

THE VIRGINS OF THE ROCKS

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649137008

The virgins of the rocks by Gabriele D'Annunzio

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO

**THE VIRGINS
OF THE ROCKS**

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE TRIUMPH OF DEATH

Uniform with this Volume.

Pall Mall Gazette.—'A masterpiece. The story holds and haunts one. Unequaled even by the great French contemporary whom, in his realism, D'Annunzio most resembles, is the account of the pilgrimage to the shrine of the Virgin by the sick, deformed, and afflicted. It is a great prose poem, that of its kind cannot be surpassed. Every detail of the scene is brought before us in a series of word-pictures of wonderful power and vivid colouring, and the ever-recurring refrain, 'Viva Maria! Maria Evviva!' rings in our ears as we lay down the book. It is the work of a master, whose genius is beyond dispute.'

Daily Telegraph.—'The author gives us numerous delightful pictures, pictures of Italian scenery, simple sketches, too, of ordinary, commonplace, innocent lives. The range of his female portrait gallery is almost as wide and varied as that of George Meredith. His Ippolita, his Marie Ferrès, his Giuliana Hermit, live as strong and vivid presentments of real and skilfully contrasted women. *The Triumph of Death* ends with a tragedy, as it also begins with one. Between the two extremes are to be found many pages of poetry, of tender appreciation of nature, of rare artistic skill, of subtle and penetrating analysis.'

Daily News.—'The close of the tragedy is swift and haunting. It is impossible to overpraise the art. Every page is enriched with descriptive passages of effects of nature, of music, of art, that arrest the imagination and linger in the memory. In his words seem entangled the very breath and sunshine of Italy—its translucent moonlight skies, its incomparable horizons. It is difficult by quotation to do justice to the author's power of giving the vivid impression of a scene.'

Daily Chronicle.—'The little effects of landscape are skilfully touched in and harmonised with the emotion of the moment. The incidental pictures of peasant life are most interesting, and the terrible pandemonium at the shrine of Casalbordino is described with Zolaesque vigour.'

Scotsman.—'The imaginative and penetrative force, the eloquence and the artistic skill, are beyond question.'

Westminster Gazette.—'For a vivid and searching description of the Italian peasant on his religious side, written with knowledge and understanding, these pages could hardly be surpassed. We see their Paganism, and their poverty, and their squalor, yet also that imaginative temper which lends a certain dignity to their existence. The narrative is remorseless . . . yet it is rich and full of atmosphere. M. D'Annunzio has a tender eye for natural detail; the landscape of Italy, its flowers and trees, kindle him to genuine poetry. We are left at the close of his story with a feeling that something like genius is at work. This book is one which will not yield to any simple test. It is a work of singular power, which cannot be ignored, left unread when once started, or easily banished from the mind when read.'

The Morning Post.—'It compels attention for its intense and minute "realism" in the presentation of the relations of the man and the woman, and equal intensity and minuteness in the description of things in general.'

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE CHILD OF PLEASURE

Uniform with this Volume.

Literature.—'For the work of a man of twenty-five, this book is nothing less than marvellous. There is no stumbling or hesitation in it. The command of language, the confidence of thought, the knowledge of character and sensation, displayed by D'Annunzio, at an age when the majority of novelists and poets have been groping in the dark for style and substance, are ever awe-inspiring. D'Annunzio began his career as a writer of verse; his prose is written with the delight in language, the love of words, of a poet.'

Manchester Guardian.—'Wonderfully absorbing, for it is written with a strange psychological intelligence, it is full of vivid descriptions, vehement narrative, and contains pages of rare beauty in which an ideal language really evokes the moods of the soul that it interprets. There is in the novel some lovely verse which has been rendered with rare felicity by Mr. Symons.'

Daily Graphic.—'The wonderful beauty of the descriptions, the wealth of colour, and most of all the realisation of a certain emotional pleasure which the contemplation of the beautiful produces in some natures, this is all so finely given, that if only as a study of human character the work would be interesting. But the greatest merit of the book is the poetic beauty and richness of the language, which makes it a glowing poem in prose.'

THE VICTIM

Uniform with this Volume.

The Pall Mall Gazette.—'*The Victim* will most certainly not lessen the enthusiasm of the English cult of D'Annunzio; it will, and should, attract new admirers. No word but genius will fit his analysis of the mental history of the faithless husband. . . . The genius of D'Annunzio is shown alike in the bold directness of the conception, and the perfection with which he works out every mental detail that follows therefrom, and compels every sentence to do its full share of the work without effort. It is a gloomy, saddening book, but a great one.'

The Daily Chronicle.—'The book contains many descriptive passages of rare beauty, passages which by themselves are lovely little prose lyrics. It is a story of a terrible experience told by the man who had endured it. It is therefore a self-revelation; the revelation of the sort of self that D'Annunzio delineates with a skill and knowledge so extraordinary. The soul of the man, raw, bruised, bleeding, is always before us.'

The Daily Mail.—'The vivid imagination of D'Annunzio's novels, their power of analysis, their grip of human emotions, and their grim truth, are beyond dispute. In *The Victim* there is the same quality of genius that was so readily recognisable in *The Triumph of Death* and in *The Child of Pleasure*, and in reading it one is impressed anew with the young author's precise knowledge of life, his skill in interpretation, and his earnestness. The whole narrative is so hauntingly real, that one cannot put it aside until the end is reached.'

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN, 21 BEDFORD ST.

The Virgins
of the Rocks

THE WORKS OF
Signor Gabriele D'Annunzio

I

The Romances of the Rose

- THE CHILD OF PLEASURE. (Il Piacere.)
THE VICTIM. (L'Innocente.)
THE TRIUMPH OF DEATH. (Il Trionfo della Morte.)

II

The Romances of the Lily

- THE VIRGINS OF THE ROCKS. (Le Vergini delle Rocce.)
THE PRODIGY. (La Grazia.)
THE ANNUNCIATION. (L'Annunziazione.)

III

The Romances of the Pomegranate

- FERVOUR. (Il Fuoco.)
THE DICTATOR. (Il Donatore.)
THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE. (Il Trionfo della Vita.)

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN
21 BEDFORD STREET, W.C.

The Virgins of the Rocks

Translated from the Italian of
Gabriele D'Annunzio
By Agatha Hughes

'Io farò una finzione, che significherà cose grandi.'

LEONARDO DA VINCI



London
William Heinemann
1899

PROLOGUE

"Una cosa naturale vista in un grande specchio."

LEONARDO DA VINCI.

WITH these mortal eyes I beheld within a brief space of time three peerless souls unfold and blossom, and then wither away and perish one by one: the most beautiful, most passionate, and most miserable souls ever embodied in the latest descendants of a haughty race.

From the scenes where their desolation, their pride, and their grace wandered every day, clear and terrible thoughts came to me, such as the most ancient ruins of illustrious cities had never suggested. In hopes of unravelling the mystery of their strange ascendancy, I used to explore the depths of the vast ancestral mirrors, where, often unnoticed by themselves, their three figures were reflected bathed in a pallor like that which heralds dissolution after death; and I gazed long and earnestly at the old, worn-out things which they touched with their chilled or fevered hands, using the same gestures perhaps as had been used by other hands long since crumbled into dust.

Was it thus, indeed, that I knew them in the

tedious monotony of daily life, or are they only creations of my yearning desire and perplexity?

It was thus, indeed, that I knew them in the tedious monotony of daily life, and yet they are also creations of my yearning desire and perplexity.

That fragment of the web of my life, unconsciously woven by them, is of such priceless value to me, that I would fain embalm it in the strongest of spices to prevent it from becoming faded or destroyed in me by Time.

Therefore I now try the power of art.

Ah! but what magic could impart the coherency of tangible and durable matter to that spiritual texture which the three prisoners wove in the barren monotony of their days, and embroidered little by little with images of the noblest and most heart-rending things in which human passion has ever been hopelessly reflected?

Unlike the three ancient sisters, because victims rather than daughters of necessity, they seemed nevertheless, as they wove the richest zone of my life, to be preparing the destiny of him who was to come. Together they toiled, scarcely ever accompanying their labour with a song, but less rarely shedding visible tears—tears in which the essence of their unexhausted, cloistered souls was sublimated.

And because from the first hour that I knew them a dark cloud had overhung them, a cruel decree had struck them to the heart, and left them discouraged and gasping, and ready to die—all their attitudes