

Archbishop Mar Jacobus Remembers The Baron

by

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Even the Syro-Chaldean bishopric I offered
On the strength of 'Hadrian VII'
Did not tempt Corvo. As mere Provost
To the Lieutenant of grandmagistracy
Of Sanctissima Sophia he fled
To Venice, convinced the Rhodes Trustees
Were plotting his assassination.
Where else should provide a home
To the inventor of submarine photography?
I missed his inch-thick cigarettes,
Gigantic Waterman fountain pens
And Graecocorvine vocabulary.
We played duets but kissed only once.
At last, he denounced me as a fraud
And schismatic. I said he played the spinet
Like a lobster trying to escape its pot –
After that, my overtures were useless.
For all his violence and absurdity
I warm to think of him now,
His cropped grey hair dyed with henna,
His white hand wearing the spur-rowel ring
I gave him as defence against Jesuits
Closed round the oar of his panther-skinned gondola
Diapered with crabs and ravens and flying
St. George and the red and gold Vesilla
Of the Bucintro rowing Club.
I think less of the lagoon-eyed fauns

He photographs and masturbates.
Does he think of me in Godless Middlesex
Where it either rains or they're playing cricket
The Syro-Chaldean Church is not doing well
Despite my sigils, blazons, banners
And the undeniable splendour of our ritual.
The landlord's wife is singing 'Auld Lang Syne'.
This is going to be a Godless Country