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ALBERTO MARIO

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CAMBRIDGE,
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THE SECOND of June was already a date sad enough for all Italians, it being the day of Garibaldi's death, and now Fate so ordained it that its sadness should be doubled through the death of Alberto Mario, the man whom for pure-mindedness, ardent love of his country and bravery, I unhesitatingly rank with the Great Patriot who rests at Caprera.

It is difficult to speak of Alberto Mario in the limited space of a newspaper: it is hard for an humble pen to find, as near as possible, the most suitable words to express the feelings of heart and mind, on recalling the noble being who has just left us.

It will require a book, written by an uncommon pen, to hand down to posterity the life of a man who stands out quite apart, even among the pleiades of great and good men whom Italy had the good fortune to possess during that period of her modern history in which such men were most needed.

I can compare Alberto Mario to no other man; now that he is dead and that his doings and sayings become public property, now that his brave and gentle figure appears before the tribunal of the Present, we may say that in Alberto Mario

there was no flaw; that he was a man who never changed for one second in his life, never wavered, never was untrue to that great and high ideal which was incarnated in himself. How describe him? He was Alberto Mario—an apparition unique, especially in our days; all his deeds, all his words, as a Patriot, a Writer, a Soldier all bore his own impress, all came up to that pure standard which he had set to himself.

Alberto Mario was brave as a lion, gentle as a woman, simple as a child, generous, coherent and dignified as a man should be.

A patrician by birth, a gentleman by nature, he was humble with the humble, equal with the proud. Chivalrous as a knight of old, courteous as men were of yore, Alberto Mario never bowed his handsome Nazarene head to aught but that which was his own—and the true—ideal of the Good and the Beautiful.

A conspirator for his country's freedom, he never thought this country owed him gratitude or reward. A soldier, he showed on the battlefields of Italy's Regeneration how a man fights with no object in view but the fulfilment of that sacred duty which alone makes battles holy. An artist, he has left us works that tell how immense was his love of Art for art's sake alone. A citizen, he has taught us how a man must not, even to serve his cause, soil his soul with hypocrisy and his lips with a lie. I have said that Alberto Mario was coherent—a few instances will best show how he never wavered, never accepted compromise or transition.

Alberto Mario was a Republican whose ideal, as Carducci has beautifully expressed it, was 'Athens without the slaves, Venice without the Ten, Florence without monks.' Thus, being a Republican, when after the Campaign of 1860 the Medal for Military Valour was awarded him, he wrote to the Minister of War as follows:

I read in the *Official Gazette* of the Kingdom of Italy, that I have been decorated with the Silver Medal for Military Valour. I thank General Garibaldi most heartily for having remembered me. I have fought at his side with the people, whose heroic incarnation he is. The people, exercising its sovereignty, placed itself under the Monarchy of Savoy, and I respected and respect this expressed will. If similar occasions return, I shall be happy to give my life for the completion of my country's unity. But I am a Republican by faith and cannot without contradiction accept from the Monarchy decorations or anything else.

Again after the Campaign of 1866 Alberto Mario refused the same decoration for the second time.

In 1862, unknown to him, the borough of Modica in Sicily, elected him as their representative in the Chamber of Deputies. This honour, too, he declined in a most eloquent and noble-minded address to those who wanted him for their representative.

I have said that as a soldier he only fought for his country's freedom, that as a citizen he has taught us how a man must not soil his soul with hypocrisy or his lips with a lie.

Yet, when in 1879 at Naples, King Humbert happily escaped the cowardly knife of an assassin, Alberto Mario, the Republican who could accept no reward for his military valour, who could not sit in the House, except by perjury, telegraphed to the King of Italy to express his satisfaction that the murderer's foul deed had been frustrated. Alberto Mario, as I said, was a gentleman by nature.

As an artist, he had all the enthusiasm, the faith, the perception of the Beautiful which alone can make us understand and feel Art. When he spoke on Art, as when he told the tale of Italy's Regeneration in simple yet impressive language, all those who had the privilege of hearing him, kept silent, spell-bound by the charm of this man who saw in the Past but what was pure and sublime, who hoped for the Future but what might correspond to his ideal of the Past.

As a journalist, Alberto Mario was an honour to our pro-

fession. A redoubtable polemist, possessing the satire of an Athenian, he never once overstepped that limit which respect for himself told him was to be respected in controversy with others. Many and fierce were the battles with the pen in which Alberto Mario engaged since his youth; in no instance have his bitterest enemies been able to say that he forgot himself.

Being such as he was, we can understand how, while ill, men of every creed and party took an affectionate interest in this man, how on his death every public organ, every individual who has loved and loves Italy, Truth and Light, has sent a line of condolence, spoken a word of regret, in every way paying homage to the Great and Good Man who has departed.

Born on the 5th of June 1826; Alberto Mario was comparatively young in years, as he was ever young in mind and heart; but, during the last four or five months of his existence, his physical sufferings were such, that we, his friends, wished every day that that gentle and noble spirit might leave its tortured body.

On his deathbed, as in prison, or on the field of battle, or in the editorial room, Alberto Mario was calm, serene, awing those around him by his fortitude and his intelligent resignation.

And as his spirit was beautiful, so was his person. His physical beauty belonged to the kind of which Christ's must have been, which Garibaldi's was. His thoughtful yet smiling, soft eyes, that at times lit up with leonine fire, his vast, white brow, were ever to me as a great book on which, unwritten, one could read those elevated thoughts the comprehension of which is reserved to the chosen.

By man and woman Alberto Mario has been loved with a feeling of enthusiastic reverence and deepest attachment. He will live in his beloved country's history as the Patriot, the

Soldier and the Scholar. In the hearts of those who approached him, who knew him intimately, he will ever dwell, and as long as but two of his numerous friends live, they will never meet without uttering the dear name of Alberto Mario, without evoking the gentle and striking figure that has passed through the world without having for one moment been soiled by calumny or envy.

For many years Alberto Mario had in his wife, Jessie White, a noble, worthy companion, a mate who was capable of comprehending the man whom she had met and loved in a prison, over whose happiness she constantly watched with jealous, truly womanly love and care, whose last days she comforted as only a woman can, when she understands the man whose welfare in this world depends so much on herself.

In the unutterable grief that has for so many months weighed upon Alberto Mario's wife, the universal tribute of love and respect paid to his memory, the profound and sincere sympathy shown to her, either in words or in silence, may be, not comfort, for to her that is impossible, but some mitigation to her anguish. Jessie White Mario has a dear and sacred task before her now, a task which all feel certain she will, despite her grief, be equal to: it is she who must watch over all that Alberto Mario has left us; the world at large must know him better, thoroughly—to revere and love him the more. She alone can do this, and thus erect a monument to his memory more enduring than tablet, or bust, or statue. And on this written monument let the words *Sans peur et sans reproche* be read, for, in truth, to no man do they apply more fitly.

P. T.