

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott  
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel  
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen  
Weber Freiligrath Frey  
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel  
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas  
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach  
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil  
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London  
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer  
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup  
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff  
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt  
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier  
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder  
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer Bebel Proust  
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke George  
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot  
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy  
Storm Casanova Lessing Langbein Gilm Gryphius  
Chamberlain Tersteegen Gilm Grillparzer Georgy  
Brentano Claudius Schiller Lafontaine Kralik Iffland Sokrates  
Strachwitz Bellamy Schilling Raabe Gibbon Tschchow  
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gibbon Tschchow  
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius  
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Goedicke  
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist Mörike Musil  
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus  
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus  
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke  
Nestroy Marie de France  
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht Ringelnatz  
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz  
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# **Sandra Belloni –Volume 7**

George Meredith

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## **BOOK 7**

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LI. A CHAPTER INTERRUPTED BY THE PHILOSOPHER

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LVIII. FROST ON THE MAY NIGHT.

LVIX. EMILIA'S GOOD-BYE



## CHAPTER I

Emilia remained locked up with her mother all that evening. The good little shrill woman, tender-eyed and slatternly, had to help try on dresses, and run about for pins, and express her critical taste in undertones, believing all the while that her daughter had given up music to go mad with vanity. The reflection struck her, notwithstanding, that it was a wiser thing for one of her sex to make friends among rich people than to marry a foreign husband.

The girl looked a brilliant woman in a superb Venetian dress of purple velvet, which she called 'the Branciani dress,' and once attired in it, and the rich purges and swelling creases over the shoulders puffed out to her satisfaction, and the run of yellow braid about it properly inspected and flattened, she would not return to her more homely wear, though very soon her mother began to whimper and say that she had lost her so long, and now that she had found her it hardly seemed the same child. Emilia would listen to no entreaties to put away her sumptuous robe. She silenced her mother with a stamp of her foot, and then sighed: "Ah! Why do I always feel such a tyrant with you?" kissing her.

"This dress," she said, and held up her mother's chin fondlingly between her two hands, "this dress was designed by my friend Merthyr—that is, Mr. Powys—from what he remembered of a dress worn by Countess Branciani, of Venice. He had it made to give to me. It came from Paris. Countess Branciani was one of his dearest friends. I feel that I am twice as much his friend with this on me. Mother, it seems like a deep blush all over me. I feel as if I looked out of a rose."

She spread her hands to express the flower magnified.

"Oh! what silly talk," said her mother: "it does turn your head, this dress does!"

"I wish it would give me my voice, mother. My father has no hope. I wish he would send me news to make me happy about him; or come and run his finger up the strings for hours, as he used to. I

have fancied I heard him at times, and I had a longing to follow the notes, and felt sure of my semi-tones. He won't see me! Mother! he would think something of me if he saw me now!"

Her mother's lamentations reached that vocal pitch at last which Emilia could not endure, and the little lady was despatched to her home under charge of a servant.

Emilia feasted on the looking-glass when alone. Had Merthyr, in restoring her to health, given her an overdose of the poison?

"Countess Branciani made the Austrian Governor her slave," she uttered, planting one foot upon a stool to lend herself height. "He told her who were suspected, and who would be imprisoned, and gave her all the State secrets. Beauty can do more than music. I wonder whether Merthyr loved her? He loves me!"

Emilia was smitten with a fear that he would speak of it when she next saw him. "Oh! I hope he will be just the same as he has been," she sighed; and with much melancholy shook her head at her fair reflection, and began to undress. It had not struck her with surprise that two men should be loving her, until, standing away from the purple folds, she seemed to grow smaller and smaller, as a fire-log robbed of its flame, and felt insufficient and weak. This was a new sensation. She depended no more on her own vital sincerity. It was in her nature, doubtless, to crave constantly for approval, but in the service of personal beauty instead of divine Art, she found herself utterly unwound without it: victim of a sense of most uncomfortable hollowness. She was glad to extinguish the candle and be covered up dark in the circle of her warmth. Then her young blood sang to her again.

An hour before breakfast every morning she read with Merthyr. Now, this morning how was she to appear to him? There would be no reading, of course. How could he think of teaching one to whom he trembled. Emilia trusted that she might see no change in him, and, above all, that he would not speak of his love for her. Nevertheless, she put on her robe of conquest, having first rejected with distaste a plainer garb. She went down the stairs slowly. Merthyr was in the library awaiting her. "You are late," he said, eyeing the dress as a thing apart from her, and remarking that it was hardly suited for morning wear. "Yellow, if you must have a strong colour,

and you wouldn't exhibit the schwartz-gelb of the Tedeschi willingly. But now!"

This was the signal for the reading to commence.

"Wilfrid would not have been so cold to me," thought Emilia, turning the leaves of Ariosto as a book of ashes. Not a word of love appeared to be in his mind. This she did not regret; but she thirsted for the assuring look. His eyes were quietly friendly. So friendly was he, that he blamed her for inattention, and took her once to task about a melodious accent in which she vulgarized the vowels. All the flattery of the Branciani dress could not keep Emilia from her feeling of smallness. Was it possible that he loved her? She watched him as eagerly as her shyness would permit. Any shadow of a change was spied for. Getting no softness from him, or superadded kindness, no shadow of a change in that direction, she stumbled in her reading purposely, to draw down rebuke; her construing was villanously bad. He told her so, and she replied: "I don't like poetry." But seeing him exchange Ariosto for Roman History, she murmured, "I like Dante." Merthyr plunged her remorselessly into the second Punic war.

But there was worse to follow. She was informed that after breakfast she would be called upon to repeat the principal facts she had been reading of. Emilia groaned audibly.

"Take the book," said Merthyr.

"It's so heavy," she complained.

"Heavy?"

"I mean, to carry about."

"If you want to 'carry it about,' the boy shall follow you with it."

She understood that she was being laughed at. Languor, coupled with the consciousness of ridicule, overwhelmed her.

"I feel I can't learn," she said.

"Feel, that you must," was replied to her.

"No; don't take any more trouble with me!"

"Yes; I expect you to distinguish Scipio from Cicero, and not make the mistake of the other evening, when you were talking to Mrs. Cameron."

Emilia left him, abashed, to dread shrewdly their meeting within five minutes at the breakfast-table; to dread eating under his eyes, with doubts of the character of her acts generally. She was, indeed, his humble scholar, though she seemed so full of weariness and revolt. He, however, when alone, looked fixedly at the door through which she had passed, and said, "She loves that man still. Similar ages, similar tastes, I suppose! She is dressed to be ready for him. She can't learn: she can do nothing. My work mayn't be lost, but it's lost for me."

Merthyr did not know that Georgiana had betrayed him, but in no case would he have given Emilia the signs she expected: in the first place, because he had self-command; and, secondly, because of those years he counted in advance of her. So she had the full mystery of his loving her to think over, without a spot of the weakness to fasten on.

Georgiana's first sight of Emilia in her Branciani dress shut her heart against the girl with iron clasps. She took occasion to remark, "We need not expect visitors so very early;" but the offender was impervious. Breakfast finished, the reading with Merthyr recommenced, when Emilia, having got over her surprise at the sameness of things this day, acquitted herself better, and even declaimed the verses musically. Seeing him look pleased, she spoke them out sonorously. Merthyr applauded. Upon which Emilia said, with odd abruptness and solemnity, "Will he come to-day?" It was beyond Merthyr's power of self-control to consent to be taken into a consultation on this matter, and he attempted to put it aside. "He may or he may not—probably to-morrow."

"No; to-day, in the afternoon," said Emilia, "be near me."

"I have engagements."

"Some word, say, that will seem to be you with me."

"Some flattery, or you won't remember it."

"Yes, I like flattery."

"Well, you look like Countess Branciani when, after thinking her husband the basest of men, she discovered him to be the noblest."

Emilia blushed. "That's not easily forgotten! But she must have looked braver, bolder, not so under a burden as I feel."

"The comparison was meant to suit the moment of your reciting."

"Yes," said Emilia, half-mournfully, "then 'myself' doesn't sit on my shoulders: I don't even care what I am."

"That is what Art does for you."

"Only by fits and starts now. Once I never thought of myself."

There was a knock at the street-door, and she changed countenance. Presently there came a gentle tap at their own door.

"It is that woman," said Emilia.

"I fancy it must be Lady Charlotte. You will not see her?"

Merthyr was anticipating a negative, but Emilia said, "Let her come in."

She gave her hand to the lady, and was the less concerned of the two.

Lady Charlotte turned away from her briskly.

"Georgey didn't say anything of you in her letter, Merthyr; I am going up to her, but I wished to satisfy myself that you were in town, first:—to save half-a-minute, you see I anticipate the philosophic manly sneer. Is it really true that you are going to mix yourself up in this mad Italian business again? Now that you're a man, my dear Merthyr, it seems almost inexcuseable—for a sensible Englishman!"

Lady Charlotte laughed, giving him her hand at the same time.

"Don't you know I swore an oath?" Merthyr caught up her tone.

"Yes, but you never succeed. I complain that you never succeed. Of what use on earth are all your efforts if you never succeed?"

Emilia's voice burst out:—

"Piacemi almen che i miei sospir sien quali  
Spera 'l Tevero e 'l Arno,  
E 'l Po,—"

Merthyr continued the ode, acting a similar fervour:—

"Ben provvide Natura al nostro stato  
Quando dell' Alpi schermo  
Pose fra noi e la tedesca rabbis."

"We are merely bondsmen to the re-establishment of the provisions of nature."

"And we know we shall succeed!" said Emilia, permitting her antagonism to pass forth in irritable emphasis.

Lady Charlotte quickly left them, to run up to Georgiana. She was not long in the house. Emilia hung near Merthyr all day, and she was near him when the knock was heard which she could suppose to be Wilfrid's, as it proved. Wilfrid was ushered in to Georgiana. Delicacy had prevented Merthyr from taking special notice to Emilia of Lady Charlotte's visit, and he treated Wilfrid's similarly, saying, "Georgy will send down word."

"Only, don't leave me till she does," Emilia rejoined.

Her agitation laid her open to be misinterpreted. It was increased when she saw him take a book and sit in the armchair between two lighted candles, calmly careless of her. She did not actually define to herself that he should feel jealously, but his indifference was one extreme which provoked her instinct to imagine a necessity for the other. Word came from Georgiana, and Emilia moved to the door. "Remember, we dine half-an-hour earlier to-day, on account of the Cameron party," was all that he uttered. Emilia made an effort to go. She felt herself as a ship sailing into perilous waters, without compass. Why did he not speak tenderly? Before Georgiana had revealed his love for her, she had been strong to see Wilfrid. Now, the idea smote her softened heart that Wilfrid's passion might engulf her if she had no word of sustainment from Merthyr. She turned and flung herself at his feet, murmuring, "Say something to me." Merthyr divined this emotion to be a sort of foresight of re-

morse on her part: he clasped the interwoven fingers of her hands, letting his eyes dwell upon hers. The marvel of their not wavering or softening meaningly kept her speechless. She rose with a strength not her own: not comforted, and no longer speculating. It was as if she had been eyeing a golden door shut fast, that might some day open, but was in itself precious to behold. She arose with deep humbleness, which awakened new ideas of the nature of worth in her bosom. She felt herself so low before this man who would not be played upon as an obsequious instrument – who would not leap into ardour for her beauty! Before that man upstairs how would she feel? The question did not come to her. She entered the room where he was, without a blush. Her step was firm, and her face expressed a quiet gladness. Georgiana stayed through the first commonplaces: then they were alone.



## CHAPTER LI

Commonplaces continued to be Wilfrid's refuge, for sentiment was surging mightily within him. The commonplaces concerning father, sisters, health, weather, sickened him when uttered, so much that for a time he was unobservant of Emilia's ready exchange of them. To a compliment on her appearance, she said: "You like this dress? I will tell you the history of it. I call it the Branciani dress. Mr. Powys designed it for me. The Countess Branciani was his friend. She used always to dress in this colour; just in this style. She also was dark. And she imagined that her husband favoured the Austrians. She believed he was an Austrian spy. It was impossible for her not to hate him —"

"Her husband!" quoth Wilfrid. The unexpected richness that had come upon her beauty and the coolness of her prattle at such an interview amazed and mortified him.

"She supposed him to be an Austrian spy!"

"Still he was her husband!"

Emilia gave her features a moment's play, but she had not full command of them, and the spark of scorn they emitted was very slight.

"Ah!" his tone had fallen into a depth, "how I thank you for the honour you have done me in desiring to see me once before you leave England! I know that I have not merited it."

More he said on this theme, blaming himself emphatically, until, startled by the commonplaces he was uttering, he stopped short; and the stopping was effective, if the speech was not. Where was the tongue of his passion? He almost asked it of himself. Where was Hippogriff? He who had burned to see her, he saw her now, fair as a vision, and yet in the flesh! Why was he as good as tongue-tied in her presence when he had such fires to pour forth?

(Presuming that he has not previously explained it, the philosopher here observes that Hippogriff, the foal of Fiery Circumstance

out of Sentiment, must be subject to strong sentimental friction before he is capable of a flight: his appetites must fast long in the very eye of provocation ere he shall be eloquent. Let him, the Philosopher, repeat at the same time that souls harmonious to Nature, of whom there are few, do not mount this animal. Those who have true passion are not at the mercy of Hippogriff—otherwise Sur-excited Sentiment. You will mark in them constantly a reverence for the laws of their being, and a natural obedience to common sense. They are subject to storm, as in everything earthly, and they need no lesson of devotion; but they never move to an object in a madness.)

Now this is good teaching: it is indeed my Philosopher's object—his purpose—to work out this distinction; and all I wish is that it were good for my market. What the Philosopher means, is to plant in the reader's path a staring contrast between my pet Emilia and his puppet Wilfrid. It would be very commendable and serviceable if a novel were what he thinks it: but all attestation favours the critical dictum, that a novel is to give us copious sugar and no cane. I, myself, as a reader, consider concomitant cane an adulteration of the qualities of sugar. My Philosopher's error is to deem the sugar, born of the cane, inseparable from it. The which is naturally resented, and away flies my book back at the heads of the librarians, hitting me behind them a far more grievous blow.

Such is the construction of my story, however, that to entirely deny the Philosopher the privilege he stipulated for when with his assistance I conceived it, would render our performance unintelligible to that acute and honourable minority which consents to be thwacked with aphorisms and sentences and a fantastic delivery of the verities. While my Play goes on, I must permit him to come forward occasionally. We are indeed in a sort of partnership, and it is useless for me to tell him that he is not popular and destroys my chance.

## CHAPTER LII

"Don't blame yourself, my Wilfrid."

Emilia spoke thus, full of pity for him, and in her adorable, deep-fluted tones, after the effective stop he had come to.

The 'my Wilfrid' made the owner of the name quiver with satisfaction. He breathed: "You have forgiven me?"

"That I have. And there was indeed no blame. My voice has gone. Yes, but I do not think it your fault."

"It was! it is!" groaned Wilfrid. "But, has your voice gone?" He leaned nearer to her, drawing largely on the claim his incredulity had to inspect her sweet features accurately. "You speak just as—more deliciously than ever! I can't think you have lost it. Ah! forgive me! forgive me!"

Emilia was about to put her hand over to him, but the prompt impulse was checked by a simultaneous feminine warning within. She smiled, saying: "'I forgive' seems such a strange thing for me to say;" and to convey any further meaning that might comfort him, better than words could do, she held on her smile. The smile was of the acceptedly feigned, conventional character; a polished Surface: belonging to the passage of the discourse, and not to the emotions. Wilfrid's swelling passion slipped on it. Sensitively he discerned an ease in its formation and disappearance that shot a first doubt through him, whether he really maintained his empire in her heart. If he did not reign there, why had she sent for him? He attributed the unheated smile to a defect in her manner, that was always chargeable with something, as he remembered. He began systematically to account for his acts: but the man was so constituted that as he laid them out for pardon, he himself condemned them most; and looking back at his weakness and double play, he broke through his phrases to cry without premeditation: "Can you have loved me then?"

Emilia's cheeks tingled: "Don't speak of that night in Devon," she replied.

"Ah!" sighed he. "I did not mean then. Then you must have hated me."

"No; for, what did I say? I said that you would come to me—nothing more. I hated that woman. You? Oh, no!"

"You loved me, then?"

"Did I not offer to work for you, if you were poor? And—I can't remember what I said. Please, do not speak of that night."

"Emilia! as a man of honour, I was bound—"

She lifted her hands: "Oh! be silent, and let that night die."

"I may speak of that night when you drove home from Penarvon Castle, and a robber? You have forgotten him, perhaps! What did he steal? not what he came for, but something dearer to him than anything he possesses. How can I say—? Dear to me? If it were dipped in my heart's blood!—"

Emilia was far from being carried away by the recollection of the scene; but remembering what her emotion had then been, she wondered at her coolness now.

"I may speak of Wilming Weir?" he insinuated.

Her bosom rose softly and heavily. As if throwing off some cloak of enchantment that clogged her spirit! "I was telling you of this dress," she said: "I mean, of Countess Branciani. She thought her husband was the Austrian spy who had betrayed them, and she said, "He is not worthy to live. Everybody knew that she had loved him. I have seen his portrait and hers. I never saw faces that looked so fond of life. She had that Italian beauty which is to any other like the difference between velvet and silk."

"Oh! do I require to be told the difference?" Wilfrid's heart throbbed.

"She," pursued Emilia, "she loved him still, I believe, but her country was her religion. There was known to be a great conspiracy, and no one knew the leader of it. All true Italians trusted Countess Branciani, though she visited the Austrian Governor's house—a

General with some name on the teeth. One night she said to him, 'You have a spy who betrays you.' The General never suspected Countess Branciani. Women are devils of cleverness sometimes.

"But he did suspect it must be her husband — thinking, I suppose, 'How otherwise would she have known he was my spy?' He gave Count Branciani secret work and high pay. Then he set a watch on him. Count Branciani was to find out who was this unknown leader. He said to the Austrian Governor, 'You shall know him in ten days.' This was repeated to Countess Branciani, and she said to herself, 'My husband! you shall perish, though I should have to stab you myself.'"

Emilia's sympathetic hand twitched. Wilfrid's seized it, but it proved no soft melting prize. She begged to be allowed to continue. He entreated her to. Thereat she pulled gently for her hand, and persisting, it was grudgingly let go.

"One night Countess Branciani put the Austrians on her husband's track. He knew that she was true to her country, and had no fear of her, whether she touched the Black-yellow gold or not. But he did not confide any, of his projects to her. And his reason was, that as she went to the Governor's, she might accidentally, by a word or a sign, show that she was an accomplice in the conspiracy. He wished to save her from a suspicion. Brave Branciani!"

Emilia had a little shudder of excitement.

"Only," she added, "why will men always think women are so weak? The Count worked with conspirators who were not dreaming they would do anything, but were plotting to do it. The Countess belonged to the other party — men who never thought they were strong enough to see their ideas acting — I mean, not bold enough to take their chance. As if we die more than one death, and the blood we spill for Italy is ever wasted! That night the Austrian spy followed the Count to the meeting-house of the conspirators. It was thought quite natural that the Count should go there. But the spy, not having the password, crouched outside, and heard from two that came out muttering, the next appointment for a meeting. This was told to Countess Branciani, and in the meantime she heard from the Austrian Governor that her husband had given in names

of the conspirators. She determined at once. 'Now may Christ and the Virgin help me!'

Emilia struck her knees, while tears started through her shut eyelids. The exclamation must have been caught from her father, who liked not the priests of his native land well enough to interfere between his English wife and their child in such a matter as religious training.

"What happened?" said Wilfrid, vainly seeking for personal application in this narrative.

"Listen!— Ah!" she fought with her tears, and said, as they rolled down her face: "For a miserable thing one can not help, I find I must cry. This is what she did. She told him she knew of the conspiracy, and asked permission to join it, swearing that she was true to Italy. He said he believed her.— Oh, heaven!— And for some time she had to beg and beg; but to spare her he would not let her join. I cannot tell why—he gave her the password for the neat meeting, and said that an old gold coin must be shown. She must have coaxed it, though he was a strong man, who could resist women. I suppose he felt that he had been unkind.— Were I Queen of Italy he should stand for ever in a statue of gold!— The next appointed night a spy entered among the conspirators, with the password and the coin. Did I tell you the Countess had one child—a girl! She lives now, and I am to know her. She is like her mother. That little girl was playing down the stairs with her nurse when a band of Austrian soldiers entered the hall underneath, and an officer, with his sword drawn, and some men, came marching up in their stiff way—the machines! This officer stooped to her, and before the nurse could stop her, made her say where her father was. Those Austrians make children betray their parents! They don't think how we grow up to detest them. Do I? Hate is not the word: it burns so hot and steady with me. The Countess came out on the first landing; she saw what was happening. When her husband was led out, she asked permission to embrace him. The officer consented, but she had to say to him, 'Move back,' and then, with her lips to her husband's cheek, 'Betray no more of them!' she whispered. Count Branciani started. Now he understood what she had done, and why she had done it. 'Ask for the charge that makes me a prisoner,' he said. Her husband's noble