not already been atomized.

The congress lasted for four days. The project was discussed, papers were read on the expenses of Napoleonic public works; the cost of the Napoleonic armies; the economic and social conditions of Europe during Napoleon's sovereignty in Elba; Napoleon and the United States of America; science and technology in the Napoleonic era. Outside the windows the sea sparkled far below. The fortitude of the carabineers was remarkable. Were they, too, absorbing history, or just heroically enduring, I wondered irreverently. But I am not an aficionado of the great Corsican. Far more an admirer of Cosimo I, I felt I was in that sacred gathering under false pretences. For one moment the proceedings flickered to life: Count Roger Walewski, it was announced, had come from Paris to speak. As he was delivering his beautifully polished thanks, I slipped out into the golden air, feeling extremely ignorant. They knew so much, these eminent men. But, as I walked down the pink-stepped street to catch my bus, I trivially consoled myself: they did not know about the coffee-cup.

NOTES TO CHAPTER XV

For the letters and papers of Admiral Viscount Keith which are in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, I am indebted to Professor Christopher Lloyd, who introduced me to them, and who edited them for the Navy Records Society in 1955.

Admiral Lord Collingwood's letters were written to Sir Edward Blackett: see *Private Correspondence of Admiral Lord Collingwood* (Navy Records Soc., vol. XCVIII, 1957).

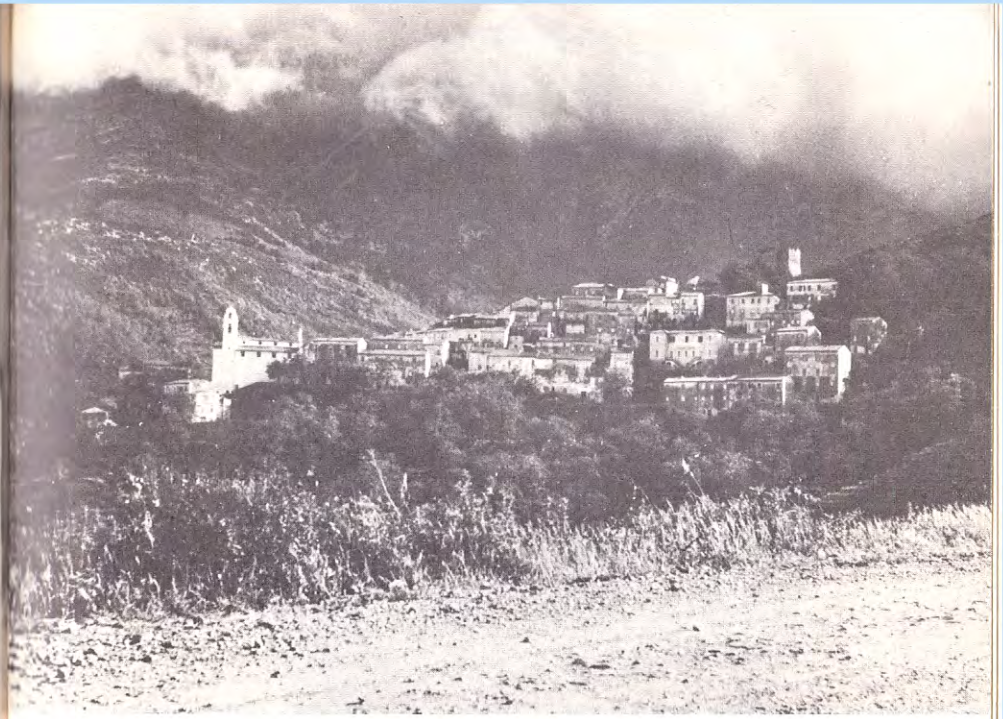
Sir Neil Campbell's experiences were published in 1869 under the title: *Napoleon at Fontainebleau and Elba. A Journal. With a memoir by A. Neil Campbell Maclachan* (London, 1869), while Admiral Sir Thomas Ussher's account appeared in 1906 under the title: *Napoleon's Last Voyages*, with an introduction and notes by J. Holland Rose (London, 1906).

De Villeneuve (not to be confused with the French admiral of that name), in his report (loc. cit.), mentions the careening of the *Foudroyant* and other British ships in Portoferraio harbour.

All the information about the Rio mines at this period I have taken from Gastone Garbaglia's contribution to *Miniere e Ferro dell'Elba* (op. cit.).

In the Fort Order Book (loc. cit.), there is an order from the major on behalf of the commandant that no one is to play *pallotola* except at the Mulini.

Carlo Perez: I am under an obligation to his present descendants on the distaff side for showing me his papers. I therefore must respect their wish for anonymity.



Marciana

Poggio

The Madonna del Monte

The Sanctuary of the Madonna del Monte

XVI

ISLAND PRISONS

'MAY 20th, 1814. To an island, Pia Nosa, which Napoleon took possession of as a dependency of Elba ... He carried two horses with him and rode out at two several times to examine every part of the island. We dined altogether on the grass under a sail ... he seated at a small table with his hat on.'

Campbell could be very graphic. I imagine that incongruous picnic as pure Douanier Rousseau: the fat man in the black cocked hat and Hessian boots sitting at the little round table; the members of his staff in tight uniforms, and the watchful Campbell, all sitting on the drying grass under the awning in the sharp, sea-reflected light. And around them deserted Pianosa, like a crusted slice of toast floating on the bright, bright blue sea.

The ex-Emperor said: 'Toute l'Europe dira que j'ai fait une conquête déjà'—a joke which Campbell found in poor taste. Indeed, he and Napoleon were to grow 'loud and warm' over the island, for, Campbell told him, Pianosa had not been given to him and he would be obliged to report the matter to the British government. It was not so much the territorial expansion to which Campbell objected as the opportunities afforded to his charge by the smaller islands 'of receiving persons from the Continent'. Campbell would have been even more suspicious had he known that six years previously Napoleon had sent over a certain Fineschi to make a report on Pianosa for him, which he did most efficiently, prefixing it with the usefully protective pronouncement: 'There is no historian who is not a plagiarist.'

I have never landed on Pianosa, although I have anchored off shore. I said as much, eating at Lidia's one day. 'What,' exclaimed her brother-in-law, a fat, jolly roadmaker, 'afraid it would tip up?'—a sally greeted delightedly by the whole table. It was funny

because it was so apt, for Pianosa is the one completely flat island of the archipelago—its highest point is eighty-five feet above sea-level—and it floats like a raft on the horizon. I have always thought that it was a strange place for the sumptuous Roman villa whose ruins many travellers described, but Agrippa Postumus, to whom it belonged, was a royal exile. Did the Emperor Augustus purposely choose it for appearances' sake? The other islands could hardly be imagined as places of penance by rich and cultured Romans. Agrippa Postumus was an unofficially favoured exile. Augustus relegated his grandson—third son of his daughter Julia—to Pianosa on a false charge to please his wife, Livia Drusilla, who was determined to secure the succession to Tiberius, her own son by a former marriage. Rumours circulated in Rome that the Emperor had secretly paid his grandson a visit of reconciliation. This would explain the unusual luxury of the exile's setting, and also its unattractive site. Both Giulj and Chierici, the nineteenth-century archaeologists, have left descriptions of the ruins they found there: whole mosaic floors of the vast palace in the centre of the island; the ruined theatre, the coloured marble baths, the ruins of many other villas. According to Tacitus—who hints that Livia had a hand in the deaths of his two brothers—Agrippa Postumus lived on Pianosa for seven years, and the then long arm of Livia's jealousy reached out from Rome and killed him.

Giulj visited Pianosa in 1833 and found all the peasants living in underground dwellings, into which 'one went down as in a ship'; the Pisan tower had been blown up by the English in the Napoleonic war, and, he reported, 'the only modern buildings were the barracks'. Sommier, the botanist-historian, opened a rock tomb on the island in 1901 and found skeletons of slaves with fettered feet. But by then the superb mosaics had disappeared under the plough and the ruins had been used as quarries for building material. Sommier, quietly botanizing, found all sorts of Stone Age remains, and was fascinated to discover that the stone of which the implements were made was not local, although chips proved that it had been worked on the spot. The flint might have come from Elba, but the obsidian must have been brought there from still farther away. Both Sommier, Chierici and Foresi comment on the complete lack of Etruscan remains. Sommier found the artificial caves described by Giulj and Chierici, and catacombs marked with a cross.

Chierici, who spent a month on Pianosa in 1874 when it was already a penal settlement, describes how he saw convicts uproot a lentisk tree and reveal two rock burials with obsidian knives and perforated conch shells. He counted thirty such tombs 'converted into dwellings by peasants from Elba'.

The island must have been an archaeologist's paradise. It is sad that no record of its treasures exists except in the papers of these men in rare periodicals and still rarer opuscules.

For generations after the Romans left it, Pianosa was used to graze sheep. It was constantly being raided, depopulated by corsairs, repopulated by enthusiastic rulers and decimated once more. In 1399 the Appiani settled some families there, who grew grain and reared sheep and horses. According to a contemporary account there was 'a good village, surrounded by good and better walls with a fine fortress in the middle', when Dragut and his French allies breached the walls, and the only water tank, on their way to Corsica. The peasant inhabitants sent word to the Turks that they would give themselves up to the French, thinking at least to avoid slavery, but Dragut's captain, Cara Mustafa, replied 'that they could give themselves up to the Devil, but that he was and would remain the master'.

The Turks left Pianosa empty and smouldering. It was obvious that no permanent settlement could survive on the island except at a disproportionate cost in fortifications and men, so the shepherds and fishermen from Elba continued to camp there sporadically, and peasants to sow their grain and tend a few vines.

In 1790 Antonio Sardi went over from Campo to tighten up the administration and to compose a full *Relazione* for the Prince of Piombino. He found about a hundred 'agriculturists', their number varying with the harvesting of the crops, ten Neapolitan fishermen temporarily installed there, and twenty-five shepherds with three thousand sheep. Ships anchoring in the bay of San Giovanni—although it provided no shelter—were made to pay 'a *paolo* a mast', which seems to have been the sole communal revenue. He found productive salt-pans on the littoral, and plenty of small wood for 'discreet felling for firewood'. He believed the island to be an asset worth keeping, and recommended that each peasant be issued with an arquebus, side-pistols, four pounds of powder, one hundred shot and six musket flints—which arms, he judged, were none too many to keep the Algerian pirates at bay. Presumably it was much the

same when the Grand Duke Pietro Leopold slept there in a 'Neolithic cave' in 1831, and five years later when the idealistic German, Stichling, the ex-consul from Lisbon, rented it for fifteen hundred lire a year. But the Teutonic Arcadia foundered, and Stichling had to face not only debts and a law-suit, but the loss of his island which the government reclaimed.

In the late nineteenth century Raffaello Foresi visited it several times to study the Stone Age remains, and the indefatigable Major Forsyth came with his fossilizing hammer; but by then Stichling, the earnest agriculturist, must have wrought untold damage, and the prison commissioners completed the havoc. Today, I am told, nothing visible remains. No one has ever excavated on the island, and presumably no one will, for it is cut off from the world and on its plate-like surface live and work two thousand prisoners.

* * *

One hundred and forty-four years after Napoleon, I went to Pianosa. I knew that I could not land there and that a permit was not easy to obtain, since it is an open prison. I was down in the harbour early. At half-past seven the boats had not returned. Only Nino passed me with Lidia's milk-cans, and the scavengers, collecting rubbish which the neat, clean Elban housewives do not throw into the harbour. The white boat slides round the point but does not come alongside, although she is able; we are rowed out to a rope-ladder where, it seems, the whole ship's crew is silently waiting with brown arms of iron to lay hold of each passenger, and, before we can blink or baulk, the thing is done: men, women, babies, a one-legged man and a sewing-machine, we are all aboard, astonished, and no word spoken. I use the historic present advisedly, for this process, beautifully deft, is repeated wherever the Navigazione Toscana boats cannot go alongside—which is everywhere except Porto Azzurro, Portoferraio and Giglio Porto.

We sailed out into the blue morning, past the Focardo, past the little, lonely, lovely coves backed by the green *macchia*-covered spurs of Capoliveri, past the grey, white-marbled cliffs tilted almost vertically at the beginning of time, then under the steepening bulk of Monte Calamita, its buttresses scarred by the iron workings, with lorries crawling like ants up and down the hair-pin bends; pipes and belts pouring out, piling up, waste like giant hour-glasses. And then across the loveliest bay of Elba: the blue,

the purple-shadowed, the infinitely variable Star Bay, with the hills above it catching trails of cloud. Untouched, except for one small beach, tranquil, unspoiled as yet, but utterly doomed to tourism, its long headland narrowly divides it from Lacona Bay, so that sitting on its shore one seems caught up in the blueness, the gold-meshed, water-reflected light: enclosed in a star sapphire.

Beyond Lacona we anchored off Campo to load brilliant-capped demijohns of wine into a peacock and red boat, and to discharge some cargo. It was not until we were sailing south-south-west, with a stretch of bitumen-black sea between us and the great blunt end of Elba, that I realized that there was something wrong with the feel of the ship. The reason was not far to discover: no one wanted to go to Pianosa but myself. The boat was charged with their hatred of the place. They were prisoners of the two thousand prisoners there. 'It does us more harm than it does them good,' said a young warder returning from leave. He did not like the job anywhere, but it was worse on Pianosa because there was no life there unconnected with the prison. But it was a job ... there was no work to be had in the Abruzzi where he came from. So, *cosa vuole?* It was this lack of work that caused many of the prisoners to come back and back again, he said. 'No work, little bread, then they pinch something. They might do a lot worse than get free meals from the state, poor devils.' He was homesick, and frankly admitted it; he was tall and golden-brown, but the cheap little photographs which he proudly showed me of his sisters were of two raven-dark beauties ('and no make-up, signora'): one a flashing, fierce Charlotte Corday of a girl, the other like a Guido Reni madonna.

The clerk and his wife returning from their native Caserta with their charming children—tenderly tidied with the young warder's pocket comb—sighed beside me at the rail when they sighted the flat rock, a mere thickening of the horizon. Like Napoleon's soldiers, who told him that rather than settle there they would blow their brains out, they were forcible, if less violent, in condemnation.

'Nothing here but convicts, convicts, convicts. Not even a *hill* to look at!' spat a little official's wife, too vulpine for a small, close-knit community. 'I tell my husband I can't stand it, and go to Rome every month.'

'We go where we are sent.' The slightly faded elementary schoolmistress sounded resigned. She taught the thirty children on

the island. 'But,' her voice lifted, 'in one more month this exile will have finished for me. I am fortunate: I am going to be married. But—my successor!'

The anchor rattled out. There was Pianosa: a half-ruined fort, a handful of pseudo-Pisan buildings above the jetty and, at the far end of the grassy raft, the pink prison looking, in that immensity of sea and sky, too small to hold two thousand men. Warders in boats were waiting: into them climbed a number of mild men carrying little bundles. They were neither grave nor gay nor truculent; the warders were friendly, but there was no laughter or shouted badinage.

'Bet they wish they'd never done it!' a young sailor said to an old one. But all the old one said was: 'They're luckier than some.'

'It's the feeling of isolation—being cut off on that miserable saucer. You feel forgotten. We're *their* prisoners.' There it was again. And this was on the homeward passage when the young accountant was going on leave and, I told him, should have been happier. But most of them, he said, were thinking of when they had to return.

Even the released prisoner was not a happy drunk. He came into the little saloon, lean, leathery, fairish, with ruined, dissipated good looks. Balefully he drank three tumblers of vermouth; one could feel oneself included in his hatred. He looked round, eyeing us, spoiling for a fight. Asked for the first-class ticket which would have justified his being there, he leaned unsmiling and sinister on the bar and retorted: 'I don't permit anyone to criticize my way of life, see?' He exuded the bad smell of hatred like a cornered skunk. This, I thought, is where Major Forsyth would have grasped his geological hammer and addressed the trouble-maker as 'My man' ... I finished my meal and looked round.

The stewards' faces were admirably blank; the captain eating at his table in the corner was adder-deaf. They seemed, as Italians so often do, to be making allowances for unfortunate humanity. Somehow they got him below without force, for when I returned to the saloon he had gone. 'Some words—quite a lot of words,' the head steward said when I asked him how they had achieved it. '*Poveraccio!* But what would you have? It is up to us to preserve decorum.'

* * *

Gorgona, too, is an open prison, solely given over to the Detained. But at least it is not monotonous, its two and a quarter square kilometres rising sheer out of the deep sea to a thousand feet. Its 'dreadful cliffs', as Antonio Micheli described them, make the only and most effective barrier to freedom except the sea.

Gorgona's historic pattern follows that of the other islands: vanished but recorded Roman remains, Etruscan objects recovered, hermits seeking tranquillity. St Augustine, we are told, passed the island on his way from Carthage to Luni. The Countess Matilda is recorded as giving 'rich gifts' to the Benedictine hermitage of San Gorgonio. The monastery was directed by no less a man than Lanfranc, so that it must have housed more than a handful of hermits. In 1074 the monks, financed by Corsica, built a monastery, probably using the Roman remains as well as the local granite. But they were so molested by pirates that they begged Pisa for protection, and in 1283 the Pisans built there one of the round towers which are their signature throughout the Mediterranean. But it appears to have been ineffectual, and the monks withdrew to the mainland. At the end of the fourteenth century, the Carthusians, on St Catherine of Siena's advice, tried where the Benedictines had failed, but they too were eventually driven out by the corsairs. There is still a squat, square tower nine hundred feet up on the saddle, where the little Medici garrison dominated the few fishermen's cottages down by the round tower; the peasants' houses on the hard-won terraces are leased by optimistic pioneers from the mainland.

In the sixteenth century the rock was appropriated as a feud by a Pisan family; claimed by Vettori, Captain of the Pontifical fleet; and given back to the Medici by Pope Leo X, who then established the Carmelites under Father Stefano di Bisignano there, on condition that he paid tribute to Florence. But Cosimo I regarded Gorgona as an essential bulwark against the Genoese, who already held Capraia, and turned the monks out, though what harm they could have done remains a mystery. It returned to Carthusian ownership under Tuscan protection at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Antonio Micheli visited the island in 1704. He was a brilliant Florentine botanist, patronized by the Grand Duke Gian Gastone, and appointed by him to the chair of Botany at Pisa; he was also honoured by Linnaeus, who named a species of magnolia after him,

and was an indefatigable field-worker. He has left an account of his visit to Gorgona, which is refreshing after the earnest *Relations* of dutiful employees. He had intended to botanize in Elba, but finding at Leghorn that there was no immediate vessel bound for Portoferraio, he accepted the offer of a passage in a small boat taking some monks back to the island. The monastic accommodation on Gorgona must have been scant, or the monks unusually inhospitable, for some monks at Leghorn gave him '4 loaves and 4 flasks of wine, telling me that there was no inn on Gorgona'.

They set sail in what Micheli found 'a good tramontana', but 'one of the good fathers made himself very ridiculous in his fear of the rising waves when the wind freshened, crying: "Oh Jesus, what a plight am I in!" ' The thirty-seven-mile passage took three hours, and one feels deeply for the sea-sick monk, faced, not only by the inexorable swell, but by the maddeningly hearty botanist. Perhaps that is the reason Micheli was not even offered a share of the monks' shelter, for he was told that the only alternative to a fisherman's hut was the tower, where the garrison lived. Micheli decided upon the tower, 'not wanting to sleep in the fisherman's hut, which would have been much better for we would have had fish to eat and not been eaten by lice as we were in the Tower'.

The garrison—consisting of a corporal and two soldiers—must have been delighted to entertain a stranger from the mainland. Micheli tells us that they drank six bottles of wine between them, 'ate fish and little birds', and were very gay. He went off to bed tired (and probably tipsy), only to be 'assailed by furious Lice and famished Fleas', also delighted by fresh blood. Next day he went plant-hunting with one of the soldiers, but the *macchia* was of the usual mixture and the castellan's pigs rootled destructively. He persuaded a fisherman to row him round 'the roots of the island to see the corals', but the heavy swell prevented this excursion. Whenever I have seen it, Gorgona sulks on this sinister black surge which, I am told, is its normal character. Next day, two ships from Capraia offered to take Micheli back with them, but when the sailors learned the object of his travels they dissuaded him as, they said, a fire had charred the whole island and he would find no plants. So, still scratching, Micheli returned with his lice to the mainland.

* * *

Capraia has been two-thirds free and one-third open prison since

1866. Approached from Elba the island is closed and unrevealing, a *macchia*-covered rock one thousand feet high. A slit in the cliff-face barely reveals the existence of a harbour. From Leghorn, its aspect is more amiable. There is a grey, house-walled village surrounding the church; and the old fortress of San Giorgio, with its fifteenth-century Genoese inscriptions, *à pic* on the cliff above the sea. In its twelfth-century walls the Guelf leader, Ranieri di Buondelmonte, took refuge from Frederic II, was overcome, blinded, and ended his life as a monk of Montecristo. Higher still, the rocky slopes are bare and one wonders upon what the goats, after which Capraia is called, subsisted. There is a single black smudge of pineta. Down by the deep, narrow harbour a dozen or so pink and ochre houses, a chapel by a thin water-course. There are bleak prison buildings, and terraces worked by convicts. I cannot imagine it as a setting for Nausicaa and her maidens. I find it a depressing island, but an Italian I know liked it enough to buy a fisherman's house there. Since he owns a famous garden on one of the lakes, it may be the contrast of the wild, uncompromising sea which attracts him.

There lingers, too, an atmosphere of controversy in the island, for about three years ago the council of Capraia let the whole island to the Ministry of Justice except a strip along the sea. This brought a storm of criticism from the Press. 'This Bastion of ancient Genoa, this charming little island set in its sapphire sea, this perfect subject for an enlightened [*sic*] tourism is to be cast to the vandalous Ministry of Justice and lost for ever.' But to the peppercorn rent is added electric light and free upkeep of the roads and the little cemetery. Furthermore, the islanders can benefit by the warders' stores, where prices for wine, meat and foodstuffs are about one-half the market price elsewhere. 'But,' the opposition objects, 'in Leghorn they describe us as a place of notable landscape interest, and the tourist trade will increase. We have a future ... Foreigners want to buy our land and build houses.' Well, why not? I asked. 'If that is the general opinion, how comes it that the Commune can act as it did?'

It was alleged that the mayor was the prison accountant, the councillors prison officials. The Capraiese, unique in all Italy, are said to have returned money to the tourism development bureau, saying they did not know how to use it. But this astonishing and comforting story may be apocryphal.

'Put the lot on Pianosa and develop Gorgona, too,' say the journalists. 'The fate of these islands is menaced by petty interests, peasant conservatism, and public inertia and obtuseness; in the hands of the Americans and the English they would be the delight of yachtsmen, a precious gem of the Tyrrhenian Sea.'

It is one point of view, and, such is the myth of tourism, not an uncommon one. But when I recall sitting in the Caffè Roma in Portoferraio last summer, watching a mammoth steam yacht edging in to her anchorage among other elegant leviathans, watching the gangway being set up with shining brass stanchions threaded with silky nylon (or was it plastic?) rope, seeing the red matting uncurling to the quay, and a white-coated steward hurrying with a flashing tray of drinks towards a totally absorbed bridge-four, I am smitten with misgiving. It surprises me that the journalists, who are intelligent people, do not realize that with their simplicity goes the islands' enchantment.

The inhabitants of Capraia were constantly in need of protection: the hermits of St Augustine from the Saracens, the Moslems from the Pisans, the Pisans from the Genoese, the Genoese from the French, the French from Nelson who took the island in 1796 (and lost it to France in the following year). Somewhere in our archives there must be the letter which the Capraiese addressed to Lord William Bentinck in 1814, saying that they had shipped the French garrison to Corsica and now begged for British protection. But Britain had her hands full and subsequently Capraia was given to the King of Sardinia under whose rule it remained until the archipelago became part of United Italy.

* * *

If the hypothetical tourist attractions of Capraia have already roused such strong emotions, I cannot understand why Italian tourism has not seized upon the most romantic island of the archipelago, namely Montecristo, which is empty of convicts and tourists alike. There could be a facsimile treasure-cave lit by neon lights, a waxen Count of Montecristo and—but I have no wish to put ideas into the promoters' heads. As it is, I hear that two Milanese families have recently rented it for summer holidays and they, like the Ruffo family in Giannutri, may preserve its beauty a little longer.

NOTES TO CHAPTER XVI

Sir Neil Campbell (op. cit.) describes Napoleon's visit to Pianosa and his subsequent conversation with the ex-Emperor about the island.

I found Fineschi's *abrégé* in Piombino 643, no. 36 (*Arch. d. Stato*, Florence).

The descriptions of the ruins and remains on Pianosa are given by Giuseppe Giulj in 'Descrizione delle Traccie di Fabbriche Romane e dei bassi tempi, che si trovano in alcune isole Toscane', *Indicatore Senese et Grossetano* (Ann. II, no. 11, 6 Agosto, 1833); by Stefano Sommier in *L'Isola di Pianosa e la sua Flora*; by Antonio Salvagnoli-Marchetti in *Notizie sull'Isola di Pianosa* (1846); and by Gaetano Chierici in *Antichi Monumenti della Pianosa* (Reggio Emilia, 1875).

The account of Dragut's raid is taken from 'Relazione della Distruzione dell'Isola della Pianosa', the eye-witness account of a priest, Diodato Spadai of Marciana, which was found in the episcopal archives of Massa in the eighteenth century and copied by Coresi del Bruno (loc. cit.).

Antonio Sardi's report is in Piombino 643, Pianosa 27 (*Arch. d. Stato*, Florence).

Additional details about the island in the eighteenth century are contained in loc. cit., Pianosa 0.

Both Sommier and Salvagnoli (op. cit.) give Stichling's story.

'Die Tyrhenis', *Kosmos* (Ann. VII, vol. XIII, Stuttgart, 1883), contains a report of Major Forsyth's activities.

Gorgona: Antonio Micheli's Excursion was edited and published by Renato Pampanini under the title: *L'Escursione bottanica di Pier. Ant. Micheli all'Isola della Gorgona nel 1704* (1911).

Much general information about the island is to be found in Cionini's *L'Isola di Capraia* (Pisa, 1891) and G. Rovereto's article on the island in *Le Vie d'Italia* (Oct. 1926).

The newspaper from which I have quoted the Capraia controversy is *Epoca* (Sept. 14th, 1958, no. 415).

XVII

MONTECRISTO

HITHERTO, the island of Montecristo has defeated me. I know its profile by heart, but I have never been there. Until last year (1960), no vessels touched there, but during the past summer, the Navigazione Toscana's weekly excursion boat to Corsica anchored off the island briefly. I came back to Elba to find that I was too late to benefit by it. Moreover, no one can tell me what I want to know about the island. Angiolino has been there for purposes of the chase, but all that impressed him was the size of a rat which crawled up his trouser-leg while he slept: 'Large as a rabbit, I'll swear!'

The rat or rabbit grows larger with each festive dinner.

Garibaldo has been across from Campo, whence I watched the scirocco piling up a barrier of seething rollers between me and my goal. He, likewise, is no archaeologist, but he told me that there were still 'a lot of old ruins', though he could not describe them. 'And,' I heard myself say, watching the spray-soaked fishermen drawing their boats up the slip-way, 'there are enormous rats there—like rabbits.' Garibaldo said politely that he quite believed it. He had not climbed far up the mountain-side: the going was very rough.

In Cosimo I's day, when the famous abbey of Montecristo had been ruined barely a century, the going was rough. In 1550 Cosimo, wishing to establish an outpost there, had sent over one of his young squires, the Signorotto da Montauto, to investigate. In a letter, among Cosimo's papers, the young man reported that he had been to the island and that he 'was not at all sure that he would go back there for 100 scudi!' He had to climb and climb 'and needed to have good nails' (presumably to cling with). There were, he wrote, 'the ruins of a little church and of a few houses all

Submarine treasure trove

Mending the nets
at Marina di Campo

ristoCampese Bay, Giglio

destroyed by the Turks'. To maintain a guard-post would be difficult, as the island was unapproachable in winter. There was a small wharf, but it was a good mile from the monastery and more than a mile from the old fort. It was solid rock: 'sempre e tutto sasso'. There is no mention of the treasure, but Cosimo knew of the legend, which in those days seemed a practical fact, when the memory of a powerful and wealthy abbey was still young. 'As to the treasure of Montecristo', he wrote to Simone Rossellini,* one of his commanders, in 1549, 'as Dragut is come, it would be best to put off going to a more propitious time.' That year, as I have said, one of Dragut's corsairs had taken a frigate and a barque in broad daylight off Piombino, which had annoyed Cosimo greatly. Whether he later sent a search party we do not know, but it is unlikely that he would have neglected to pursue so promising a source of wealth. Both Alessandro and Isabella d'Appiano sent men to look for it, but without success.

Apart from the deduction that a very rich abbey, in danger of corsair attack, would bury the treasure that all wealthy religious foundations collected, the source of the story which inspired all the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century treasure-hunters, and the one which Dumas may have heard, originated in a monk's notebook which came to light in the muniments of San Michele in Borgo in Pisa. It said that in 1670 'about 15 persons left Corsica [for Montecristo] in a gondola, one of them having found a book in which it said that under the altar there was a treasure of inestimable value. Where, arriving safe and sound ... after toiling 15 days and 15 nights, we found but a few jars full of ashes and were forced to give up the work.'

Towards the end of the sixteenth century, the Knights of San Stefano looked for the treasure, but all they found were some Turkish gold coins on the shore. Undoubtedly the pirates, who gradually took over the whole island, would have found and taken anything of value there. Later archaeologists have bewailed the digging of generation after generation of treasure-seekers, since the church floor, its altars and its steps have all been completely destroyed.

There is nothing legendary, however, about the rich abbey of Montecristo. Only its origins were passed on by word of mouth. St Mamiliano is said to have had a little chapel to San Salvatore

* Or 'Rossermini', see Note, Chapter VI.

built near his cave, and on the peak above the sea he and his successors lived a devout life of prayer and contemplation for about a century. It is towards the end of the sixth century that the monks first step into history out of the epistles of Gregory the Great. 'I have come to know,' he wrote to the monks of Montecristo, 'that you do not observe any monastic Rule. I am therefore constrained to send you as interpreter of my will in this matter the Abbot Orosio, that he may examine carefully all your observances ... I admonish you to render him obedience and observe every recommendation of his with the same reverence which you would accord to myself.' Henceforward the 'Monastery of San Salvadore', and then the 'Monastery of Montecristo', figures in various documents.

Apparently in the tenth and eleventh centuries it grew rich and prosperous through the munificent donations in money, churches and lands of the Corsican Marquises, William and Hugo, and the Counts Simon, Dominic, Guy and Otto. I can find no reason why the Corsican nobles worshipped so far afield, but Dom Enrico Lombardi, who has studied the monastery's history, puts forward the conjecture that its reputation for holiness and spirituality was unsurpassed throughout the Mediterranean islands. This feudal patronage would be enough to account for the presence of costly church plate and votive offerings—the 'treasure' of Montecristo.

In Elba, besides the house at Capoliveri, the abbey owned the little church at San Mamiliano, set on the reedy Bovalico which runs into Campo Bay, down to which the people of San Piero came in procession through the April fields intoning the Litany, and again through the yellowing, grape-laden vines and the rustling maize for the Saint's feast day in September. Dom Enrico Lombardi thinks that the monks must have owned most of the Campo region, and quotes a Bull of Leo X of 1501 which mentions the monks' hospice in Elba, used as a resting place and also as an infirmary for the monks of Montecristo. This, he thinks, referred to San Mamiliano. The decline of the monastery began when the Pisan Republic established its rule in the whole Tuscan archipelago. The Abbot, in exchange for certain privileges and tithes, was accorded 'military protection', but very soon had to appeal to Urban III to complain to the Pisan Consuls in disputes over monastic properties in various territories.

One has in this small picture an example of what was taking place all over Italy: the dynamic challenge of the young city-republics to an outmoded, static feudality. The monks, too, seemed to have lost their quality and saintly reputation, for the Pope introduced there in the twelfth century the strict Camaldolese reformed Rule. But Pisan might could not protect Montecristo from Turkish raiders, who were constantly interfering with the monks' food supplies from the mainland. Finally, in the marauding attacks which were incidental to his offensive against Elba and Corsica, Dragut looted the monastery and carried off all the monks and the few peasants living on the island. Thenceforward Montecristo was abandoned to pirates and outlaws.

But islands exert a powerful fascination over romantics, idealists, ascetics, and the non-conformist-on-principle. The idea of owning an isolated domain, within which to exercise one's will and theories untrammelled, is irresistible. During the nineteenth century, Montecristo attracted as unusual a collection of inhabitants as Dumas could have wished. In 1839 'two strangers' (no nationality is given) came to Elba with implements and bags of corn, and requested permission to live like hermits on Montecristo. The would-be followers of San Mamiliano set off for the island, followed, we may be sure, by the respectful prayers of the Elbans. Nothing was heard of them for several weeks, until one of them returned to Elba to complain that he had been chased out of the cave with abuse by his fellow-cenobite whom he wished to prosecute.

The next persons to try the isolated life were a German and his female companion. Their stay was briefer than that of the hermits. The following year a Frenchman from Lyons rented it for ten years. He does not appear to have had any but the normal intention of cultivating the island, but this time it was the authorities who turned him out, for refusal to pay his rent. In 1848 another Frenchman, Jacques Abrial, started to form his ideal colony there; but his arcadian island almost at once became notorious.

The Sardinian ship, *La Madonna delle Vigne*, out of Genoa, carrying 60,000 gold francs and a valuable mixed cargo, bound for Leghorn, was attacked and captured by pirates in the Gulf of Spezia. They killed all the crew, took the ship with two children they had found on board, and made for Montecristo. There, Martino, the captain of the band, ordered his men to bury the loot

in the deepest part of the valley, while, afraid of betrayal, he killed the two children and threw their bodies into the sea. Five of the pirates stole the ship's boat and made for the mainland, where they hid near Piombino, while the rest made a hut out of sails in which to live until the hue and cry died down. But the Elban fishermen, who saw them there, became suspicious; soldiers were sent over to investigate and the whole horrible story came out.

Nevertheless, Abrial apparently had no lack of volunteers for his rural social experiment. By 1852 he had built houses for his four hired men and opened a combined wine-shop and store. His factor supervised the planting of vines and the more immediately profitable sowing of grain and vegetable crops, while the fishermen from Campo were encouraged to make the island their headquarters. But the upkeep of the settlement devolved entirely on its promoter. One bad harvest followed another, and after five years Abrial, who thought he knew so much, sold the island for fifty thousand lire to an Englishman who thought he knew better. George Green Taylor called himself the Count of Montecristo, and his lavishness was quite in character. The cultivation of the island must be done in a large way: bold schemes were needed. His confidence won some support, but in eight years he had spent over a million lire (a considerable sum in those days) and went bankrupt.

The last drama in which Montecristo was to figure took place in 1860 when an English ship, the *Orwell*, bringing reinforcements to Garibaldi, anchored off the island. She was captained by a certain Settembrini, an Italian in the British Merchant Navy. A party from the *Orwell* went ashore and for no apparent reason burned down two huts. Taylor by this time had gone, but when he heard about it, he sued the British government for compensation for an act of piracy. Settembrini was arrested on the high seas by the British corvette *Scylla* and taken to Malta for trial. He was acquitted, and both he and Taylor fade into obscurity.

With Taylor, the efforts to colonize Montecristo ended—although I do not know what plans the present Milanese tenants have for it. It became an open prison for ten years, and then the Ginori family leased it, rebuilt Taylor's villa and houses for three peasant families, and stocked it with game. A member of the family told me what is not generally known, that King Victor Emmanuel, who used to go there to shoot as a guest, accepted the lease of the

island as a gift from the family. Until the establishment of the Italian Republic, Montecristo remained a royal preserve.

I have not given up hope of seeing the remains of the abbey. According to Dom Enrico Lombardi the monastery and church stood about twelve hundred feet above the sea, and the little granite church is still almost intact. With Giulj's description it is possible to trace the ruins of the chapter house, a little pillared cloister with a pool and a few rooms: that is all. But flowers and votive offerings are still sometimes to be found there, for the fishermen do not forget their patron saint.

NOTES TO CHAPTER XVII

Montauto's letter is in Carteggi di Cosimo, F.67, 94 (*Arch. d. Stato*, Florence).

The other sources I have used for this chapter are:

A. I. Angelelli, *L'Abbazia e l'isola di Montecristo* (Florence, 1903); Enrico Lombardi, *S. Mamiliano di Montecristo* (Massa Maritima, n.d.); Jack la Bolina, *L'Archipelago Toscana*, Serie I, Italia Artistica, 74 (Bergamo, 1914); Fortunius, *Hist. Camald.*, II, 135 et seq.; *Reg. Gregori*, I, lib. 1, 48; Abbé Letterton, 'Donations faites en Corse à L'Abbaye de Saint Mamilien de Montecristo', *Bull. de la Soc. des Sciences Historiques et naturelles de Bastia*, VII, 169 (1887); and Emanuele Foresi, *Cenni sull'Isola di Montecristo* (Pitigliano, 1899).

The collection of maps at Simancas includes an undated one of Piombino, Elba and Montecristo (MP. YD. IV-43). On it is clearly shown a complete little church on the summit of Montecristo. It also shows fortifications at Longone. This would seem to indicate that the monks' church was still intact—or in good repair—in the seventeenth century some time after 1603.

XVIII

THE SEA KINGDOM

'Mon royaume est bien petit!' Napoleon, complaining, had no conception of the waving forests, the sea-worn valleys and peaks, the coral-glowing grottoes, which lay at his feet—a submarine kingdom extending Elba's frontiers away under the purple-streaked sea. To me, also—no amphibian—enclosed in vapours and winds, roofed with blue space, this twilit submerged world is conceivable only on a still day, when the sea in the deep bays is quartz-clear and a boat seems to float over it, suspended in a new element.

It is the undersea explorer, alone, who knows and has succumbed to its glass-sealed magic: its salty flowers and forests, its fishes, its ruins, its skeleton ships. For centuries, the coral divers have had brief, breathless glimpses of it: rifling Giannutri's exquisite, scarlet-branched caves, hacking at 'the roots of Gorgona', the banks of Cape Fonza. But only since Gino and his fellows became frogmen for purposes of war has the sea realm ensnared for their pleasure the young men of its shores who have known only peace. They go down into the eerie, new world not only for the excitement of hunting fish through its ribbony forests, but for the strange wonders, the beauties which they find there.

It is a world of 'Subs', which has its heroes no less than those of the Space above it. There is the legendary Guido Garibaldi, the 'Coral King', who, reaching unplumbed depths, found, as an admirer put it, 'Eden in the belly of the sea', and who died two years ago, crushed by its weight at last, while weeping 'Subs' waited at midnight outside the Naval Academy at Leghorn. More than once he lost himself in dark labyrinths of caves. One day he found his way to the open sea-bed only by following a current-borne fragment of weed, knowing that if it floated through a rock

couloir too narrow for his massive body to pass, he was doomed. Then there is Ferraro, one of Gino's original frogmen, who has explored Elba's submarine fringes; Falco and Novelli and Doctor Olschki's son, who devotes himself more and more to antiquarian research. One of his greatest finds, as I have already said, is lying even now awaiting investigation beneath the curling currents which, in summer, trace their arabesques round Giglio's cliffs. For half the year these waters are moody and wild, but Alessandro Olschki and his companions know that if the winter's heavy swells and fierce winds obliterate those current patterns in a welter of white crests, they leave the sea-bed undisturbed, so that the ooze still steadies and preserves a wreck and its cargo of jars which, they reckon, was stowed two thousand years ago. To investigate it properly they must work from the surface supported by a vessel with all the necessary equipment. One fact they have already established which makes their discovery unique: the jars were not of the common variety, used for carrying wine, oil, and grain—jars which litter the Mediterranean floor—but amphorae of the type which the Romans used embedded in mortar, to support the great expanses of mosaic pavements in the costly villas of the imperial epoch. The archaeologists hope to find ship's gear and artefacts which will tell them more about the men who owned it and confirm one of their three conjectures: whether the ship was a Roman one exporting to Etruria, known to have been a large importer of the jars; or an Etrurian vessel returning from some Roman market; or whether the Etruscans made the jars themselves. They can hardly wait to find out. Dr Aldo Olschki tells me that no Etruscan ship has ever been found.

In Elba, archaeologists and 'Subs' have fruitfully co-operated. Submarine fishermen competing for the national championship off Capo Sant'Andrea, which shelters one of the loveliest little bays of the island, reported amphorae fragments strewing the sea floor, lying among the reefs. Groping in the sand about thirty feet beneath the surface, produced earthenware sealing-stoppers inscribed M.FVR VIN. The submarine archaeologists measuring, photographing, exploring, have reconstructed to their satisfaction a minor Roman tragedy, there under the peacock-shining water. A Roman cargo boat, they say, must have come in to the little rocky bay to load the wine for which Sant'Andrea is still famous (and which I, with slight feelings of disloyalty, prefer to the red wine of

our side of the island). A sudden wind must have risen and dashed the laden ship on the reefs where she foundered. But part of the wreckage seemed to lie under great masses of granite, which, the very old say, broke off from the headland and fell into the sea in the great storm of 1899. The wine jars and seals date the wreck to the last century or two of the Republic. The reconstruction of the incident makes far more fascinating reading than a detective story.

But more romantic and mysterious are the strange ruins lying among the seaweed thickets off the Ghiaie beach on the sea side of Portoferraio. Who built this submerged town, among whose hewn stone walls, thickly overgrown with sea mosses, the Elban explorers have wandered? What was this complexus of massive, twenty-foot-high walls? Where did this masonry tunnel lead? The great architrave, through which the fishes swim where once swallows skimmed?

These are questions still to be answered. Funds for exploring the ruins are meagre: the archaeologists need wealthy patrons. Meanwhile, the sea-washed walls alone put bounds to our imagination.

NOTES TO CHAPTER XVIII

A detailed report of the underwater archaeological explorations in Elban waters is to be found in *Rinvenimenti e ricuperi archeologici all'Isola d'Elba* (1958–1959), by Alessandro Pederzini (Bollettino e Atti 1958–1959 del Centro Italiano Ricercatori Subacquei, Ente Valorizzazione Isola d'Elba).

The full account of Guido Garibaldi's activities and death is reported in *Il Tirreno* (Sept. 21st, 1959).

In the Castello,

man Villa, Giannutri

XIX

VINTAGE

TODAY is the justification of the whole year's work. All last week the scirocco blew rain across the island, and the hills stood sullenly under the blue-black clouds. Lidia and Angiolino had decided the days for the grape-picking some weeks ago but, as with harvests the world over, dates are provisional. Yesterday the wind shifted, and today the sunshine is brilliant, and the sky the flawless, obedient blue of a glazed picture-postcard. Below on the slopes the whole family is quietly snipping off the blue and green-gold bunches. The special Moscato grapes have already started their equivalent of a *pourriture noble* on the rough, sun-drenched cane racks which Lidia made for them last week. There, as they shrivel, they seal in themselves the rich, full, tangy sweetness which makes their wine so good to drink after dinner. The Guglielmi family laugh at me when I tell them that I find half a glass of it a powerful soporific. It is perfumed and potent, and even they keep it for weddings, christenings and when the family factor comes to dinner.

At seven o'clock the helpers arrived in ones and twos. The vineyards, facing full south, are some of the first to be harvested. Franca tells me that in her childhood the vintage was a gay affair, possibly because the Neapolitan fishermen used to turn peasant for the day, and the boys capered with barefoot gusto on the squelching mountains of grapes. But today it is a staid and adult affair. Everyone knows the others far too well to talk much and, unlike at the tying, the helpers are nearly all men not given to gossip.

A boy with a dark-brown ass is helping Nino, with Marco, to carry the heavy wooden hods of grapes down to the cellar under the farmhouse. The pickers, directed by Angiolino, are working

their way up the blue-bloomed Legno duro, Alicante and Sangioveto vines which will make the ordinary red wine. They fill their wicker baskets and tip them into the *tinelli*, and, as each pair are brought down, Nino chalks up the journey on one of the gigantic old butts which flank the walls. The asses are unloaded at the door, whose posts are concave to give passage to the huge barrels. It fascinates me to see Nino swing the grape-spilling *tinello* from the creature's back on to his shoulder, climb the ladder propped against the butt that supports the *mostatrice*, and tip the grapes in. It looks graceful and easy, but I cannot lift an empty *tinello* off the ground: I believe Nino when he tells me it weighs fifty kilos.

There is no English word for *mostatrice*. 'Must-extractor' is the nearest, but it is not exact. In form it is hopper-like, with wooden mangle-machinery and a crank to work it by hand. It rests on two shafts across the butt into which fall juice and crushed fruit alike. It is the pleasant, still-human mechanization of man and wood and simple scientific principles which he understands and in which he can co-operate. Some will say that it is not mechanization at all, but to the Guglielmi and their neighbours the *mostatrice* is still modern, and shares, in some degree, the mechanical magic of the new electric pump. Nino leaves his carrying to turn the handle, but every now and again he jumps in to the vat and stamps round before he buckets up the rich scarlet mixture and pours it into the cask above him, his legs running with juice. The crushed red grapes stay in the cask to ferment for four days, then Angiolino and Nino draw the liquid off into another butt, Nino scoops up the sediment, squeezes it in the chestnut-wood press and pours the two liquids back into the same cask. There it will remain until November 11th, when, Lidai assures me, all wines every year are 'still'. In March it is 'racked' again and finally sealed in the butts. The fine Moscato and the velvety Aleatico is made in the same way but, after the pressing, it must remain only fifteen days in the cask and then be filtered and piped into magnificent glass demi-johns and sealed with sweet oil.

* * *

The red grapes are all harvested by one o'clock. That is when we eat. I sit at the table, while the men sluice down by the well, watching Lidia. Her quiet steady movements, backwards and forwards between cooking pots and table, weave into strength and

solidity the many-stranded warp of the farm's life. It is she who creates and maintains the whole. She achieves a prodigious amount of work without stress or hurry. She not only follows the rhythm of the natural world with which she deals: she is part of that world. But there is nothing bovine about her bearing, nor is she that figment of Ovidian pastoralism, the innocent, carefree nymph. In her square, upright body she carries that Olympian calm and wisdom that I imagine to have been Demeter's: that reliability of the earth itself—the earth which we take for granted, without which we should die.

She has been harvesting since dawn, but she has milked and fed the cows, cleaned the house, prepared the midday meal for a dozen hungry harvesters. I saw her in passing take the roast pimentos for dinner out of the hot wood ash in her outside oven, which she is preparing for the drying of raisins. Tomorrow, when the oven is hot, she will dip the wicker baskets of grapes into boiling water and put them into the oven. Each night for three or four days she will repeat the process. It is just one more task to remember to fit into the mosaic of her day.

When she cooked the pasta, prepared the squid and tomato seasoning, killed and roasted rabbits and chickens, laid the places on the spotless coarse cloth, I do not know. She has time now without haste to fetch a piece of paper and write down for me the names of the grapes, which I can never remember. The sheet in her distinctive handwriting is beside me now as I write: 'Vino Bianco is made with Trebbiana, Biancone and Riminese; for Moscato, Procanico, and for fine red wine, Aleatico rosso.' Then come the evocative names of the dessert grapes which each day or so she carefully packs in wooden boxes for the mainland: Sant' Anna, Ausonaca, Regina dei Vigneti, Oglierina, Sasciala, Salamanna, and the long, glaucous, scented Terracino muscatels which she bottles in brandy and brings out for her friends—and me. Their crisp pungency is inextricably associated in my mind with conversations with Lidia and, now that I think about it, nothing could better symbolize her talk.

* * *

Ginetta arrives with Giulio, her eighteen-month-old son. Immediately he is the centre of attention. Moretta and Lila, the Segugia bitches, push their noses into my lap jealously as Giulio

is set in a high chair between his doting grandfather and me. The helpers sit down; they are mostly Lidia's relatives. They know me and are easy and friendly. As for me, I bring out the bits of information collected from my English farmer friends for just these social occasions: they are listened to with curiosity. The peasants are passionately interested in our farming methods, our insurances, our social services, our old people's welfare, which Italy sadly lacks. I have to explain our taxes. 'Heavy! but you never pay them?' 'Indeed I do. That's what pays for our social services.'

But it is time to give our full and silent attention to the food. Quietly Lidia has been slicing chunks of unsalted bread taken from the dresser drawer (I never get used to the Tuscan habit of keeping bread in a drawer), ladling the steaming pasta into a great bowl, and is now bearing down on me.

'A little one for the Signora,' she says, piling my soup-plate with about two pounds of slippery coils.

'She eats like a sparrow,' says Angiolino falsetto, pursing his lips.

Lidia makes me feel undernourished, Angiolino over-refined.

Ginetta is ladling out crimson squid-feelers and thick, sweet, tomato sauce. The whole table is admiring Giulio, who imitates the farmyard animals with enough verisimilitude to send the grown men into rapturous laughter. 'Accipicchia!' they exclaim admiringly. 'See, how he does it!'

The stacks of spaghetti have vanished like snow. Lidia steadily puts pieces of roast rabbit and chicken on our plates, followed by Ginetta with the pimentos and fried potatoes. No one says to her: 'You are not getting anything yourself.' She is there: she always has been there: that is her job: to feed them. If her menfolk offered to help her she would be fearful that they had been deranged by sunstroke. But she and Ginetta are no meek serving women. They salt the conversation, throwing into the table-talk shrewd, usually astringent, comments. Only with Giulio are they soft and yielding. Everything he clamours for he gets. This adoring indulgence of Italian parents does not seem to handicap or mar their children's character in later life. Perhaps the love lavished on them is responsible for their deep humanity.

The fresh-killed rabbit is hard. I am thankful that if I used knife and fork instead of my much more useful fingers I should be at once 'grand'.

Outside, the bright high sky shows no sign of clouding. After a smoke, while the women wash up, they will all go back, including Lidia, to the right-hand slopes and the terraces high up above the pineta to pick the clear, pink-gold grapes. Nothing now can prevent a good harvest: let the winds blow, the hail sweep the island, the sun burn, the rain soak. The suspense was over.

'Aren't you relieved?' I ask Lidia, with, I suppose, the biblical finality of this gathering at the back of my mind.

'Oh yes,' she said, 'and God be thanked. Now we start all over again.'

I had not looked at it that way.

APPENDIX

SOME idea of the turbulent state of the waters of the archipelago can be gleaned from a ship's log of 1752 belonging to Dr Baldacci: 'Journal of a Cruise [or armed Patrol] of the man-of-war, *Aquila*, under the command of Capt. Thomas Smith and Flag. Capt. Cav. Pandolfo Pertucci, kept by me Cav. Raffaello Maffei, third Lieut. of the same warship.'

The log of the 'war-ship' *Aquila* was kept, one must remember, not in war-time, but two years after the signing of the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle.

The *Aquila* had an English captain and Italian officers. Her allegiance is doubtful, since her log records 'a couple of broadsides' for almost every ship she met: Genoese, Neapolitan, Prussian. She chased 'a Tunisian galliot with a Gigliese prize [which wore the Imperial flag] and from the latter got news of other corsairs—one wearing the Maltese flag.' She managed to take two prizes from a Prussian: 'one Tuscan the other Swedish', and altogether succeeds in so confusing the issue that one is forced to the conclusion that she was a privateer, and one of the least respectable ones at that. Indeed, even had she carried letters of marque, they would have been out of date. Privateering, piracy—there was often nothing to choose between the two names.

At the end of the log are a few notes on the use of the globes, and then: 'Log of a voyage of the ship *Aquila* after hearing the news that ships under the Prussian flag were attacking [preying on] those under the Imperial flag.'

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INDEX