

# 8 *The tenth generation*

**In the 10<sup>th</sup> generation of the red line of great industrialists and bankers we find the most important figure of the family, Pietro (1803-1875), who became famous for the development of the factory-town of Valmadrera and the internationalising of his companies. Pietro, in fact, was well deserving of his family nickname, «the Great». Pietro was a character who loved public service, took upon himself prestigious titles and held a firm political position in the precarious period in which he lived.**

## **PIETRO GAVAZZI (1803-1875)**

Giovanni Pietro Gavazzi (known as Pietro) was born on December 27, 1803 in Valmadrera, where he was baptised five days later.

He was born into a large family. In fact, his father, Giuseppe Antonio, had sixteen children in all (among which were also other characters worthy of mention, including Antonio and Egidio<sup>1</sup>).

Pietro is the forefather of all the Gavazzis of the «extended family» that exist today. The other branches either died out or continued through the female side of the family, thus losing the surname Gavazzi (or adding it, as in the case of the Balossi-Gavazzi line).

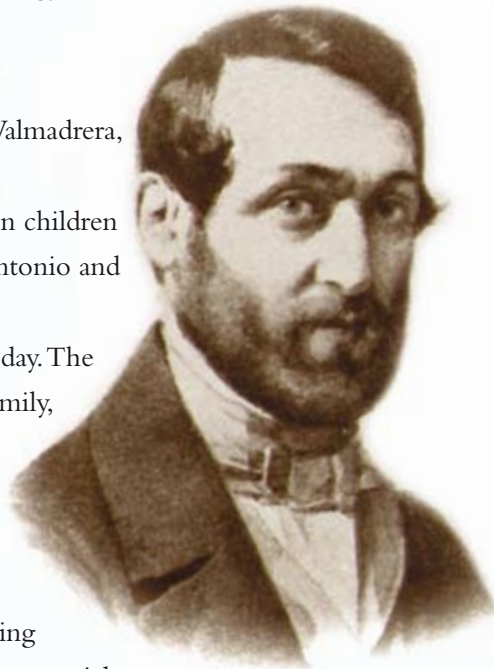
### *Pietro «the Great»*

Together with his brothers Egidio and Antonio, he was responsible for bringing about great progress in silk processing. Within the family, his extraordinary entrepreneurial success won him the nickname of Pietro «the Great».

He was undoubtedly one of the most important leading figures of the dynasty.

Despite the fact that the silk industry of Lombardy was going through difficult years (especially during the silkworm disease epidemic), Pietro did not limit himself to increasing the number of factories complexes and mills (by 1872 he owned 324 throwing basins with 20,424 spindles, attended by 1,800 workers), but he also, beginning from the years prior to the unification of Italy, made a considerable amount of technological improvements in his factories.

By far the most open to the new industrial techniques, he was the first to close the spindles in steam-heated chests, thereby making it possible to throw in the winter, and in the silk



Pietro Gavazzi  
(1803-1875).

<sup>1</sup> Their biographies may be found respectively on pages 209 and 216 of this chapter.



Portrait of Pietro Gavazzi  
(Eliseo Sala, approx.  
1853-1855)  
Oils on canvas,  
139.3 x 118.5 cm  
The Gavazzi family.

mills of Valmadrera he introduced mechanical beaters. He was also the first, in 1851, to introduce Chinese and Japanese silks in the European continent for transforming into yarn.

He made use of hydraulic power by means of complex operations in Bellano (while in Valmadrera the factories were steam-powered, using advanced foreign-made boilers).

To his textile complex in Valmadrera and that of Bellano he added another silk mill in Desio (the Pietro Gavazzi silk and spinning mill), already in operation in the 1860s, and lastly, in 1869, he persuaded two of his sons, newly-graduated in engineering – Egidio (1846-1910) and Pio (1848-1927) – to open a weaving factory in Desio with 12 Honegger power looms, the first in Italy to take steps to close the considerable gap in mechanization that afflicted the Italian silk industry.

Pietro went on to establish another throwing mill in Cornaredo (active in the 1870s). He also owned silk mills in Canzo, Albese and many other places in Lombardy<sup>2</sup>.

As well as his banking interests, Pietro worked as town councillor of Milan, pioneering the

involvement in the administrative and political field that was to become a family tradition.

### *Ernestina Pascal, the natural daughter of Viceroy Eugene Beauharnais<sup>3</sup>*

On October 14, 1829, in the middle of the Austrian reinstatement, Pietro Gavazzi married Ernestina Pascal (b. 28.11.1805, d. 4.1.1884). The wedding was held in Milan, in the Church of San Giorgio al Palazzo. The bride was born in Milan of a French family, part of the numerous retinue that came to Lombardy with Eugene Beauharnais, Napoleon's stepson and Viceroy of Italy<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 13, «Gavazzi industries, banks and businesses».

<sup>3</sup> Historical study by Giorgio Mauri with the contribution of Lorenzo Caratti di Valfrei; text by Giorgio Mauri.

<sup>4</sup> Eugene Beauharnais (b. in Paris on 1781, d. in Munich on 1824) was of a family originating from the region of Orleans. Born a viscount, he was adopted by Napoleon and became an Imperial Prince. Subsequently he was appointed Viceroy of Italy. After Napoleon's defeat, he received from his father-in-law, the King of Bavaria, the titles of Duke of Leuchtenberg and Prince of

The certificate of the marriage, which was celebrated by Don Vincenzo Bonacina, coadjutor of the Church of San Giorgio, reveals certain information regarding Ernestina and her parents: she was the legitimate daughter of Louis Pascal, native of the city of Rennes, in Brittany, and his wife, Thérèse Tavernier of Saint Maurice, a town in the Valais area<sup>5</sup> between Martigny and Lausanne, in what is today French Switzerland but was at the time under French rule. There is a fine portrait of Ernestina in Torricella (Erba), painted by Giuseppe Molteni (1800-1867)<sup>6</sup>.

Louis Pascal was a high-ranking officer and functionary at the Milanese court of the Viceroy; his wife was one of the many ladies-in-waiting.

The Pascals already had two children, Louis Jr. and Louise, born in France, who came with their parents to Milan in 1805.

Very little is known of the son – when still very young, his father started him off on a military career, and he followed the Imperial army in the various Napoleonic campaigns; he later settled in Asti, where he married Marietta Cavallero. He had a daughter, Adele, who married Agostino Garrino and also had two children, Nestore and Ernestina. The Gavazzis and their relatives from Asti remained on excellent terms, as can be seen from a number of letters and documents kept in the family archives in Valmadrera<sup>7</sup>.



Ernestina Pascal  
(1805-1884), wife  
of Pietro Gavazzi.

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Eichstadt. After the second marriage of his widowed mother with Napoleon I, Beauharnais followed his stepfather, first to Italy and later to Egypt. He was promoted to Group Commander after Marengo and Brigadier General in 1804; after the proclamation of the Empire he was appointed Imperial Prince, High Chancellor of the State and, lastly, in 1805, Viceroy of Italy. He then left immediately for Milan, where for ten years he was the most loyal of the Emperor's lieutenants.

He raised an army of 80,000 men, which took part in the campaigns of Austria, Spain and Russia; meanwhile, he promulgated the Napoleonic codes and improved the economy of Northern Italy, increasing public works and communication routes. A competent officer, in the course of the 5<sup>th</sup> Alliance (1809) he led the operations in Hungary, substituted Napoleon and later Gioacchino Murat during the Russian retreat (1812) and finally, though unsuccessfully, defended Italy against the Austrian invasion (1814). Abandoned by his subjects, Beauharnais fled to Munich, where he took refuge with his father-in-law Maximilian I, King of Bavaria.

<sup>5</sup> Today the Valais region is a Canton of Southern Switzerland, which extends along the upper Rhone valley, but in the years between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries it was under French rule.

After being conquered by the French in 1798, transformed by Napoleon into an independent State and called the Republic of Rhone, the Valais area was annexed to the French Empire and given the name of the District of Simplon. Finally, after the defeat of Napoleon, the region became part of the Swiss confederation.

<sup>6</sup> From *AA. VV., Giuseppe Molteni (1800-1867) e il ritratto nella Milano romantica*, Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Skira Editore, Milan, 2000 (see painting on p. 577): «... In 1829 Ernestina married Pietro Gavazzi, a leading industrialist in the silk sector, and dedicated herself to running their large household (the couple had many children), as well as the Valmadrera home, and performing her duties as mistress of the house, organising the parties and other gatherings that characterised the social life of the aristocratic and upper-class Milanese in those days.

Molteni had already contributed to the portrait gallery of the articulated and extended Gavazzi clan; the portrait of Ernestina, nevertheless, due to the size, design and type of frame, was specifically intended to be hung beside that of her husband Pietro, which was painted by Eliseo Sala.

The commission to two different artists of a couple of portraits associated by such close ties was not, however, unusual in the Milanese environment, especially after brothers Giulio and Antonio Litta, in 1843, had their own portraits painted by the very same pair of artists, Molteni and Sala (Milan, Portrait Gallery of Maggiore Hospital, Litta Collection).

While Pietro Gavazzi poses in such a way as to proclaim to posterity his role as silk industrialist, Ernestina Pascal is portrayed by Molteni in a corner of her home, against the background of an iridescent cloth and next to a splendid still life with flowers, which enhance the figure. The face is painted boldly and with a psychological subtlety which the artist did not always succeed in bringing out in his models ...».

<sup>7</sup> The relations between Ernestina Gavazzi Pascal and the family of her brother Louis were apparently also excellent, marked, perhaps, by a kind of protectiveness on the part of Ernestina, rich and socially well established, towards the relatives who had been less fortunate than herself.

At the time of the wedding of her niece, Adele Pascal, with Agostino Garrino, Ernestina put together a dowry for the bride of 6,000 lire, with notarial deed drawn up on June 30, 1875 by notary Gian Battista Bolgeri of Milan.

More is known about Louise – we know that she was born in 1790 in the French town of Chambéry (as several documents reveal), where the Pascal-Tavernier couple probably moved after their wedding. Upon her arrival in Milan, Louise Italianised her name and became known to all as Luigia.

There was fifteen years' difference between Luigia and her sister Ernestina. Raised according to the customs and traditions of the Milanese aristocracy and thanks to the elevated position they managed to maintain in society, the two Pascal sisters were destined to marry within the elite circles of the Lombardy industrialists.

Luigia Pascal made a good middle-class match in marrying Giovanni Battista Tallachini (1785–1856), an engineer from a family of silk mill owners, with mills and a luxurious villa in Casciago, just outside Varese. The match, however, proved childless. Tallachini, along with his brother Antonio, was a contractor with a good reputation in Milan; he had constructed roads, both civil and military, between Veneto, Austria and the Danube region, in the service of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He was also known as a great building constructor, and was responsible for many important restorations and constructions in the centre of Milan.

Luigia Tallachini Pascal (as she is called in the epigraph on her tomb in the monumental Tallachini chapel of the Casciago cemetery) exemplified the ideal of the perfect lady of her day – kind-hearted, generous, brilliant and gifted with exceptional artistic talent.

Luigia (or Aunt Tallachini, as she was known in the Gavazzi family) is depicted in a portrait, also by Giuseppe Molteni, which today hangs in the house that once belonged to Ernestina Belgiojoso Gavazzi<sup>8</sup> in Parravicino d'Erba. The portrait shows her as a mature woman, already with rather stout figure that characterised her, rendered just slightly less severe by the skill of the artist<sup>9</sup>. The harp in the background alludes to Luigia's musical vocation: she was an amateur but remarkably talented harpist, a fact which won her not little renown in Milanese high society<sup>10</sup>. The portrait of Aunt Tallachini was also known as *Woman with Harp* in the Gavazzi family, and was the object of frequent and extensive gossip.

But let us return to Louis Pascal, father of Luigia and Ernestina. It is likely that as part of his duties at court, he travelled frequently between Paris and Milan. From the few records that mention him, we know that he also travelled throughout Europe with Napoleon's army, but it is difficult to know whether this was for military or diplomatic purposes. Presumably, his wife Thérèse accompanied him on his continual journeys, as was customary for many wives

<sup>8</sup> Ernestina Belgiojoso Gavazzi («Aunt Mamà») left this painting, along with the house, to her sister Maria Piera, wife of Luigi Lado, specifying that she should not leave it to her grandson Franco Gavazzi (who would have liked to own it), because of the malicious remarks he had made about the woman depicted.

<sup>9</sup> The stoutness of Luigia Tallachini Pascal is immortalised in a rather unsympathetic comment by writer Carlo Dossi (the pen-name of Carlo Alberto Pisani Dossi) who, with false innocence, in his famous *Note Azzurre* recounts this anecdote: «Big, fat Mrs. Tallachini goes to a party with six young girls. They step down from the carriage; Gavazzi at the door counts them, saying 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 ... (followed, last of all, by Mrs. Tallachini) and 6 makes twelve!».

<sup>10</sup> Alfredo Chierichetti, the son of Bice Gavazzi (1873–1959), who lived in Brazil, claimed to have found a book there in which Luigia Tallachini was said to have been a gifted and famous harpist.

of French officers and functionaries. The fact remains, however, that it is very difficult to reconstruct the movements of the Pascal-Tavernier couple in Milan, where they were not even included in the «General Population Census» of 1811. Their two daughters, however, do appear in the registers of this census – first Luigia, who at the time was 21 years old, and around three years later in the updating of the census, Ernestina, who was only six.

From this census we learn that the Pascal family lived at number 2380, corresponding to the present-day number 11 of Via Meravigli, and therefore in the parish of Santa Maria Segreta, a church which was later closed and destroyed.

When, on several occasions between 1812 and 1814, part of the French army was sent to Spain, Louis Pascal went to Madrid with a contingent of Italian soldiers to fight against the English troops which, led by the Duke of Wellington, opposed the French occupation.

What became of Pascal, from this time onward, is not known – was he leading a battalion or was his assignment of a different nature? The family records are vague, revealing only that he «had followed the French army in the last war of Spain»<sup>11</sup>. He was never heard of again, although his wife and children tried hard to trace his whereabouts. Louis Pascal, officially and mysteriously, was not listed either among those who died in battle or those who were reported missing; no one, in fact, ever managed to find out anything, and all traces of him were lost forever.

His family settled permanently in Milan, and yet, little by little, the records regarding Thérèse Pascal Tavernier also began dwindling and became unaccountably sketchy until, finally, her name disappeared completely.

From the remaining documents we know that Ernestina, at the time of her wedding with , was living in Milan with her sister Luigia and her brother-in-law. The Tallachini house was at number 3396, corresponding to today's number 23 of Via Santa Marta, in the parish of San Giorgio al Palazzo. In the summer of 1829 the engaged couple set the date of the wedding for October 14. This was in August, however, and the bride had four months to go before coming of age, which, for girls in those days, was at twenty-four.

As Ernestina's birthday was on November 28, and therefore during Advent, when weddings were only celebrated for exceptional reasons, to wait for her coming-of-age would have meant postponing the wedding to the following January, after the Christmas season, and the couple did not want to wait.

In this type of situation it was customarily the father of the bride who gave his consent to an early marriage, which in this case was impossible, because Louis Pascal's whereabouts were unknown. On September 16, 1829, therefore, Thérèse Pascal Tavernier sent a request to the Royal Imperial Pupillary Court, which acted as Ernestina's guardian in place of her

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<sup>11</sup> From the Gavazzi archives in Valmadrera, which include a request made by Thérèse Tavernier to the Pupillary Court of Milan to obtain, along with the emancipation of Ernestina, consent for her marriage with Pietro Gavazzi.

father, who was declared absent<sup>12</sup>, asking and receiving permission on her daughter's behalf for both an early emancipation and the marriage with Pietro Gavazzi.

The request that Thérèse presented to the Court reveals other details regarding Ernestina – although she was born in Milan in 1805, she had actually lived there only from 1814 onwards. Her father, on his departure for Spain, had left the family in dire financial straits, and her brother-in-law, Giovanni Battista Tallachini, had generously assumed responsibility for her education and support. Now that she was to marry, he also provided her with a sizeable dowry.

The Valmadrera family archives also contain the certificate of the Marriage Contract between Pietro and Ernestina, drawn up on the day of their wedding by notary Cristoforo Caimi of Milan. The document glosses over the undertones of familial bitterness and reveals that Ernestina's rich dowry was, in actual fact, based mainly on a fund of 13,000 Lira deriving from a deposit made by Louis Pascal himself, with Turin banker Felice Nigra, before he left for Spain. The remainder was composed of 4,000 lire of interest accrued, over a period of around fifteen years, on the deposited amount, to which Tallachini had added a personal contribution of 5,000 lire in token of his affection for his sister-in-law and his approval of her profitable match. In addition to this, Giovanni Battista Tallachini and his brother Antonio generously gave the bride a rich *schirpa*<sup>13</sup> worth 3,000 lire – listing in detail all the valuable articles and objects in an attachment to the certificate – so that Ernestina would not have to use her capital to put together a trousseau and a wardrobe that was fitting of her rank. Her entire dowry amounted to a total of 25,000 Austrian Lira.

Up to this point, the information gathered tells the story of a prosperous union that was basically similar to most of those in the high society of the period. However, the bride of Pietro Gavazzi, who grew up in the age of Romanticism, concealed a secret that shrouds her character and her solid, serene marriage in picturesque, novel-like mystery, very much in line with the literary spirit and atmosphere of the time. For Ernestina Gavazzi Pascal was, in actual fact, the natural daughter of Viceroy Eugene Beauharnais.

The fact should have remained a secret, as those involved greatly wished. As the years passed, however, the secret began to filter through. Rumours and allusions gradually circulated, with veiled hints and half-revelations, until they finally coalesced into a full-blown scandal, which took its place in the annals and traditions of the Gavazzi family, though always only hinted at, extremely vague and full of missing details and obscure aspects.

Within the family, which was dominated by sober austerity and strict customs, the subject of Ernestina's origins was always treated with the utmost prudishness and reserve, in an

<sup>12</sup> Since the women of the Pascal family were unable to declare for certain whether their husband and father was still alive or not, the authorities adopted the hybrid formula of «absent».

<sup>13</sup> *Schirpa* (or *scherpa*) was a term used in past centuries in Lombardy, as well as in official documents drawn up in Italian, indicating the collection of material goods – trousseau, furniture, jewellery and valuable objects – brought by the bride as her dowry.

attempt to conceal as much as possible the truth about this illegitimate birth which was regarded by the family as a kind of blemish on their otherwise unquestioned respectability. None of the Gavazzis, in fact, would have boasted about having in their veins, through the beautiful Ernestina, a little of the blood of the Viceroy of Italy and, through him, of such a fascinating and unique figure as the Empress Josephine, Napoleon's first wife and Eugene's mother. Rather, the fact that was of greatest relevance to the strictly Catholic Gavazzis was that Ernestina was the daughter of an adulteress – very unpleasant for a family of such rigid moral principles.

Of course, we cannot prove, with the records available, that the Viceroy was indeed Ernestina's father, for if there ever was any documentary evidence, it was probably immediately destroyed. However, the clearest indications of such are not based written proof, such as letters and so on, but are of a psychological nature – the melodramatic attitude of the family, for example, and the constancy and determination with which, for over one hundred and fifty years, they tried to hide the truth about Ernestina's origins. If Viceroy Eugene were not her real father, it would have been enough to simply deny the fact. No one, however, ever did deny it outright: they were either silent or noncommittal whenever the subject was alluded to, and this now appears to be the most incontestable evidence. It could not be denied outright, since some family members probably knew it was true, but only hushed up as much as possible and, obviously, never mentioned in the presence of outsiders.

Half the secret regarding the birth of Ernestina had been revealed, albeit without causing a stir, and although the family did not willingly talk about it, the fact that emerged was officially common knowledge – that Ernestina was the daughter of Viceroy Eugene and one of the ladies-in-waiting of his retinue. This was, after all, the most social aspect and, above all, the historical part of the event, however the moralists and humbugs viewed it; besides, it was not so extraordinary or unusual. Such incidents were rather commonplace between royalty and the beautiful ladies of the court, and, after all, circulating as it did only within the Gavazzi homes, where the secret was passed around in hushed whispers, it did not cause any untoward scandal. The story, however, does not end here.

The other half of the secret, which, if it had become public knowledge, might indeed have caused a great sensation in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Milanese society, was fortunately not revealed. It would have remained a secret forever, in fact, had not certain documents, previously unknown, come to light during the research for this book – documents constituting proof that no one could have destroyed. Now that the facts are known, one cannot help but wonder how the family would have reacted if, at the time, the whole truth had been revealed.

After almost two hundred years, these records, retrieved from among an enormous quantity of material on the shelves of the Diocesan Historical Archives of Milan, unexpectedly revealed the second part of the secret involving the three Pascal women – Thérèse, Luigia and Ernestina. This is the part that had always been kept hidden or, at most, was perhaps alluded to in a hushed tone by some family member more informed than others, perhaps, by rare exception, having been taken into confidence by one of the women.

After the truth about Ernestina's father had leaked out, the version of the facts that was furtively whispered in the family, and which has been passed down until today, was this – that Ernestina was the fruit of a fleeting liaison between her mother, the adulteress Thérèse Tavernier, wife of Pascal, and Viceroy Eugene, who had been lovers during the journey from France to Milan in 1805, when the Prince first came to receive his crown.

The shock aroused by the fact in itself and the astonishment at the impressive-sounding name of Ernestina's true father placed the Viceroy at the centre of attention, leaving no room for curiosity regarding the rest of the story, which remained, fortunately, shrouded in secrecy, leaving its protagonists in peace. The true story, however, contained certain details that, had they been revealed, would have raised a great scandal, considering the moral convictions of the time and of the Gavazzi family in particular.

To the rigid mentality of those days, in fact, and the hard-and-fast rules of the middle classes (always ready to excuse the erring man and harshly condemn the transgressing woman) to have a secret father, different from the one officially recognised, was a reprehensible fact to be kept as hidden as possible – but, after all, it was still tolerable as long as form and respectability could be preserved. To have a mother who had broken the rules of common morality, however, was totally unacceptable to middle-class society which, while it was willing to turn a blind eye on the errors of a man (especially those of a prince!) was by no means as lenient towards women guilty of the same sins, who were disgraced forever. This was the reason the family had so carefully guarded the second part of the secret regarding the birth of Ernestina, who was undoubtedly the most defenceless and innocent element in the whole matter.

In the Gavazzi family it was common knowledge that the portrait of *The Woman with Harp* depicted Aunt Tallachini, Luigia Pascal, the sister of Ernestina. Some, however, basing their ideas on what they could manage to gather from the gossip that circulated, became convinced that the woman in the painting was in actual fact the girls' mother, Thérèse Tavernier, a married woman who was guilty of having succumbed to the desires of a man other than her husband, Viceroy though he might have been. It was believed, therefore, that because of her unforgivable sin, the true identity of the woman in the painting had been concealed from everyone, as it would not have been acceptable for the family to display the portrait of an adulteress.

The «Late Romantic» style of the subject's clothing is evidence against this idea – if she had really been Thérèse Pascal Tavernier, in fact, the woman would have been depicted in the style fashionable in the Napoleonic period. The «Woman with harp», therefore, was really Luigia Pascal Tallachini, although many in the family were convinced otherwise. Those who had first made malicious remarks about the painting may perhaps have already known or sensed the truth, but could not reveal it. Evidently, however, they were not able to keep the sensational discovery to themselves, or to resist the temptation to let at least part of the secret out. Unable to speak openly, however, they limited themselves to furtively spreading a

half-truth, which could have been interpreted ambiguously. This rumour, which was passed around in whispers without naming names, said only, in a roundabout way, that the woman in the painting was Ernestina's real mother.

All things considered, the malicious remarks about the portrait seem rather obscure and apparently incomprehensible. The truth was there, waiting to be revealed, and yet everyone, conditioned by the information they had at their disposal, continued to believe the rumours that had been circulating for some time – that if the «Woman with Harp» was the true mother of Ernestina, then the subject could not be Luigia Tallachini Pascal, as this would mean that Ernestina was the daughter of her sister Luigia, and since this was physically impossible all malicious assumptions fell upon their mother, Thérèse Pascal Tavernier.

Certainly, some might have delved deeper in their investigations, but to take into consideration the alternative hypothesis, that the kinship between the two sisters was, in actual fact, of a totally different nature, was so scandalous and so totally inconceivable that it was rejected immediately.

The truth, in fact, so simple as to appear absurd, was precisely what had been half-revealed and half-hidden in the mysterious rumour that circulated within the family. The «Woman with Harp» was actually both the true mother of Ernestina Gavazzi Pascal and, at the same time, Luigia Tallachini Pascal, who had managed to convince everyone that Ernestina was her younger sister, while she was in fact her daughter. She herself had been the Viceroy's paramour, not her mother, who, once the story had become far-removed in time and difficult to reconstruct exactly and in detail, had taken the blame on herself in order to save the reputation of the two young women, who by this time were well-established in Milanese society, and to allow them a good marriage and a tranquil, normal life.

The true story was probably more or less as follows. In 1805, at the time of his journey to Italy, the newly-appointed Viceroy Eugene, who was just 24 years old, must have taken a fancy to the 15 year old Luigia Pascal, daughter of a couple who had recently joined his new court and were travelling with him – Louis Pascal and Thérèse Tavernier.

The girl was undoubtedly pretty and Eugene, a handsome young man on his way to claim his throne as Viceroy, soon noticed her and began to ply her with gallantries. Needless to say, it must have been easy for him to win the favour of any girl he desired. The fact that Luigia was only fifteen, moreover, is not so remarkable, considering that in those days a girl of her age was regarded as being ripe for marriage. Before long, the fruits of their love became evident – Luigia discovered that she was pregnant. In the meantime, the court of Eugene had settled in Milan, where the Viceroy added to his French courtiers many of the leading personages of Milanese society.

The girl's parents must have agreed that the matter should be handled with the utmost discretion; the emissaries of the Viceroy probably advised the Pascal family about the best way to behave and the proper measures to take. Besides, the story of the affair between the Viceroy and Luigia must have been known only to those closest to the prince or, in any case,



Eugene Beauharnais (1781-1824), imperial prince and Viceroy of Italy.

only French courtiers who, presumably, were immediately ordered to keep silent. It was partly thanks to this, in fact, that the matter did not become public knowledge in Milan. The image of a new ruler who had seduced a young girl of his court, hardly more than a child, and had done so right at the time when he was claiming his throne, would certainly not have been the best initial image for Eugene to present to his Milanese subjects, who were very anxious to see what kind of person the Emperor's representative was.

Luigia, making some acceptable excuse, must have spent the months of her pregnancy secreted in a house, which later was revealed to be the residence at number 1807, corresponding to the present-day address of number 3, Via Oriani.

So it was that, at 11 o'clock on the night of November 28, 1805, Luigia gave birth to a baby girl. On December 3, the baby was baptised in the nearby Parish Church of San Tommaso in Terra Amara (in present-day Via Broletto) with the name of Ernestina Luigia Guglielmina Maria. In the baptism certificate, drawn up by canon coadjutor Don Giuliano Righetti, Ernestina was registered as the daughter of a certain Mr. Luigi Solier, a Frenchman of Rennes, in Brittany, and Luigia Pascal of Chambery, legally husband and wife.

The details of the birth certificate, obviously, were partly invented, with the full mutual consent of the parties and under the protection of the court, all united in their intent to conceal the truth. Mr. Solier, as was normal in such cases, was probably an obliging court official, loyal to the Viceroy; and it is likely that he «lent» his name in exchange for some special position and a handsome recompense. Regarding their «union», Solier and the 15 years old Luigia falsely declared in the certificate that it was celebrated in France, knowing that it was not compulsory to produce evidence, especially when the marriage had taken place in such a distant location. No one would ever take the trouble to go search out some obscure church records in France for the sake of verifying the truth. All that mattered to Don Righetti as a priest, after all, was that the child should be baptised as soon as possible in the faith of the Roman Catholic Church; as for the rest, the declaration of the baby's parents was enough, and, in any case, with the sponsorship of the Viceroy behind the couple, no one would think of questioning the marriage.

It is plausible to assume that, at the right moment, Luigia Pascal reappeared at her parents' side, while Ernestina was secretly given into the care of a wet nurse in some farm outside Milan, out of curiosity's reach, where she probably remained for a few years, as was customary in such circumstances. Thus, for the moment, everything was taken care of.

Meanwhile, in the following year, 1806, according to the wishes of Napoleon, Viceroy Eugene married Princess Amalia Augusta of Bavaria, who was to give him five children<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Augusto Carlo, first husband of Mary II, Queen of Portugal; Massimiliano Giuseppe, husband of Olga, daughter of Nicholas I, Tsar of Russia; Giuseppina, wife of Oscar I, King of Sweden; Eugenia Ortensia, wife of Prince Frederick Wilhelm of Hohenzollern; Amalia Augusta, second wife of Peter I, Emperor of Brazil. Her sister Ortensia married Louis Buonaparte, the future king of Holland, in 1802, and became the mother of Napoleon III.

In good time, Luigia will have been officially introduced at the palace, as was customary for all young girls from important families and, occasionally, without doubt, during the regular entertainments, she will have been asked to play the harp for the princes and the court.

Eight years pass, and we come to the tragic events of 1814 and the decline of the Napoleonic Empire, which obviously had drastic repercussions on the Viceroy's reign. In April 1814, Eugene, whose loyalty to his step-father remained firm, left Italy once and for all and retired to the court of his father-in-law, the King of Bavaria, while the Austrians made their return to a Milan buffeted and bewildered by the turn of events. The return of the Austrians, in fact, was not entirely unexpected among the more farsighted members of Milanese society, some of whom had even attempted to take remedial measures as best they could, especially those who had compromised their position by cooperating with the French administration. It is likely that the women of the Pascal household, alone and at the mercy of the events, had also realised that the new political climate by no means favoured them. Thérèse Pascal Tavernier must already have decided that her «daughters» should not leave Milan, where she evidently felt she could rely on her social standing and where she still had good support. Nevertheless, she was French, and had been associated with the former court, and she was alone in a city that was now in the hands of the Austrians, who cannot have viewed their predecessors with much favour. Moreover, she had a daughter who was already twenty-four, and she had to secure possible a good place in society for her as soon as possible. The certificate of baptism, hidden among the pages of the registers in the Church of San Tommaso in Terra Amara, must have troubled the former lady-in-waiting considerably, despite the fact that no one, or practically no one, knew of its existence. The document had, in any case, the potential to ruin the reputation of the two girls – it was necessary to act as quickly as possible and try to protect Luigia's reputation, who now, without the protection of Viceroy Eugene, found herself in an extremely difficult and delicate position. What good match could a single mother hope for? Besides, in the document Luigia had had to declare herself, albeit falsely, to be the wife of Luigi Solier, who had long since disappeared without a trace.

If these details had come to light, not only would all hopes for a future marriage for the girl have been dashed: if she were revealed to be a wife as well as a mother, she would also have been accused of bigamy. At the same time, there was the future of little Ernestina to worry about. Kept continually away from home so as not to arouse suspicion, the child would also have been compromised by the discovery of her birth certificate. What social aspirations could a girl with such a background hope to have?

At this point – in the initial weeks of 1814 – the Pascal women, or perhaps trusted friends on their behalf, must have sought the help of certain influential members of the clergy (or of Beauharnais himself), because someone from the Milanese Curia came to the aid of



Another portrait of the imperial prince and Viceroy of Italy, Eugene Beauharnais (Andrea Appiani).

The original birth certificate of Ernestina Pascal, 1805.

«On the third day of December, Eighteen Hundred and Five Ernestina, Luigia, Guglielmina, Maria, daughter of Mr. Luigi Pascal, of Rennes in Brittany, and Mrs. Luigia Pascal de Chambéry, lawfully wedded couple living in this parish at no. 1807, born on the twenty-eighth day of last November at eleven o'clock in the night, was baptised by myself the undersigned in this parish collegiate church of San Tommaso. The godfather was Mr. Guglielmo Ferrerati, son of the late Giuseppe, member of this parish. In witness thereof, Canon Giugliano Righetti, coadjutor».

After numerous «corrections», in 1814 Canon Righetti rewrote a new birth certificate, in which Ernestina was given a new surname and a new identity, becoming the «daughter» of the woman who for over 8 years had been her grandmother.

«Finis Hujus Codicis. On the third day of December, Eighteen Hundred and Five Ernestina Luigia Guglielmina Maria, daughter of Mr. Luigi Pascal, of Rennes in Brittany, and Mrs. Teresa Tavernier de Chambéry, lawfully wedded couple living in this parish at no. 1807, born on the twenty-eighth day of last November at eleven o'clock in the night, was baptised by myself the undersigned in this parish collegiate church of San Tommaso. The godfather was Mr. Guglielmo Ferrerati, son of the late Giuseppe, member of this parish. In witness thereof, Canon Giugliano Righetti, coadjutor».

these defenceless women, who wanted only to save their reputation and maintain their respectable position in Milanese high society.

It may be, then, that Canon Giuliano Righetti, who was still coadjutor of the Parish Church of San Tommaso in Terra Amara, received specific orders from above. With the guarantee that he would not find himself in trouble should anyone question the legality of what he was about to do, he took up his pen and drew a line right across the birth certificate of Ernestina, annulling it as if it had all been just a big blunder, a gross mistake that was being corrected, even if very late in the day.

A note by the same priest, written in the margin of the annulled certificate, refers the reader to the following pages and, in particular, to the last baptism certificate of 1813, drawn up on December 30. Right here, by some strange coincidence, after the last lines previously written and before the end of the page, a blank space had been left, very conveniently, in which Don Giuliano entered, re-written and duly corrected, the dates of Ernestina's birth and baptism. In the new certificate (in all other details identical to the previous one) we find Ernestina registered as the daughter of those who, up until this time, had been her grandparents – Louis Pascal and Thérèse Tavernier! This must have been the plan contrived by the consenting prelate and those directly involved. From this time on Luigia and Ernestina, mother and daughter, were to be sisters in the eyes of the world. Even in those days, the falsifying of personal data was considered a crime, and such measures could have had serious consequences. Fortunately, however, the protectors of the Pascal women were evidently very powerful, as the fact never came to light, neither at the time nor afterwards.

The price Luigia had to pay was enormous – sensitive as she was, being unable to openly express her motherly love for the child, but rather forced to disguise it in the form of sisterly affection, must have been a great sacrifice.

And Ernestina? How must she have lived these events, in which she played such a central

<sup>15</sup> In this new certificate of the baptism of Ernestina Pascal, Louis Pascal – as Luigi Solier had been in the previous deed – is indicated as a native of Rennes, in Brittany, a detail confirmed in other subsequent documents; after all, there would be nothing strange about the two men coming from the same city. Thérèse Tavernier, however, is registered as being from Chambéry, whereas in actual fact she was born in St. Moritz, in French Switzerland. This new, additional «fib» is probably justified by the fact that those involved had thought it wise to limit as much as possible the differences between the first and the second birth certificates, altering only the essential details in line with the mistake theory. In actual fact, this was only a half-lie, since Thérèse, although not a native of Chambéry, had lived there before her arrival in Italy, and her daughter Luigia had been born there.

role; how must she have felt? How can she have reacted to this change of identity and surname, suddenly, after eight years, taking on the name of Pascal and abandoning forever that of Solier, and to the fact that the woman she had called grandmother until the day before was now to be her mother? Unfortunately, we know little about Ernestina's first eight years of life; undoubtedly, she must have been moved directly from the house of her nurse to one of the many elegant boarding schools for the daughters of good families, where Thérèse and Luigia, in fleeting and rather mysterious apparitions, came now and again to visit her.

It cannot have been easy for little Ernestina to take her first steps in a world so full of complications, unexpected episodes and embarrassing changes of identity, secrets, lies, surprises and dramatic turns of events. Did she discover the truth by herself, gradually or brutally, or was she told tactfully and gently by her relatives?

However it went, the discovery of the truth must certainly have had some influence on the formation of her character, but to what extent? How much, also, did she miss having a father figure in her life, how did she imagine the father of whom someone probably spoke to her at some point, when she asked to be told more about what every child has a right to know?

At her boarding school, along with a plethora of other regulations, she was no doubt inculcated with the rule (very much in favour in those days) that a well-educated young girl should never ask adults insistent and embarrassing questions ...

Ernestina perhaps never shared with anyone the profound suffering initially caused by discovering the truth and being forced to live with such a secret, but rather kept it hidden in a corner of her heart, and no document researcher or archivist will ever find a trace of it. Today, from the large portrait painted by Molteni, Ernestina looks down at her descendants as they move among the armchairs of the living room, with an attitude and a pose that appear very symbolic, as if the painter had caught her in a moment of reflection.

With the book lowered but still held tightly in her hands – perhaps a novel, as her life itself is a novel – Ernestina, her head slightly tilted upwards in an absorbed expression, thoughtful and almost melancholy, looks down at us and seems a little dazed herself at the hidden truths of her life story.

Ernestina very likely found partial compensation in her marriage, and perhaps it was not completely by chance that the man she married, Pietro Gavazzi, a captain of industry, happened to be a person of great character, capable, intelligent and solid – a figure well-suited to filling

Portrait of Ernestina Pascal (Giuseppe Molteni, 1844-1846)  
Oils on canvas,  
140 x 119 cm  
Private collection.



the emptiness of her past, a husband–father on whom she could rely completely and in part be compensated for the presence that had been so sorely lacking in her childhood.

But did Ernestina know the whole truth or only a part of it? Besides discovering the identity of her real father, did she also know who her real mother was? Did the three Pascal women share the whole secret to the end? Right up to her death, Luigia officially played the part of sister to Ernestina and the records prove it. But in their intimacy, what sort of relationship did Luigia and Ernestina Pascal have? Was the role of elder sister acted out only for the sake of appearances? Did the two share a secret complicity, facing the events of their lives together and creating between them a deeper and more visceral relationship?

The last will and testament of Luigia Tallachini Pascal, who died in 1854, a copy of which is kept in the Gavazzi Archives of Valmadrera, gives us some idea about the relationship between the two «sisters». The words that Luigia, romantic and passionate as she was, uses in her last will are full of the warmth of a woman devoted to the cult of the household. She has little to say, however, regarding the distribution of her wealth, of which the universal heir was her husband; a large sum was left to Ernestina, and various smaller amounts to the numerous relatives of the Pascal, Gavazzi and Tallachini families.

A great many affectionate words, on the other hand, were used to express her thanks for the love of those closest to her – her husband and her daughter–sister. After thanking her husband for the love and generosity he showed not only to her but also to all the other members of the Pascal clan, she asks that he «always wear the ring of our marriage, as well as the one in turquoise and black enamel, so he may remember always she who loved him so dearly»; and to Ernestina (who, we must remember, was her only daughter) she left a pair of *solitaire* earrings, the ones she always wore, «with the wish that she will always use them in remembrance of the one who loved her so dearly, may God bless her and reward her for the loving care she showed me, for the sweet company that helped me to have patience in bearing my infirmities, for the tender affection she had for me which, together with that of my wonderful husband, gave me great happiness...».

These words of Luigia, more than those of a sister, seem to reveal the feelings of a mother speaking for the last time, and with great gratitude, to her daughter.

From the epigraphs of the Casciago cemetery we know, moreover, that Luigia's illness was long and full of suffering. From her will it is evident that, up until the very end, she was cared for constantly and lovingly by Ernestina, whom Luigia describes more as an affectionate, thoughtful and devoted daughter, than just a loving sister; a daughter willing to temporarily put aside the needs of her numerous family – a husband and six children – to dedicate herself to her mother, as children often do in such situations.

The sweet and romantic nature of Luigia and the importance she gave to her loved ones and family were passed on to her daughter. In fact, the will that Ernestina was in turn to draw up (also kept in Valmadrera) might have been written by Luigia – the same warmth, the same use of vocabulary, the same need to set down on paper, one last time, the deep affections that

bound her to each member of her family, expressed in fond and loving words.

After her birth certificate had been duly corrected, Ernestina finally returned to her family. The date this correction was made coincides, in fact, with the period declared by Thérèse Pascal Tavernier at the Pupillary Court of Milan as the beginning of Ernestina's residence in Milan: the first months of 1814. The date of 1814 is also confirmed by the updating of the above-mentioned Napoleonic Census of 1811, in which the address of Ernestina is the same as that of her mother/sister.

Milan, at this time, had fallen into a situation of total chaos and confusion and people had far greater things to worry about than the mishaps of these French ladies. Those who knew the story of the Viceroy's fleeting and now remote romance were by this time far away, back in France or in some other distant place. The Pascal women were no longer in the sights of the court, and evidently the daughter who suddenly appeared in the life of Madame Thérèse managed not to arouse suspicion.

To the most intransigent, if necessary, it could always be argued that the two Pascal sisters who, moreover, were both extremely polite and well behaved, were not responsible for the mistakes of their parents.

It would seem that, in any case, even after the happy ending of their adventure, the two sisters and their enterprising mother continued to be very careful when using their new official identities, adopting a line of conduct marked by the greatest discretion and caution, so as to avoid attracting attention that might prove damaging. Luigia, in fact, chose to marry in a church that was neither in her parish nor in that of her future husband, but far from the city gossips and the prying, malicious eyes of those who might even have been curious enough to go and look through the old and dangerous notebooks. As for Ernestina, while it is true that she chose a well-known church for her wedding, such a prestigious marriage as hers could have been celebrated with a pompous ceremony, and yet she chose the most modest formula, the *in vesperis* marriage, an extremely short service, without a Mass, celebrated in the late afternoon and attended by only a few select guests. It was, in fact, a hurried and unceremonious event, as there was no time for anything more for «reasons of travel», as the marriage document states; for reasons of security and peace of mind, we might perhaps add.

The most important thing, indeed the only thing for the three women that was worth the great risk they ran, was that at the time of the weddings of the two «sisters» (who both made excellent marriages, maintaining, or rather, improving their status in the most exclusive circles of Milanese society) the union was guaranteed by copies of the documents proving their legal status, perfectly legitimate and exemplary in every way! All's well that ends well...

### *The move to Milan*

All the children of the Gavazzi-Pascal couple were born in Valmadrera, with the exception of the last two, Egidio and Pio, who were born in Milan. It would appear, therefore, that



Portrait of Luigia Tallachini Pascal (1790-1855) (Giuseppe Molteni, approx. 1840) Oils on canvas, 132 x 117 cm Private collection.

She was Ernestina Gavazzi Pascal's mother, but at the registry office, thanks to a «correction», she was listed as her sister.

Pietro went to live in the city permanently in around 1846.

The birth certificates of Egidio and Pio show that the couple lived in the district of San Vincenzino, no. 2349 (the parish of San Tomaso in Terra Amara). Later they moved to the first floor of Via Cusani no. 14 (the official address was Via Cusani no. 2283). The ground floor was occupied by the «silk studio».

Pietro, in around 1855-1860, requested permission to make certain modifications in order to improve the perspective, on the side of Piazza Castello, of the wall of his garden. Nothing is known of the house, but the drawings of the garden wall contained in these documents bear witness to the architectural harmony and beauty of the entire structure.

### *Technological innovations*<sup>16</sup>

Pietro, as we have seen, was famous for having invented, around 1849, a method of «enclosing the silk mill spindles in steam-heated chambers», which allowed «the cocoons to be spun on rainy and also winter days». This meant that the mill could be in operation all

year round, «with considerable economizing on the part of the owner and great advantage to the workers».

Even before this important invention, however, Pietro had already made a name for himself with numerous other innovations, so much so that in 1827 he was awarded prizes, privileges and patent-rights «for the improvement which substantially consists in:

1. the invention of a machine designed to comb the cocoons mechanically, rather than by hand (the machine was, in fact, an automatic comber);
2. another mechanism designed to prevent the strands from joining together;
3. an improvement of the silk spinning mill that increased the speed of the spindle while making the work of the operator easier;
4. an improvement in the keys, or taps, which regulate the steam and the boilers, causing the fluid to disperse more effectively and consequently the water to heat better<sup>17</sup>.

In 1839 Pietro was one of the first to use peat as fuel in his factories (from this time on, peat bogs acquired considerable financial importance).

As far back as the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Pietro's inventions received special mention. In *Cenni sui perfezionamenti della trattura della seta*<sup>18</sup>, we read that «the improvements made

<sup>16</sup> Pietro Cafaro, *Da un sistema agricolo a un sistema industriale. Il Comasco dal '700 al '900*, Volume II, edited by Camera di Commercio, Como, 1988.

<sup>17</sup> Report of the Milan Administration of the Royal General Aulic Chamber of Vienna for the application of Pietro Gavazzi, November 8, 1827, in HKA, Kommerz-Kammer "Fondo", c. 24/25.

<sup>18</sup> By G.B. Berizzi, published in Milan in 1845, page 28.

in the processing of silk ... the widespread use of which is thanks to many silk mill owners, including foreigners, have increased the availability of well-made silk yarns». The author attributes the progress in throwing to the innovative accomplishments of Pietro Gavazzi, Keller, Mylius, Sessa, Verza, Huber, Delacchi, Robinson, Gaddi, Cusani, Guacchi and Mondelli<sup>19</sup>.

Again, in the new *Enciclopedia dei Paesi* we read: «The 1800s in Valmadrera marked the take-off of the local textile industry, with a specialisation in the silk-throwing process, thanks partly to such enlightened entrepreneurs as Pietro Gavazzi, who succeeded in anticipating their rivals with advanced technical innovations that guaranteed the high quality and greater quantity of the product».

The inside of the silk mill was heated by radiators and, before 1859, lit by gas lamps.

### *Free trade and paternalism*

With paternalistic convictions that it was an employer's duty to «procure the material and moral benefits of the workers», and above all with the declared intention of forestalling disorder among the workers, as the owner of various silk throwing and extracting establishments, Pietro set up primary schools at his factories in Cernusco, Bellano and Valmadrera «where the girls are taught daily in half-hour shifts during working hours». This initiative, however, remained isolated and the silk mill owners continued to show no interest in the education of their female workers, choosing instead to rely totally on the efficacy of the townships' public education program.

Between 1870 and 1874 the Government conducted an inquiry that proved to be of great importance in determining the problems linked to industrialisation. In 1871 (or 1872) the highly respected Pietro Gavazzi was consulted on the matter.

His exposition was quite interesting; first of all, because it gave a clear description of the various technical stages of processing, revealing his entrepreneurial openness to introducing technical innovations in his factories (the fact that Pietro had reached a certain level of solidity was evident, moreover, from the vertical integration of his companies; from the union, that is, of the two sequential stages of extraction and throwing).

Secondly, he clearly stated the position of the silk merchants regarding free trade. The exaltation of the «ultimate and supreme purpose of absolute commercial freedom» was in flagrant contradiction to the protectionist demands advanced in other industrial sectors. This peroration was dictated by the need to maintain intact the movement of semi-processed silk in the direction of the French markets. The nature of ideological superstructure in the theories of free enterprise was revealed here admirably.

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<sup>19</sup> Angelo Moioli, *La gelsibachicoltura nelle campagne lombarde dal '600 alla prima metà dell'800*, Part 1, *La diffusione del gelso e la crescita produttiva della sericoltura*, Libera Università degli Studi, Trento, 1981.



Business letter sent by the Gavazzi Bros. company of Castenovo di Garfagnana on 11/07/1858, with the rare stamp of the «Postal Service» of the Duchy of Modena.

The words of Pietro betray a certain misgiving that under the pressure of other industrial groups a change might occur not only in Italian commercial policies but also in those of foreign countries. This apprehension was not unfounded, since shortly afterwards almost all the countries enacted protectionist policies. Subsequently, Pietro broadly developed the theme of the workers' living conditions and employee-employer relations. In order to understand his concerns, we should remember that the Gavazzis were one of the first industrialist families to take a paternalistic attitude towards the workers. While it is true that their initiatives did not always succeed in placating

labour unrest (given that the «ignorant» working class «resentfully compared a happy and comfortable life with their own hardships and privation»), it is also true that Pietro had an uncommon penchant for reform.

He looked favourably, in fact, on technical transformations in the winding machines that would make the work less difficult and, while he had an unbending attitude towards labour unrest, he was also concerned about the material and moral well-being of his workers, to the point of enforcing a minimum age for the girls working in his factories.

Pietro also set up a primary school for his workers during working hours; he believed strongly, in fact, in providing adequate professional training, and to this end he co-operated diligently (as his descendants were likewise to do) with the Milan Society for the Encouragement of Arts and Trades.

While he rejected governmental financial interventions, at the same time he did not hesitate to call for government inspection of the factories, although this was exclusively for the purpose of placing the industrialists «all on one level». Individual paternalism, in fact, may be useful, but it is costly, especially when «the competitors do not want it».

A very clear picture of the figure of Pietro can be drawn from his interesting depositions: «The deponent replies to the postulates on the silk industry, transmitted by the Chambers of Commerce of Milan and Lecco. Having factories in the provinces of Milan and Como, I will answer for all of them in one single report. The upper Milan area and the Como area may be considered one single region, as regards agricultural and manufacturing habits. The property is divided equally, and silkworm-raising and the silk extraction and throwing processes are carried out in the same way. Most of the Como area, moreover, conforms its prices to the Milan Chamber of Commerce, although the Como Chamber also publishes its official averages annually.

Owner of silk mills and also spinning mills, like a great many of my associates, I also mention here the extremely important industry of silk throwing, which employs more or less the same number of workers as silk extraction. Indeed, the silk throwing industry draws its supplies from as far away as the Far East. The throwing industry hopes to bring into the country the trade of Asian silk (from which England benefits so greatly and which France seeks to divert towards Marseilles, with some success). This might have been possible, and may still be, if our ports, especially Genoa, were equipped with the same conveniences for unloading

and storage that are found in the seaports of civilised countries.

Another obstacle is represented by the fact that the Italian currency is unknown and therefore not negotiable in Chinese and Japanese markets.

For this reason, we are forced to depend on bankers of other nations and are often subjected to outrageous commissions. If trade is expected to make any headway, the Government should at least provide the most basic form of support, which is freedom and defence both at home and abroad.

We might have already made progress in this direction if we had not been hindered by the forced currency of the National Bank banknotes. This has deprived Italian currency of all its stability and as such represents a serious risk to buyers, especially in very long-term transactions, which are customary in overseas commerce. As long as this state of affairs continues, therefore, it will be difficult to become independent from foreigners in this matter.

Moreover, I cannot emphasise enough the importance of improving the railway service, as it seems to me greatly inconvenient that the goods sent off, especially to France, should suffer delays of up to ten days or more. It is truly disheartening to see that, since the opening of the Fréjus, the journey has actually become slower.

The undersigned openly supports the theories of free trade, and would like to see trade agreements with other countries, consistent with such texts, based on the principle of absolute reciprocity. I consider trade agreements, in fact, merely a means for attaining the ultimate and supreme goal of absolute commercial freedom.

The undersigned therefore rejects any idea of favour towards his own industry or that of others, for his own country or that of others, since, in favouring one, the others fall into disfavour, thus offending a justice that is the right of all<sup>20</sup>.

[5]. The silkworm disease resulted in a valiant battle of studies, experience and activity. The Asian and European sides of Turkey, the islands of the Archipelago, Greece, Persia, the Caucasus, Bukhara, Spain and Portugal were explored for the possibility of importing healthy silkworm eggs. This led to new trade relations in other fields also. Studies conducted by a great number of important researchers served as practical guides for cultivators; the buildings used for silkworm-raising were improved and greater care was dedicated to the processes of cultivation, feeding and cleaning of the silkworms. Moreover, the microscope became widely used among silk producers. We are already reaping abundant fruits. Even though we have lost our own ancient and fine race, our harvests equal those of the old days, at least in quantity. We resorted to Asian silk to fuel the throwing mills, which in the first



Another business letter sent from Castelfranco on 14/01/1865 to Gavazzi Brothers in Milan of Lombard and Venetian Kingdom. To be noticed the address of Corso di Porta Vittoria

<sup>20</sup> [1.2] Almost none of the cultivators spin their own cocoons. The extraction of silk is carried out by industrialists who specialise in the process.

[3] The provinces of Milan and Como produce enough cocoons for their silk mills. These arrive in the winter and the spring from Marseilles, and originate from Greece, the Archipelago and Asia Minor. These cocoons, however, bring little profit, as their price is too high for being second hand; they are often bought to supplement insufficient domestic supplies and provide work for the workers, to prevent them seeking employment elsewhere. The imported quantity, therefore, is of little importance, but it could be very great if the cocoons arrived via Brindisi, Ancona or, better still, Genoa, rather than Marseilles.



Two views of the Gavazzi silk mill at Cernusco sul Naviglio.

years of decline were lacking in raw material. The Italians of the North earned a reputation as more capable spinning mill operators than their counterparts in France and England. Our business extended to China and Japan, where it would have been even greater and easier if the Italian currency had been as commonly exchanged as that of other countries. Therefore, once the problem is solved, Northern Italy will find itself a much improved producer of raw and processed silk, and its better results will serve to raise its value<sup>21</sup>.

[14] There are microscopic stations in our province and also owners who carry out studies and trials for their personal use. There is no need, in my view, for the government to organise anything along these lines; the attention of those with a particular interest is enough.

[15]. No protecting import or export duty<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> [6] The main reasons for the continual increase in the price of cocoons appears to be:

a. a general price rise across the board, caused by the falling value of our currency in the past few years.

b. the greater cost of silkworm-raising, in which the eggs were an important factor, which had become up to fifteen times more expensive than in earlier years.

[7] Microscopic selection, cellular cultivation and other complex processes, which had to be left entirely to private silkworm-raisers, proved to be the most successful measures in combating the atrophy of the silkworm and re-establishing our race.

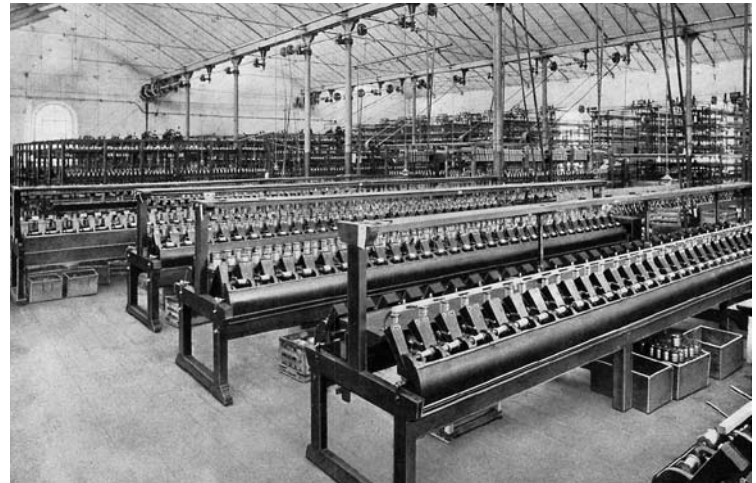
[8] For the moment, Japan supplies the safest eggs and in sufficient quantities. The more our government opens up to other markets the better it will be. It appears that Central Asia produces good eggs that are suited to our climate. The silkworm lives, indeed, in very varied regions, and countries that do not now cultivate them, attracted by the money, may concentrate on selling the eggs, as did California, Virginia and some areas of South America. Besides, the diffusion of microscopic selection among the owners provides hope that within a few years we will succeed in producing eggs in our country with less expense, inconvenience and risk.

[9] The government will be able to effectively support the attempts that are being made to open up new regions, especially those of Central Asia, by jealously protecting, through its consular agents, the people and goods of its own towns.

[10] A less costly budget will be arranged by the private owners, who have the greatest interest at stake. They are not, in fact, pecuniary values which emerge, but rather greater enjoyment or the means to procure it that pass from our hands to those of others. Commerce, especially in such far-off regions, is balanced out through the exchange of other goods, both directly and through other countries to which we, in turn, sell our products. It would be advisable for the government not to be misled by the obsolete and discredited ideas of balance of trade, etc. Its task should simply be that of opening up as many routes as possible and keeping them safe. In this way, Italy would have the means of exchanging certain products directly, such as cotton goods, glassware, leather products, etc.

<sup>22</sup> [17] The spaces dedicated to spinning are mainly porticoes, and often large, well-ventilated rooms; the silk mills are powered partly by hand and partly by steam. Hand-operated means that the reel is turned by a girl. The fire-operated silk mills (ordinary method) have the basins heated by wood burners; those operated by steam mainly use fossil coal or peat. The modern and perfect silk mills are mechanically operated, that is, the reels are turned by steam or water. Their basins are all steam-heated. One horsepower is enough to turn one hundred well-made reels.

[18] The main factories owned by the Pietro Gavazzi Company:



[19] I have introduced all the improvements that competitiveness demands and circumstances allow<sup>23</sup>.

[22] The workers are taken on as young girls (9 years old). They begin to work as beaters and then, little by little, learn the craft of spinning silk. In turn, the girls go from the winder to the silk mill, so as to learn both operations. In all my mills, the spinners receive one lira per day, the girls from 40 to 90 centesimi, according to age and ability. The men, depending on the importance of the work, earn from 1.30 lire to 3 lire a day.

More views of the Gavazzi silk mill at Cernusco sul Naviglio. In 1871 the factory was powered by steam engines.

- Bellano (prov. of Como). Silk mill with 188 basins. Spinning or throwing factory for organzine and weaves with 6,600 spindles and all the accessories.

- Valmadrera (prov. of Como). Silk mill with 56 basins for spinning, and as many beaters. Throwing factory for organzine with 12,672 spindles.

- Cernusco sul Naviglio (prov. of Milan). Silk mill with 80 basins and as many beaters. Spinning factory for weaves with 1,152 spindles.

The first and the second employ around 700 people each, the third around 400, almost all female workers. Two thirds of the workers are adults, the rest are children from 9 to 15 years old.

The factories of Bellano and Valmadrera are operated by turbine and water wheel, respectively. The Cernusco mill is powered by a three horsepower steam engine.

Fossil coal costs on average: in Bellano 5 lira, in Valmadrera 4.50 lira, in Cernusco 4 lira per quintal. It is consumed in quantities of around 8 kilos per basin each day.

23 [20] Silk extraction with steam has a great advantage over the other type:

a. in terms of fuel economy;

b. for faster and more uniform heating of the basins, where the heat can also be regulated as desired;

c. because the product turns out better, glossier and more resistant;

d. because the heat radiated by the steam pipes can be used to heat the room in winter and ensure dry silk in the dampest and roughest weather. Whoever intends to set up new a silk mill, therefore, should fit it out for steam extraction. Silk mill owners who use the ordinary method are diminishing day by day and are limited to small-scale production.

Private interests provide enough of an impulse for these and other improvements, for it should not be assumed that a better method than steam-heating may not one day be discovered.

Here also, the government has nothing to either control or to encourage. Since it keeps a strict watch on the railway companies, however, it should make sure that their material is sufficient for the country's needs. The deplorable lack of rolling stock means that goods and especially coal, cannot be delivered when they should be.

This disgrace occurs all too frequently in Genoa, where coal remains for days on the lighters in the port, waiting for the train to take it to its destination. In the meantime, the expense for the rental of the lighters increases, as does the cost of unloading – first into the warehouse and then into the vehicles. In addition, there is the danger of tampering and damage and the monopoly still enjoyed by the stevedores of the port of Genoa means that all the goods to be unloaded are in their care, and whoever wants to do without their service must in any case pay them an unfair duty. The fact that coal is cargo of relatively little value magnifies this injustice more than with other goods.

[21] For the crossing of the strands I use hollow flat blocks or small machines, composed of two little wheels set on a rod, one above the other. The strand is wound around these and crosses in the middle. In Valmadrera and Cernusco the work of the beaters and that of the spinners is separate.



Cernusco sul Naviglio,  
warehouses for cocoon  
storage.



Overall view of the silk  
factories at Cernusco  
sul Naviglio.

Some of the men work as porters and some are in charge of stoking the boilers and the steam engines, while others work in the repair shops as carpenters, smiths and plumbers. Naturally, these are paid the most.

[23] Workers are in great demand, but wages do not ordinarily go up as a result.

In Cernusco and in Bellano I made the decision to raise the daily wage, partly so as to bring the workers of those factories up to the same level as those of Valmadrera, and partly to encourage more labourers to work in my factories. I believe this was justified by the general rise in the cost of living, and was a prudent move to forestall, with spontaneous generosity, any ill feeling which might later have arisen.

In Cernusco and Bellano there were never either strikes nor threatened strikes. In Valmadrera, many throwers were members of the notorious «Lecco Society». I decided to lay them all off on April 1869, replacing the striking workers with girls from other villages. The example worked very well.

[24] I set up primary day schools in these factories, where the girls were taught every day in half-hour shifts, during working hours.

[25] The working day lasted 12 hours, except for the months of June, July and August, when it lasted 14 hours. The silk mills and the spinning factories are active all the year round, with the exception of May, when the workers take care of the silkworms, either for themselves or for others<sup>24</sup>.

[30] A third part of the Milan silk mill and those of Valmadrera and Cernusco are mounted in such a way that the silk actually rises directly up to the reels, thus saving on the expense and the waste produced by the winding machine. The quality of the product is the same as with the old system<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> [26] The machines, equipment and other devices are all nationally produced and in part made in the workshops of my factories.

[27] For the suffocation of the pupas I use a stove, which kills them with heat. Only private producers, whether owners or leasers of silk mills, can judge whether it is worthwhile or not to build public ovens; this they will do in good time if it proves profitable. In our province, owners are mainly producers of large batches of cocoons, which they harvest and send to the silk mill owners, who buy them in advance. Public ovens are more useful where small batches are brought to the markets and run serious risks if they are not sold.

[28] I believe it would be a great advantage to both the merchant and the buyer to sell the cocoons dry rather than alive. The reasons are as follows:

a. the cocoons, when suffocated and treated as soon as they are gathered, are safe from damage. If they are transported alive or newly dead, they are susceptible to hatching, suffocation or atrophy, causing serious damage. Avoiding this risk would mean a higher price for the seller and great advantages for the buyer;

b. the transportation of dry cocoons is more economical. When they are fresh, it is necessary to use all the means available, good and bad, sometimes paying exorbitant fees and receiving poor service. With the railway, great speed is indispensable. When dry, the cocoons weigh a third of the fresh ones, and may be packed in canvas sacks, much lighter than the boxes that are essential for the transport of fresh cocoons. Lastly, dry cocoons can travel for weeks and weeks without suffering harm;

c. since dry cocoons are easier to negotiate, and therefore more convenient for both merchant and buyer, the only motive for the contract will be mutual convenience, and not the need to sell on the part of the merchant before the product is spoilt and to purchase on the part of the buyer while the time is right, before the product, good or bad, has all been bought up;

d. less haste, more care. A sharp periodic crisis occurs in times of stockpiling. Considerable amounts of money must be collected and prepared a long time in advance, or raised using the various means of credit. Foreign exchange rates fall, discounts increase – all things that would not happen if the interested parties were able to sell and buy at their own convenience throughout the year.

[29] Rusty cocoons may be spun using various methods, but cannot produce the same results as pure cocoons. The general rule is to buy batches that contain as little as possible.

<sup>25</sup> [31] The yield varies according to the year and the type of cocoon. In the best years, I produced one kilo of silk per year with 13 kilos of good Japanese cocoons, while in the worst years up to 17 kilos were needed. The eggs of Brianza and Central

[33] Trade in both cocoons and silk should be given complete freedom. The Government could encourage that of the former by promoting in Genoa all the improvements introduced by the rival market of Marseilles, which has, one might say, the monopoly on a product whose true centre of storage should by rights be Northern Italy<sup>26</sup>.

### *Notes on the silk-throwing process and the conditions of its workers*

The silk-throwing industry consists of the following operations:

a. *winding*, or the winding of the skeins onto reels, which is carried out by young, often very young, girls. A widespread prejudice among the workers causes older girls to shun this work; the owners encourage the tendency unwittingly, thinking to spend less on workers of little value. Perhaps, however, it is not all prejudice, because the winding machines are made in such a way that taller girls could not work at them without bending over all day long. It would be extremely easy to make the machines more comfortable; this would result in processing that is slightly more expensive, but of much better quality, and a population would be saved from the risk of deformity. The rules regarding the work of the girls are by no means observed;

b. *rewinding*, or the cleaning of the silk, which is passed from the reel, where it is wound, to another reel, through a draw-plate of iron, agate or simply wood covered with cloth. This removes the neps and impurities from the raw silk strands.

*Spinning*, or throwing of the silk strands onto the spinning machine.

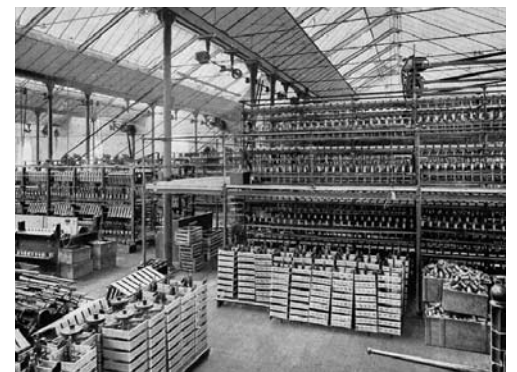
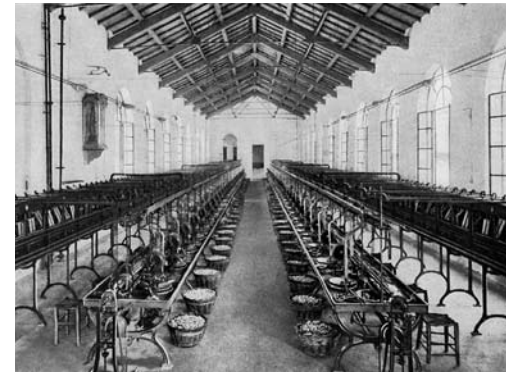
The rewound reel spins around and the thread is passed to a larger reel called *rocchella*. The faster the reel spins, the slower the *rocchella* turns, and the stronger the resulting thread;

c. *doubling*, or the doubling of the silk thread;

d. *twisting*, or a second throwing of the two threads joined together in reverse.

At the end of this process the *organzine* is completed. The threads making up the weave are fewer in number and much more loosely twisted than those of the *organzine*.

In many spinning factories, men work on the spinning and the throwing, while others prefer women workers. I prefer the latter situation, as I consider their hands more suited to the



Cernusco sul Naviglio, different parts of the silk mill, with architectural structures typical of industrial archaeology.

Italy, used since the old days, produce cocoons at a ratio of 10-12 of cocoons for each kilo of silk, and there are some races and cocoons that are so poor that 30 kilos of cocoons are needed to produce just one kilo of silk.

[32] The price of raw silk has always been in proportion to that of the cocoons, except for last year, when a series of political events caused the price of silk to plunge.

<sup>26</sup> [34] The extraction of silk in our province is also carried out on behalf of foreign companies, yet I cannot say in what proportions.

[35] The silk mill owners have their own capital, which they prepare in the spring by selling off the old stock or depositing the remainder at the Silk Banks. There is no lack of foreign capitalists and bankers who, attracted by the discounts and commissions, advance sums to the silk mill owners. The foreign companies send their own proceeds and supplies to their respective countries.

[36] The raw silks are processed largely in Italy. The rest goes mainly to France and a little to England. Silk is brought from China, Japan and Bengal, both directly, by way of Brindisi or Genoa, and through London and Marseilles. Processed silk is woven in very small quantities in our country, and in large quantities in Switzerland, West Germany, France, Saxony, Austria and England.

[37] Up until today, the only duty that obstructs this product is that of exportation from our borders. This is much more irrational because it affects both fine and ordinary silks equally, yet their prices vary from 50 lire to 100 lire. Only Russia has a heavy import tax and we hope that France will have enough common sense to not make ruinous additions to their own and our interests.



The Gavazzi silk mill at Calliano and views of the interior.

working of the silk. I introduced them after the many strikes organised against me by the workers of the Valmadrera factory.

Silk factories cannot always find enough local workers to satisfy their needs, and so these are often brought in from other villages. In many factories these women, known as *forestiere*, are very poorly housed. As many as three or four are made to sleep together, and a number of dormitories are either insufficiently ventilated, badly protected from the cold or not kept very clean.

The throwing together of all these people has a very bad effect on them both physically and morally.

Where the *forestiere* are most numerous there are also the greatest risks of disturbances; the girls, far from their families and left to themselves, and

in addition insufficiently supervised, tend to get into trouble. The owners must therefore be held strictly responsible concerning such matters, and equally obliged to look after the material and moral well-being of their employees.

Unfortunately, most owners have a number of factories in different locations, and keep their main business offices in Milan. The task of running their factories, therefore, is placed in the hands of assistants, whose level of instruction is only slightly higher than a farmer's and whose general culture is rudimentary. Many of the owners themselves, indeed, have not a much greater intellectual culture and moral sense than that of their assistants. This does nothing to improve the working class, which benefits greatly from a good example. The working class, in its ignorance, is easily swayed by faithless individuals who preach every kind of virtue while undermining the indispensable religious foundations and, forgetting the comfort which religion has to offer, fanatically accept all that these charlatans spread around, which is essentially hate towards their employers (unknown or little-known), whose happy and comfortable life they contrast resentfully with their own hardships and privation. The working hours, moreover, do not leave the young girls enough time for a little schooling and the workers in general cannot manage anything more than a simple animal life.

The government should, through intelligent and well-written laws, put an end to, or at least limit these disturbances by carrying out periodic inspections in the factories, for example; not only prohibiting the employment of girls under a certain age but enforcing the prohibition, and making sure that the girls are able to dedicate enough time to schooling, or else that such is provided within the factory itself. I believe, moreover, that it is impossible to instil order and discipline in anyone, especially in the lower classes, if the religious feeling of the masses is not cultivated. I myself can bear witness to this, having seen many such situations and diligently analysed and compared them.

Government intervention in the situation, by placing everyone on the same level, would relieve those who sincerely wished to see these laws enforced from having to choose between conforming for the sake of competition or placing themselves at a disadvantage with regard to those who did not agree.

Neither can I fail to mention the fact that in many places there exists a coalition among the owners to keep the price of labour stationary, rendering impossible the competition that is even more necessary in this than in any other field. Indeed, free competition would certainly be an excellent remedy against the prevailing of the doctrines of the International.

### *The silk mills of Bellano and Valmadrera*

The industry of Bellano, «which is one of the most important in the country» elicited the following comments in 1863 from a «visiting commission» interested in the factories of the province. «Standing out among all these», the report said, «is the very large Gavazzi silk factory, whose owner has, at his own expense, opened an evening school for his workers.

Since, moreover, the main industry of the province is the processing of silk, the various professions and factories are scattered, especially throughout Brianza, around the lake and in several valleys, where water provides plentiful and free motive power needed for the machines».

In the same period Dr. Giuseppe Medici compiled a report on the factories of Lecco, in which he stated that «the silk factories are impressive for their beautiful locations, for their tall, spacious and well-ventilated buildings, for their cleanliness, the well-organised separation of the work, the efficient management and supervision, and the fine, praiseworthy results it produces. Some of these are indeed grand and so well-organised that they may be considered true models of their kind.

The factory of Messrs. Verza of Canzo is outstanding in its magnificence. The girls are not fully accepted until the age of nine, and if they are taken on before this time it is only for short periods and for the purpose of providing suitable training.



Offices of the Gavazzi silk mill in Valmadrera.

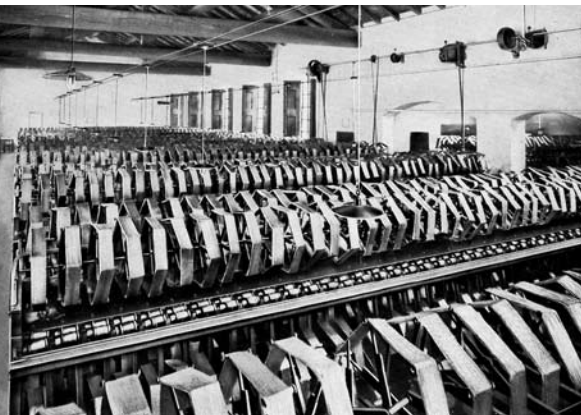
Equally grand and commendable is that of Mr. Gavazzi in Valmadrera».

«At the Paris World's Fair (1874) it was especially for the incomparable quality of the silk of the Verza Brothers of Canzo and of Pietro Gavazzi of Valmadrera that the Imperial Commission awarded a gold medal to the Milan Chamber of Commerce and Arts, as representative of the Lombard silk industry».

In his report on the hygienic conditions of the Lecco district, Medici wrote about the schools in the area, describing their faults, lack of cleanliness and indecency, with the exception of that of Canzo: «both the boys' and the girls' schools are wonderful, and leave nought to be desired». In Canzo there were the Verza and the Gavazzi families.

Pietro was defined as «one of the most intelligent and expert industrialists»<sup>27</sup>.

The reeling room in the silk mill at Albese.



### *The silk mill of Albese*

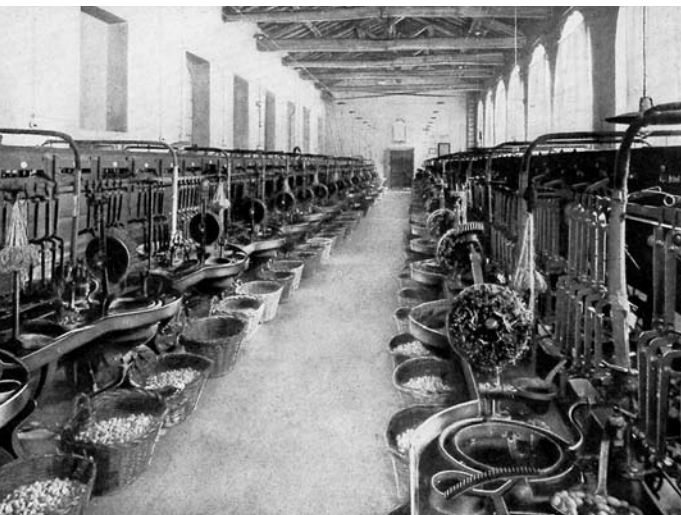
In the course of his industrial career, Pietro Gavazzi founded numerous factories. One of these, probably, was the silk mill of Albese.

«In Albese, as of 1876 there are two steam-operated mills, which employ almost 200 workers, mainly women and girls.

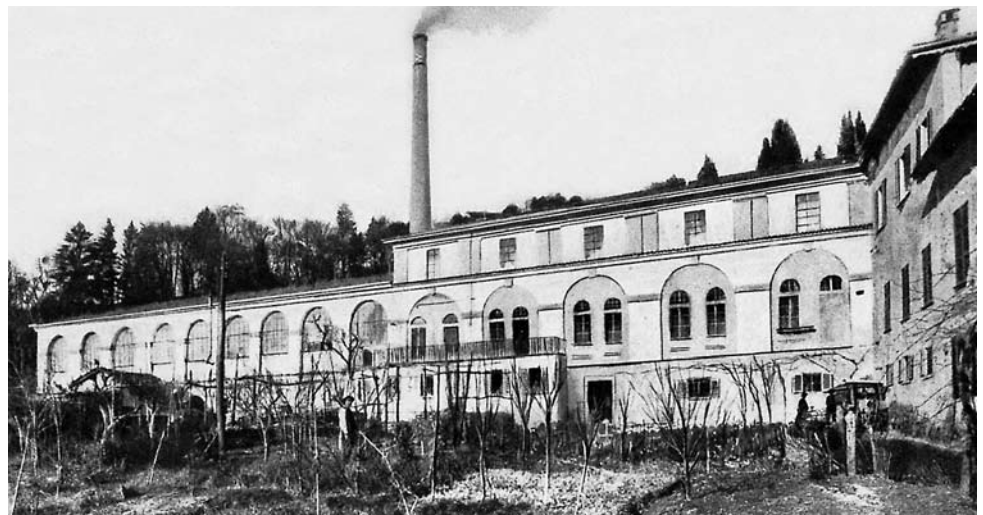
The factory, owned by Pietro Gavazzi, is one of many branches of the city-manufacturing complex of Valmadrera, and also includes a winding plant with 1,440 spindles, in operation for around 10 months in the year»<sup>28</sup>.

Along with the silk mill, Pietro owned also the villa named «La Galetera».

This charming 3-floor villa, laid out in a typical 18<sup>th</sup> Century linear block, reveals an architectural design of considerable importance.



Albese, basin room, showing the baskets containing whole cocoons. Right: the exterior of the silk mill with chimney stack.



<sup>27</sup> From *Statistical Report of the Chamber of Commerce and Arts of the Lecco Area to the Royal Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce*, Lecco, 1875.

<sup>28</sup> By Giancarlo Galli, *Segni del lavoro, immagini della festa. Equilibrio agricolo e civiltà nelle ville del territorio di Albese con Cassano*, published by the Town Council of Albese, 1983.

The name given to the villa was taken from a term in the Brianza dialect referring to the original use of the building as a silkworm deposit, probably when it was Gavazzi property.

### *The silk mill of Desio*

After 1850 the Conti family, textile industrialists originally from Cesana Brianza, came to settle in Desio.

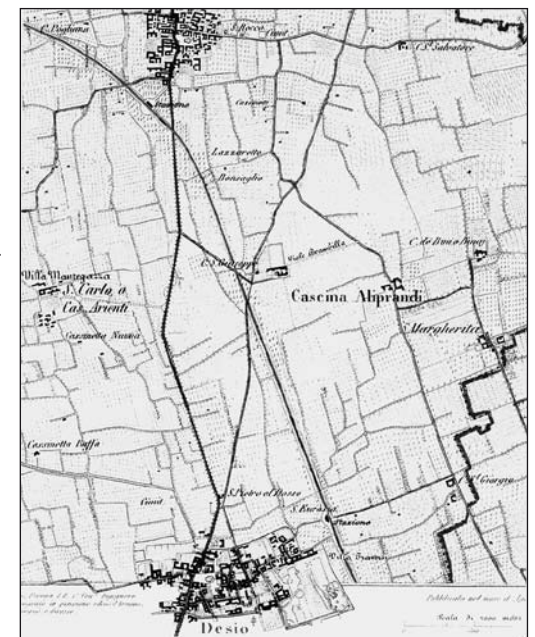
On October 21, 1831, in Pusiano, Luigi Conti bought the entire complex of the Beauharnais palace, which previously belonged to the Carpani marquises. Besides making changes to the palace itself, Conti built a silk mill bordering on the garden, which remained active until 1920. He later moved to Milan and in 1846 the Pusiano complex, with the rest of the property, was made over to his children.

On March 12, 1850, in the division with brothers Giuseppe, Ferdinando and Fermo, Pietro Conti gave up his share of the property located in the territory of Penzano, Pusiano, Cesana, Suello, Bosisio, Consonno and Dozio and bought off the remaining shares of the property described as a «house in Desio for use as silk mill and spinning factory, situated in the district of Santa Maria, at no. 85» and marked on the map of Desio at no. 422, 423 and 424.

This company was later taken over by Pietro Gavazzi. Francesco Antonio Ratti, originally from Rogeno and described as «hard-working, strong, humble and honest», was called to Desio in 1851 to become the director. Francesco Ratti was the father of Achille Ratti, who became Pope Pius XI. Pietro, who in 1869 is recorded as having been a member of the town council of Desio, later set up the famous Egidio & Pio Gavazzi Company with his two youngest sons.



Map of Albese from the «Property Transfer Cadastre» (approx. 1850), National Archives of Como.



Map of Desio (19<sup>th</sup> Century). In the Desio silk mill Pietro Gavazzi introduced important technological innovations for silk processing.



The Desio silk mill, purchased by Pietro Gavazzi from the Conti family.

### *The Pietro Gavazzi Company*

The «Pietro Gavazzi» company (named not after our Pietro but his grandfather, Pietro «senior», its founder), became one of the most important industries in Italy under the guidance of Pietro «the Great». The business of the company extended not only beyond the Lecco area, but beyond Italian borders. The organisation of all its industries, the business relationships, purchases, provisioning and sales were all extremely efficient. It is interesting and amusing to read the «telegraphic code» for the silkworm stockpiles of the «Pietro Gavazzi» company<sup>29</sup>: each letter corresponded to a sign, an order, a word, for the conclusion of business deals; to each word, in turn, corresponded an instruction (e.g. lumberjack meant «the moment is right, I suggest you authorise me to buy»); scourge stood for «the silkworms are being dispatched by train at ... o'clock»<sup>30</sup>.

In 1847, according to the deeds of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts and Trades of the year 1851, in the province of Milan alone, the following factories are registered as owned by Pietro Gavazzi:

- a silk mill in San Giorgio di Saronno, steam-operated with 60 burners and 60 reels;
- a silk mill in Legnanello with 20 burners and 40 reels;
- a silk mill in Cernusco with 80 burners and 80 reels;
- a spinning factory in Desio with 360 reels (factory operated by horsepower).

The mill in Cernusco was called the «Gavazzi Silk Mill»; all the others were indicated as belonging to Pietro Gavazzi<sup>31</sup>.

The «Pietro Gavazzi of Milan» company held a stake of 50 shares in the joint-stock company «Como Silk Seasoning».

The Pietro Gavazzi company enjoyed an extraordinary period of growth during the 19th Century, and successfully overcame a succession of great crises in the silk industry. The main concern in Paris in the year 1867 was related to the slump in silkworm-raising, which had by this time lasted for almost fifteen years, and which seemed to be resolvable by using silkworm eggs from abroad. In spite of this slump, a few companies succeeded in facing the difficulties and prospering.



The main offices of the «Pietro Gavazzi Joint-Stock Company», in Milan.

<sup>29</sup> Pietro Gavazzi, *Codice telegrafico per gli ammassi gallette*, Bernardoni Editore, Milan, n.d., preserved in the Braidense National Library under the heading: misc. 953.11.

<sup>30</sup> In this telegraphic code it was specified that the Pietro Gavazzi company had the following telegraphic addresses: for Milan: Apogeo – Milan; for Bellano: Gavazzi – Bellano; for Cernusco: Pietro Gavazzi – Limite; for Desio: Pietro Gavazzi – Desio, and for Valmadrera: Gavazzi – Valmadrera.

<sup>31</sup> Pub. in *Il patrimonio storico-industriale della Lombardia. Censimento regionale*, edited by Alberto Garlandini, Bruna Micheletti, Pier Paolo Poggio, Fondazione Luigi Micheletti, Brescia, 1991 – ... «the Pietro Gavazzi Silk Spinning Mill» in Desio, Via Garibaldi no. 59, was built in 1889 (it must, therefore, have been a reconstruction, or a radical restoration) designed and constructed by engineer F. Biella (perhaps Felice Biella, born on July 7, 1845, the brother of Giuseppina, wife of Egidio Gavazzi and therefore the brother-in-law of the latter).

«The spinning mill was plastered, and finished in wood along the inside of the eaves. The layout was irregular and formed an internal courtyard. The front extends along the old postal road to Milan. The main factory building consisted in one part with four floors and one with three floors, with rectangular windows on the first three floors and rounded arch windows on the top floor. The structure was in brick, with wooden ceilings and pitch roofs with double slopes in pantiles. The entrances to the stairways were distributed around the inner courtyard. In the lower factory block a series of low arches could be seen. The mill belonged to the Pietro Gavazzi company of Valmadrera, which at the beginning of the 1900s owned around twenty factories in Lombardy, with a total work force of 5,000».

Such was the case with the factories of the Gavazzi companies, which in Bellano and Valmadrera in the province of Como and in Desio, in the province of Milan, were able to put into action a plan of intervention concerned with «the well-being of the labourers, and especially the education of the women workers. A school was set up, giving lessons in the evenings in winter and in the daytime during summer, without interrupting the work; the school held 50 pupils. Four days a week they learned to read, write and count, the other two days were dedicated to needlework and spool work»<sup>32</sup>.



Interior view of the  
Gavazzi silk mill in Desio.

### *The banking business: The Bank of Lecco and the Lombardy Silk Bank*

Following in the footsteps of his father (Giuseppe Antonio), Pietro Gavazzi continued to develop the banking business, and was the promoter of various initiatives. One of these is the Banca di Lecco<sup>33</sup>, where the Gavazzis were an important presence.

Pietro was the most prominent industrialist in the Lecco area and his work was not limited to his own district, as was the case with almost all the others; his business base was Milan, where he became one of the most influential personages of his time.

In 1872, together with other industrialists and a group of bankers-merchants operating in the silk sector, Pietro established the «Silk Bank of Lombardy»<sup>34</sup> in Milan. The bank supervised credit operations on the marketing and processing of silk<sup>35</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> From Sergio Zaninelli (ed.), *Storia dell'industria lombarda*, a series financed by Mediocredito Lombardo, Ed. Il Polifilo, 1991, Volume II, page 207.

<sup>33</sup> Bankrupt in 1912.

<sup>34</sup> From *Storia di Milano*, Edizioni Treccani, Milan, 1996: «Founded on January 30, 1872 with a nominal capital of 12 million lire, of which almost 6 paid, the main aim of the company was the financing of silk products by discounting their bills guaranteed by silk deposits. The undersigners of the deed of incorporation included the major bankers of Milan, Genoa and Turin (C. Bozzotto & Co., G. Belinzaghi, Burocco & Casanova, P. De Vecchi & Co., E. Cramer & Co., Cavajani Oneto & Co., C. De Antoni, L. Fuzier & Co., P. Gavazzi, E. Ginoulhiac, Sons of G. Gneccchi, E. Meyer & Co., Pedroni Cavadini & Co., Zaccaria-Pisa, Ronchetti Brothers, Ulrich & V. Varchex, Bariola & Co., G.A. Spagliardi & Co., Vimercati, Vogel, Weill-Scott, Visconti Venosta, Vonwiller, etc.). The nominal shares were set at 200 lire for an amount of 60,000.

By the beginning of the year following its founding, the hopes that many operators in the silk sector had placed in the company began to be disappointed. The Silk Bank of Lombardy, in fact, dealt mainly in movables and real estate, neglecting the financial backing of the silk trade. This was partly due to the competition of the Savings Bank in the silk industry, but mainly because it was lured by the lucrative opportunities offered by various more speculative industrial and commercial sectors. In 1875, in spite of the great financial difficulties that hindered the company's business, the Silk Bank took a long time to decide to wind up its affairs. This winding-up, in fact, was not to be approved until February 9, 1876, by the shareholders' assembly.

This decision, however, seems to have provoked endless controversy because, according to one group of shareholders, it was in contradiction to the article which established the duration of the company as 20 years. In March, in fact, the Commercial Law-court of Milan declared illegal and therefore null and void, the assembly's decision to proceed with the liquidation of the bank and, at the same time, called for the resignation of the liquidators and ordered the company to resume business. The decision of the Court, on the appeal of certain «dissident» shareholders, coincided with a promising recovery in the silk business. On May 24, 1875, in an extraordinary meeting, the shareholders modified the article that prohibited the winding-up of the company before the end of twenty years from the date of its foundation. At the end of the year, this time legally, the liquidating committee presented the final balance sheet to the shareholders at the assembly, which revealed that the shares could be reimbursed in full and with a dividend, albeit small. This result had a great bearing on the work that the Bank was able to carry out in the summer months, during which there was a marked increase in the activity of the silk industry.»

The purpose of the Silk Bank, in fact, was to subsidise the manufacturers of the sector through the discounting of bills guaranteed by goods deposits<sup>36</sup>.

### *Silk merchant and banker*<sup>37</sup>

«The contribution of the silk industry to the development of Northern Italy's regional economy during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century took various forms».

Silk was «the main asset in the commercial balance sheet, both regarding the more advanced pre-Unification States (Kingdom of Sardinia and Lombardy-Veneto) and the new Italian State itself, up until the eve of the First World War and played, therefore, the most important role as the long-term agent of capitalistic accumulation».

This led to the «various types of «linkages» activated by the development of the silk industry». Lombardy was «the core of the Italian silk industry» and as such had «solid linkages with the mechanics industry». The cumulative effect brought about the natural evolution of the Italian banking system; in fact, «the silk route seems to represent the thread linking the first banking initiatives of a national character»<sup>38</sup>.

The evolution of the silk industry did not end with the *pebrine* (the calamitous silkworm disease), but instead revealed a strong capacity for recovery and expansion in terms of market targeting and productivity, allowing the silk industrialists to maintain an important market position until the end of the century.

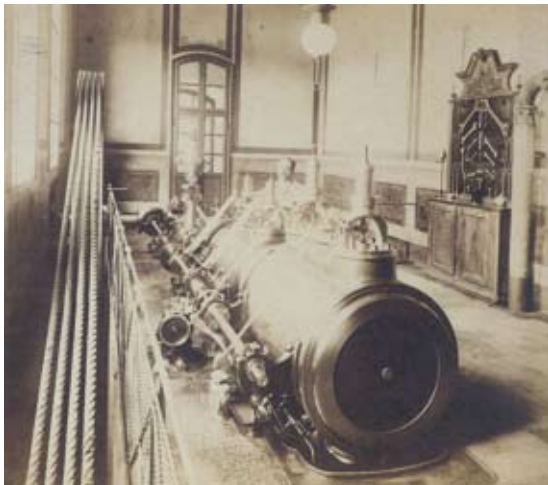
This came about thanks to technical advances, in particular the improved steam-operated silk mill, equipped with mechanised movement of the reels and new crossing mechanisms.

In short, silk represented the beginning of an extremely important step forward, which determined «the formation of attitudes in commerce, technique, knowledge or social tendencies – human capital, that is – open to further orientation towards a diversified development»<sup>39</sup>.

During the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the Italian silk districts suffered an attack on their natural monopoly of suppliers of semi-manufactured products which had characterised their presence on the market for almost the entire 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

On the British market, Asian silk, low-cost but also low quality, was enjoying increasing popularity, with the consequence that Italian silks of the same quality, but at higher prices, were being rejected in London and Manchester.

On the French market, (Lyons and Saint Etienne) the competition that French silk was now



Steam engine for generating electrical power in a Gavazzi factory.

<sup>35</sup> The text of this paragraph is partly taken from *Lecco e le sue industrie nel secolo XIX*, edited by Banca Popolare di Lecco, 1976, pp. 103-104.

<sup>36</sup> A large part of the industrial world participated: Giulio Belinzaghi and Cesare Bozzotti, the companies Cavajani Oneto, Pio Cozzi, Enrico Cramer, Pietro Gavazzi, Gneccchi, Negri, Zaccaria-Pisa and Silvestri, Ulrich and Co. and Visconti di Modrone, Vonwiller, Vogel and Weill-Schott, demonstrating the financial appeal that the processing and marketing of silk still enjoyed in the Milanese business community at the end of the century.

<sup>37</sup> From Roberto Tolaini, *Gli imprenditori serici nella prima metà dell'Ottocento. Comportamenti innovativi e circuiti d'informazione*, in Duccio Bigazzi (ed.), *Storie di imprenditori*, Fondazione Assi; Il Mulino, Bologna, 1996.

<sup>38</sup> Alessandro Polsi, *Alle origini del capitalismo italiano. Stato, banche e banchieri dopo l'Unità*, Einaudi, Turin, 1993, page 278.

<sup>39</sup> L. Cafagna, «Introduction» to Giovanni Federico, *Il filo d'oro*, Marsilio, Venice, 1994.

able to give with regard to Italian silk in terms of quality presented for the first time concrete marketing difficulties for Italian manufacturers.

In addition, before the diffusion of the *pebrine* disease, there was a period punctuated by repeated economic and financial crises, which had obvious repercussions on the silk market.

The manufacturing and marketing of silk was not a business that always and easily produced profits; it was not enough, in fact, to simply manufacture silk without paying attention to the specific demands of the various consumer markets. In order to obtain good and lasting financial results it was necessary to first study which type would produce the greatest profit. In part, the size and the continuity of the profit depended, at least in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, on the typical manufacturing capacities relating to the types of silk produced.

To preserve market share in the face of growing competition it was important to know how to respond to trends, facing the classic problems of production organisation (productivity factors, reduction of manufacturing costs, technological and organisational choices and the knowledge of the preferences of the diversified European clientele)<sup>40</sup>.

The study of relations with the demand vectors, largely foreign commission agents and bankers, through the analysis of the systems of sales, financing and marketing of those financial institutions which were set up to reduce transaction costs and render exchanges more efficient, makes it possible to grasp the entrepreneurial capacities of the silk industrialists in terms of their orientation toward exporting, risk-taking and autonomy in decision-making».

This was the overall background behind the work of Pietro, who was one of the most prominent and qualified industrialists of his day, having understood the evolution and development of the market and how to operate within it, demonstrating great intelligence, foresight and wisdom.

The industrialists who wanted a direct relationship with the market «did not go through any other intermediaries in selling their silk than the foreign commission agents, to whom they sent their goods to be sold in their warehouses. From here, most of the silk exported from Italian regions was directed to foreign markets».

These agents, «known generally as «silk merchants», had an important function as middlemen/wholesalers for the hundreds of small manufacturers (silk and spinning mill owners) who had no direct access to the international market.

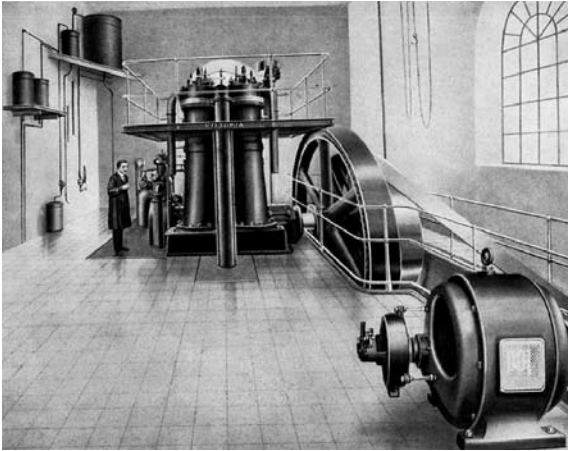
As silk was an intermediate product destined mainly for exportation, the entire silk industry depended enormously on these men.

The small silk extractors did not generally have direct access to the international market, since the nature of their work was limited or complementary compared to other, more predominant financial or professional businesses. Generally, they sold their product on the



The Gavazzi complex in Orio.

<sup>40</sup> The relationship with manufacturing technologies and technological changes made it possible to focus on innovation, a fundamental aspect of a modern attitude towards the market.



Valmadrera: detail of the engine room.

national market, to Italian or foreign agents dealing in silk. When a small manufacturer, instead of placing his goods on one of the national markets (Milan, Bergamo, Brescia, Turin, Florence, etc.) decided to sell abroad, he contacted a silk merchant who, based on his knowledge of the market, advised him on how to proceed.

The relationship of a small throwing factory owner with the international market was even more limited.

The possibilities of small manufacturers, therefore, were largely conditioned by the work of the silk merchants. In addition, through the financing of manufacturing businesses, a merchant had the power to control numerous silk mills and spinning factories and dictate to the manufacturers the product standards they were to observe (the title, or count of the thread to be traded, the quantity of silk to produce, the degree of twisting, etc.).

Directly or indirectly, therefore, the silk merchants were of fundamental importance in orienting exports and determining their composition with regard to the counts produced. They played a complex part in organising production, which frequently went beyond regional boundaries. The silk merchants of Lombardy, for example, financed the throwing operations of silk mills in Friuli, Veneto, Trentino, the province of Bologna and the Duchies.

The title of silk merchant covered a mixed category of operators with the common characteristic of direct access to the market, but who frequently were not limited to the mere function of middleman. Along with the silk merchants who sent batches of silk on behalf of third parties, to be sold through a foreign commission agent, there were also merchants who bought raw or spun silk on their own account and sold it abroad, assuming the risk personally. In addition, there was the wealthy merchant who was involved in the banking business as well, granting loans to finance the purchase and manufacture of silk. Above all, however, there were merchants who were also involved in production, owning or leasing silk mills and spinning factories.

The silk merchants might characterise their business by focusing on one or another of their functions, but often (as in the case of large merchants), they integrated all these functions together.

It is consequently difficult to accurately classify such entrepreneurial groups according to their predominant economic function, since their distinguishing characteristic was represented by just this mixture of commercial, financial and manufacturing activities.

Of the merchants, the most prominent, on the basis of aims outlined, were those who, besides selling the silk either on commission or on their own behalf, also concentrated on the extraction and throwing processes. These men dealt with problems of an industrial nature, relating to supply, organisation of production, production methods and compliance with product standards required by very diversified demand.

The operational result was not only the fruit of promptness in taking advantage of the short-term price variations that could appear on any one of the markets, but was largely due to the capacity to produce certain articles (organzine with a regular and precise count, specific

twisting points, etc.) suitable for this or that consumer market. A capacity, in other words, to respond to trends in the actual demand for raw and spun silk»<sup>41</sup>.

In this context, not only was Pietro an important «silk merchant» but he also founded enterprises with other powerful partners, such as the creation of the Gavazzi and Quinterio company.

Also of importance in the relationship with the market were the sales information systems. «The gathering of up-to-date information on the variations conditioning a particular economic activity was one of the preliminary steps towards rational decision-making. In the silk market, where fluctuations could be sudden, such a consideration was decisive.

The most widely used system among the merchants and industrialists of the various European markets was that of passing on information, aside from any actual commercial exchange. At the time, widespread information networks were set up, which often intersected, bringing together silk industrialists, bankers and middlemen of all the areas – regarding both consumption and production – related to the «noble commodity». Through these circled continuously up-to-date news on the factors that might influence trends in the silk and cocoon markets.

The question of the quality of information was therefore fundamental. Not only was it useful to have many correspondents, but it was also essential that these be reliable and that they pass on accurate information; if the information was not exact, and gave indications of tendencies which did not correspond with the true situation, the choices of the industrialists could prove to be partly or totally off target, with obvious negative consequences. False information could be spread by groups of operators with the intention of setting in motion manoeuvres of a speculative nature<sup>42</sup>. Another possibility was mistaken assessments, made without ulterior motives. This sometimes happened with the assessment of the quantities of the cocoon harvests, which remained uncertain until the cocoons actually appeared on the market.

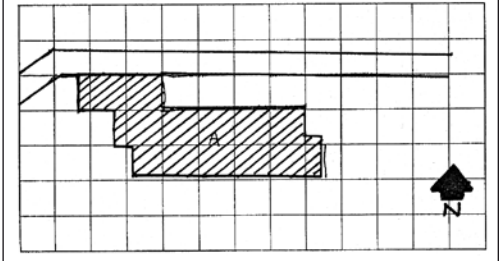
<sup>41</sup> In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century technical progress followed different lines. The most interesting developments were probably those concerning extraction, although progress was also being made in the field of throwing. There were four main areas of technical change: 1) the improvement of the basin-heating systems. As well as the gradual diffusion of the steam, we should mention the «machines» developed by Santorini and Galvani (from Friuli) or by Enrico Mylius, or again, the multiple systems of double or triple basins which, by reducing fuel consumption, also reduced production costs; 2) the mechanisation of the reel movement. Mechanisation, which since the beginning of the 1840s was essentially hydraulic powered, made it possible, on one hand, to substitute a part of the work force and on the other, ensured a more regular movement and therefore greater continuity of production. Furthermore, thanks to special mechanisms which immediately blocked the movement of the reels when the silk strands broke, it was possible to reduce the amount of silk wasted; 3) close study of the division of work. In the larger silk mills, tasks that were once carried out only by expert spinners began to be passed on to other professional workers. This led to the appearance of the «brusher», who prepared the cocoon for the spinner, and the appearance, in some of the silk mills of the Lecco area, of skilled workers specialising only in the re-knotting of the strands; 4) the diffusion of improved systems of crossing. The crossing of the strands of silk before they were wound onto the reel was one of the crucial operations for determining quality characteristics. The way in which this was carried out influenced the uniformity and purity of the thread, as well as the tensile strength and elasticity.

<sup>42</sup> Such as that begun by the Gavazzi and Quinterio company in the autumn of 1837: «The recent news from Lyons arrived at just the right time to solemnly disprove the letter circulated on the consumer markets by the Gavazzi and Quinterio company (spurred by what could only be a reprehensible lightheartedness), in which, presenting a sad picture of the situation, they forecast great price decreases, causing the merchants to postpone their purchases. This led to a point where the commissions in progress were almost suspended, their fall to such depths demonstrating to what extent the manufacturers had been alarmed by the forecast.»

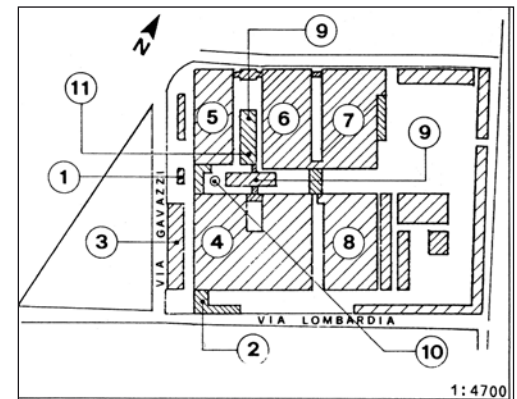
### The Gavazzi Spinning Mill later to become the Orio Spinning Mill

22049 Valmadrera (Co)  
Via San Martino 87

Owner: S.A.F.T.I Company  
Date of construction: 18th century;  
renovated c.1850  
Purchaser: Gavazzi family  
Property accessible: on authorization  
Interior accessible: on authorization



Plan of the Gavazzi spinning mill.  
The factory was water-powered for the entire 19<sup>th</sup> Century.



Plan of the Desio factory.  
The spinning mill included 360 horse-powered reels.

### The «Filandone» Gavazzi Silk Complex

(today Lariano Ribbon Manufacturers)

22049 Valmadrera (Co)

Via Manzoni 1

Owner: Gavazzi family

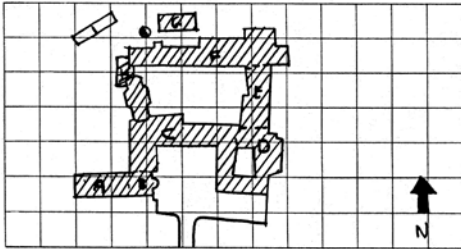
Date of construction: 1817-1820 (villa and silk mill); 1834 (chapel)

Architetto: Giuseppe Bovara

Purchaser: Gavazzi family

Property accessible: on authorization

Interior accessible: on authorization



(A) abandoned building (B) private chapel (C) owners' villa (D) dormitories (E) offices (F) silk mill (G) boiler (H) greenhouse (I) water reservoir cistern (L) chimney

Plan of the «Filandone» Gavazzi silk mill complex, situated in Valmadrera.

In any case, personal relationships were an element which strengthened and rendered the information networks and the relations between the various correspondents more efficient<sup>43</sup>.

### The Gavazzi and Quinterio Company

Pietro Gavazzi was co-owner - with Felice Quinterio - of the Milan-based «Gavazzi and Quinterio Silk and Banking Company»<sup>44</sup>.

In the course of its existence, this company went through three stages, to which corresponded three different company structures: from 1821 to 1844 it was named the «Gavazzi and Quinterio» company, from 1844 to 1852 it became the «Pietro and Gavazzi Brothers», in partnership with baron Ippolito Gaetano Ciani, and from 1852 onwards it was the «Pietro Gavazzi» company, with its central offices in Milan and silk mills in Valmadrera, Bellano and Desio.

The company «Gavazzi and Quinterio - Silk Merchants» was officially founded on July 7, 1821<sup>45</sup>.

The offices were in the district of via Meravigli, at no. 2348. The partners were Giuseppe Antonio Gavazzi, his sons Pietro, Egidio and Antonio; Felice and Alberto Quinterio; Giuseppe Paleari and Baron Ippolito Gaetano Ciani.

On October 31, 1832, the company name was changed to «Gavazzi and Quinterio, Banking and Silk Dealers». Subsequently, as well as re-confirming its areas of activity with the Chamber of Commerce, the company also integrated its funds in a limited partnership.

The company was very active and carried out large operations such as, in union with other banking firms, an important loan to the Marietti family, who had toyed with the «dream» of monopolising the entire silk trade.

The Gavazzi and Quinterio company set up a network of financial relations between owners, dealers and silk industrialists, of which there remain as written testimony the frequent conditions for the granting of silk «*in lavorerio*» (a formula which, in not implying the sale of property, was frequently an occasion for advances on the batches delivered) or for staggered sales.

On June 26, 1840, for example, the company transferred to the brothers Mario and Giovanni Spinelli a receipt in which they acknowledged the delivery «made to our silk mill in Como

<sup>43</sup> Generally, a silk industrialist was personally acquainted with his main sources and exchangers of information, as he did business with them. A personal visit to the factory or warehouses of an associate provided the advantage of direct contact that mere correspondence could not furnish, giving the possibility to see the correspondent working in his own environment and so to personally judge both his ethical-moral qualities and his technical and commercial experience.

<sup>44</sup> Felice Quinterio, partner of the Gavazzis, was a Milanese nobleman, originally from Lodi, who came from an old aristocratic family. Also a silk mill owner, he had large property in the Lodi area, as well as in Milan and Como.

Felice was the son of Carlo, an aristocratic collegiate notary, and Giuseppa Ghezzi; he had married Maddalena Pelosi in 1818, with whom he had a son, Alberto (also a member of the Gavazzi and Quinterio company, he married a noblewoman, Elisa Marozzi of Pavia), and a daughter, Ida, who married nobleman Don Giuseppe Pisani Dossi and who was the mother of writer Carlo Dossi (above Como is the Pisani-Dossi villa, known as *il Dosso*, or «The Rise»).

The Quinterio family lived in Milan in Via Borgospesso no. 25. At the beginning of the 1900s the family was still living in Milan, in Piazza Paolo Ferrari no. 10.

<sup>45</sup> This company had rented two rooms at no. 1814, Filodrammatici Square, where in 1825 the newly-founded Milan Insurance Company distributed leaflets declaring that the Company had a capital amounting to 6,000,000 Austrian lira. These rooms were very small, «large enough only for the guard and a studded iron safe, which was mainly emblematic».

of silkworms from Origgio weighing 6,786 1/2 pounds and estimated at the agreed price of 51 lire per Milanese pound «unauthorised lira. 34,726 6 6 of which, according to agreement, we will pay half in two months' time and half in four months' time from today»<sup>46</sup>.

In records of the Chamber of Commerce from 1829 there are 26 companies registered under the category of «banking and silk dealers» (with an overall capital of 11.5 million Austrian lira); of these, only 14 defined as «first class», with a presumed capital of 600,000 lire each. Among the latter were Balabio, Besana & Co., Tomaso Carli, Enrico Mylius & Co., and Gavazzi and Quinterio.

### *The Lombard Lakes Steamboat Company*<sup>47</sup>

From the very beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century an enormous amount of ideas, initiatives and projects were concentrated around the subject of steam power and its application. The first person to actually design and build a working steamboat was the American Robert Fulton who, after a series of unsuccessful attempts, finally launched the *Clermont*, the progenitor of all steamboats, on September 9, 1807.

On November 6, 1817, Francis I, Emperor of Austria, decided that privileges and tax exemptions would be granted to whoever established a steamboat service on State waters.

A few years later, three young Lombards responded to the appeal; these were Count Luigi Porro Lambertenghi, Count Federico Confalonieri and Marquis Alessandro Visconti d'Aragona. These three, together with a merchant named Brambilla and a mechanic named Locatelli, founded a Steamboat Company that would operate between Milan, Pavia and Venice. The Austrian government did not give its approval to this company until June 1820, when it was granted a 15 year license. The first boat, which had been built in the meantime in Genoa, equipped with an English paddlewheel engine and named *Eridano*, made a tour around the peninsula as far as Venice and from there, entering the river Po by the Maestra delta, reached Pavia after 12 days' upriver steaming.

Among the notables aboard for the first voyage from Pavia to Venice, which took place in September of the same year, were Porro and two of his sons, Confalonieri, Visconti d'Aragona, Vincenzo Monti, Silvio Pellico, tutor to the Porro children, and several others. The voyage took only 37 hours of actual sailing time (probably with overnight stops). Shortly afterwards the second trip was completed, which followed the river Po and the river Mincio upstream to Mantova. After the arrest of Maroncelli, Pellico, Confalonieri and Visconti, the Austrian police, increasingly suspicious, forced the company to limit its routes to the stretch between Venice and Mantova, until the *Eridano* was laid up in Venice.

The government grant was not revoked until February 8, 1825, when it was transferred to other Milanese companies, with the obligation to provide a new and satisfactory service

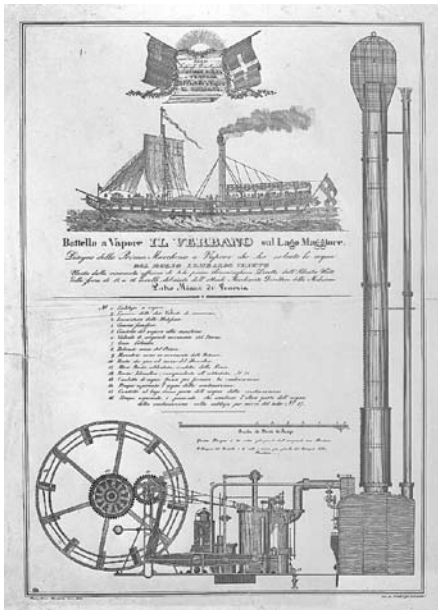


Medal engraved with the image of Pietro Gavazzi.

<sup>46</sup> A.S.M., property notary Grossi, c. 50.593.

<sup>47</sup> The text of this paragraph is partly taken from *Storia di Milano*, Edizioni Treccani, Milan, 1996.

The steamboat *Verbano*, launched in 1826 and used for transportation on Lake Maggiore (A. Bertarelli Public Prints Collection, Milan).



Poster of the steamboat «Verbano», the first steam-powered vessel to ply the waters of Lake Maggiore.

within a year's time. In 1825 the Gavazzi and Quinterio thus became the organiser of the «Privileged Steamboat Company of the Kingdom of Lombardy and Veneto», with offices in Milan. This «privileged» company, which had as its president Duke Carlo Visconti di Modrone, was granted exclusive license<sup>48</sup>, for the duration of 15 years, to run a steamboat service on the Po and other waters of the Lombardy-Veneto Kingdom and to construct steamboats. Thus the company came into possession of the *Verbano*, a steam ferry which was launched in 1826 on Lake Maggiore with a 12 h.p. engine, built at the Watt shipyard in Birmingham. This boat was used for transporting goods between Sesto Calende<sup>49</sup> and Magadino, the port of Canton Ticino, without making any intermediate stops<sup>50</sup>. Very quickly (in the same year) two other vessels were added – the *Lario* and the *Plinio*<sup>51</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> The permission and authorisation was granted on February 8, 1825.

<sup>49</sup> According to others, between Arona and Magadino, along the eastern shore of the lake, which from 1814 was part of the province of Como. It does not seem possible that it could be Arona, however, since it was in Piedmont, and therefore abroad – Author's Note]

<sup>50</sup> The service, therefore, omitted the ports of call on the Lombardy banks and also those in the Piedmont; at Sesto Calende the boat took on passengers and goods arriving from Milan by train.

<sup>51</sup> From Giorgio Terragni, *A tutto vapore. Storia della navigazione lariana*, Enzo Pifferi Editore, Como, 1987: «The construction of the Lario began on November 13, 1825 in the flat area of Villa Olmo, kindly placed at disposition by the owners. The technical direction of the construction works was assigned to engineer Edward Church who, in those years, held the position of American Consul in Milan.

Technically speaking, the craft was fairly large: it measured, in fact, 28 metres in length and was still equipped with a prudential mast for sails. The movement depended on two wooden paddle wheels situated amidships, on the cover, or carter, of which was written the name Lario. At the bow, curiously enough, a functional small-calibre cannon had been mounted.

The Lario, with a top speed of 7 miles per hour, consumed 950 kilos of beech wood every five hours.

Before beginning the service, the Gavazzi and Quinterio Company calculated, as they say, the cost. The boat had cost exactly 100,000 lire, complete. The launching took place on the shore of Villa Olmo on July 29, 1826, before numerous prominent people and a crowd of curious onlookers. An account of this historical event was given by bishop Castelnovo who, after giving his blessing, boarded the boat at around 5 o'clock in the afternoon for its maiden voyage.



The «Lario» in navigation.

These were equipped with 14 horsepower engines ordered from Fawcett and Preston's<sup>52</sup> of Liverpool, and were intended to ply the waters of Lake Como. Later, the same lake was also served by two other boats, the *Falco* (in 1830) and the *Arciduchessa Elisabetta* (in 1831)<sup>53</sup>.

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This gesture had also the clear and precise purpose of demonstrating to the people that there was nothing dangerous about this new type of transport, since there was a widespread fear that steam engines were apt to explode and cause disasters. Such an eventuality was, in fact, impossible, seeing that the boiler was low-pressure and therefore absolutely harmless. After a short trial period, the first trip to Colico was made on August 16, 1826. The round trip ticket cost 6 lira for first class and 2.50 lira for second.

Later, goods also were transported, at the tariff of 1 lira for every hundred kilos, and carriages at 30 lira each.

The first captain of the *Lario* was an Englishman named P. Perham who, after his transfer to the Po, was replaced (on April 1, 1828) by engineer Giulio Sarti, resident in Domaso, who also had financial interests in the management of the boat.

Subsequently, the command of the boat was passed on to Milanese Pietro Paleari, and then to Como-born Paolo Negretti.

On February 10, 1826, a set of regulations were drawn up for the *Lario*, which were basically composed of eight main items: first of all, it was not possible to stop the boat on request; tickets were to be purchased directly on board; children under 8 years paid half price; smoking was strictly forbidden; animals – including dogs – had to remain on the deck and could not be brought inside the cabin; free baggage allowance was limited to 20 kilos; servants were obliged to pay the same tariff as their employers if they accompanied them in first class; it was forbidden to tip the personnel; and lastly, it was specified that on board there was a shop offering choice spirits and branded soft drinks.

The *Plinio*, identical to the *Lario*, was launched on September 9, 1826, also from the shipyard at Villa Olmo.

Shortly after launching (on September 29, 1826) the Gavazzi and Quinterio company requested a technical inspection of the boat, to make sure it was working perfectly.

This inspection, carried out by a Royal Commission of Engineers, was favourable.

The first captain was G. De Vignes, a man who, broken by a life of debauchery and burdened with gambling debts, fled Como; he was replaced first by V. Fusina, then by Luigi Civati, a retired police captain and a familiar and well-respected figure in Como.

<sup>52</sup> Referred to by others as the Fawcett & Preston Company.

<sup>53</sup> From Giorgio Terragni, *A tutto vapore. Storia della navigazione lariana*, Enzo Pifferi Editore, Como, 1987: «With the launching of the *Lario* and the *Plinio*, however, the first difficulties began to arise. At the beginning, in fact, the two boats were not allowed into the port of Como and were moored at a distance of 250 metres from the city; the passengers reached the ferry by means of special shuttle boats bearing a red flag at the prow (the price of the transfer was 15 *centesimi*).

The first model of the «Lario» depicted in navigation.



A boat of Gavazzi-Quinterio firm leaves Domasio.



On September 5, 1826, on behalf of the Navigation Society, engineer Giulio Sarti presented to the Town Council of Como a request first of all for permission for the boats to enter the port, and secondly, for authorisation to build a large, wooden sloping ramp which would make it possible to load carriages and at the same time facilitate police controls.

A few days later, the *Podestà* asked the company for the drawings and plans regarding this ramp in order to reach a decision. The matter was drawn out for several weeks, until the Royal Provincial Delegation, going over the Town Council's head, gave its approval, on the condition that the boats would not have a permanent berth and that despite their size, they would not hinder the manoeuvres of the other boats.



One of the Gavazzi-Quinterio steamboats in Como harbour. Note the majestic dimensions of the new vessel in comparison with all the other boats.

The initial capital, of 300,000 lire, was barely enough for the purchase of the three boats and the company, which intended to sail on the Po as well, decided to issue 400 more shares of 1,000 lire each.

In 1827 the company launched a 28-horsepower boat on Lake Benaco and named it *Arciduca Ranieri* «by gracious permission of His Imperial Highness the Prince Viceroy».

In addition, the company finally succeeded, after several setbacks, in extending their services to the river Po, with the addition of two vessels, the *Eridano* and the *Virgilio*.

The fleet of steamboats now numbered eight.

Unfortunately, however, these new ventures also promptly met with bad fortune, forcing the company to sell one of the boats and transfer another to the Mediterranean, in the hope that it might have greater success on the Tyrrhenian routes.

From 1828 to 1832, due to unsteady proceeds and heavy expenses borne in the fitting out of the steamboats, the company was not even able to offer its shareholders the usual dividend, and in the market quotations their shares lost more than half their nominal value. One of the main reasons for the terrible state of the business was the fact of having to allocate a tenth

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The problems regarding mooring did not, however, end here. The boatmen authorised to transport passengers, in fact, had the bad habit of clustering too closely around the ferries before they had come to a complete standstill, endangering their own boats and the wheels of the ferries. Concerning this, a note dated October 21, 1826 states that the Provincial Police Delegation asks the Town Council of Como to warn the boatmen not to come too close to the ferries before they had stopped, adding that violations would be punished with the withdrawal of the offender's license. Five days later, the *Podestà* posted a notice warning the boatmen to stay away from the ferries until they had stopped and even until they lowered anchor.

The service these two ferries ran was as follows: the *Lario* set off in the morning, sounding its bell, and headed for Colico, then stopped at Cavagnola for firewood and then on to Bellagio, where it met up with the *Plinio* and disembarked its passengers bound for Lecco by means of on-board dinghies. It returned to Como at around 5.30 p.m., announcing its arrival with a cannon shot.

The «Plinio» in Como harbour.



At first, the service was not much of a success. With the approach of winter, in fact, only the *Plinio* continued its run, on both sides of the lake, while the *Lario* stopped running on December 1.

For around three years the company struggled. In fact, the ticket was quite costly, arrivals often less than punctual and the passengers were afraid of possible accidents.

In 1830 there appeared on the scene the singular figure of Giuseppe Camozzi. Born in Grotto, a small village in Menaggio Valley, he was a hard and strong-willed man, but extremely intelligent, courageous and with great initiative. He arranged a contract with the Navigation Society for the boats, even paying 10 per cent of the profits to the State. In the meantime, with great financial effort, another boat was built, named *Falco*, and assigned to the command of Giacinto Scanagatta, who remained in service for 28 long years.

Camozzi issued an enormous quantity of advertisements: first of all, on March 20, 1830, he opened in Duomo Square, at no. 381, the «Caffè del Vapore» [Steam Cafe], which helped to publicise the ferryboat services. After this, he also added the so-called «cannon shots of Nesso» - the village where he lived after having had built a Medieval-style castle, from where he answered, a salvo, the cannon shots fired in salute from the ferryboats as they passed in the evening.

In addition, he had also ordered the three captains to offer refreshments to the passengers at the company's expense when the boats stopped at Cavagnola to pick up firewood.

In the meantime, the police and government authorities were examining the ferryboat services, and on August 26, 1831, they established a series of norms created for the prevention of accidents, including a prohibition on the carrying of loaded firearms on board.

Camozzi, meanwhile, withdrew the *Plinio* from service, as it was now in poor condition, and kept it anchored in port. Consequently, on November 26, 1832, engineer P. Franchini, head of public construction in Como, supported the complaints of the Town Hall assembly regarding the permanent presence of the boat in the port, and, in order to back up his argument, Franchini called to mind that on June 18, 1830 an agreement had been made between Camozzi and the Navigation Society, according to which the *Plinio* was to be allowed into the port only for loading and unloading, but now it was permanently docked, and a serious obstacle to other commercial craft.

A few days later, a letter was sent from councillor P. Luraghi directly to the Town Hall, in which he criticised the situation and requested urgently that the necessary measures be taken so that «boats arriving for the market of Como should not risk being damaged for the sake of the private owner of the ferryboat *Plinio*».

Camozzi, however, was not easily swayed, and made several appeals to the Royal Revenue Office and the Town Council of Como, declaring that he was even willing to pay rather than move the *Plinio*.

Finally, on February 8, 1833 Camozzi was ordered to remove the boat from the port, or the authorities would move it at his expense.

This sudden stroke of bad luck regarding the *Plinio* was quickly followed by another. Camozzi had moored the boat off the little commercial pier of Sant'Agostino, habitually used by cargo boats and private boaters.

In the summer of 1833 and the winter that followed, the pier was damaged by a series of violent storms, and the large ferryboat

of the net income to the internal revenue office, since steamboat navigation was considered equivalent to a private stagecoach service.

In 1836, despite all these obstacles, Gavazzi and Quinterio requested that their soon-to-expire license be renewed for at least another 15 years, but their request, after much dodging of the issue, was eventually rejected.

So this attempt to connect Lombardy with the Adriatic coast also failed miserably, with the company shareholders losing money: Duke Antonio Visconti di Modrone, who had become a partner, lost 400,000 lire<sup>54</sup>.

On April 22, 1844, the Gavazzi and Quinterio company was dissolved, but on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1943 a new company had been founded. This company was named «Pietro and Gavazzi Brothers», and its partners were Pietro, Antonio, Egidio and Baron Ippolito Gaetano Ciani<sup>55</sup>. The latter was a limited partner with a capital of 800,000 Austrian lira.

was smashed violently several times against the boats sheltered inside the pier. Thus a delegation of boatmen, represented by Felice Gatti and Giuseppe Corti, angrily protested against Camozzi, who bluntly sent them away, advising them to take legal steps. The boatmen, however, did not lose heart, and on the January 2, 1834 sent a letter, accompanied by a detailed report, to the Royal Provincial Delegation, requesting them to take up the matter.

After a few days, therefore, the Town Council sent engineer P. Franchini to Sant'Agostino for an on-the-spot investigation. Later, on February 14, 1834, the question was considered resolved by the Provincial Delegation, after Camozzi, responding to an injunction from the Town Hall, had the moorings sufficiently reinforced and promised to repair the *Plinio* as soon as possible. Subsequently, since the *Lario* had been damaged and seemed to be rather unseaworthy, the contractor decided to rent another steamboat. Camozzi chose the 22-metre-long *Otello*, which had been built in Venice in 1821 and had always sailed on the Po. Duke Carlo Visconti di Modrone had the boat brought to Olmo, where it was reassembled and launched with the name of *Arciduchessa Elisabetta*.

The first tests in the water yielded very negative results; even the captain, Ermanno Beretta, in fact, had doubts about the boat, considering it too long and narrow of beam for Lake Como.

However, since Camozzi had requested a technical expert's report (compiled by professor C. Configliachi of the Royal Institute of Science and Literature of Milan) and this was favourable, on July 5, 1835 the steamboat began to run regularly.

This boat took the Lecco-Domaso-Cadenabbia route. Arriving at the last stop, passengers wishing to go on to Como were transferred, using a gondola belonging to G. Ferrari and brought to their destination.

Nevertheless, the boat must have been barely seaworthy, since in 1840 it appears to have been struck off the register of steamboats sailing on the lake.

For the transport of passengers from Cadenabbia to Como the old service, with specially-rigged gondolas, was re-instated.

In the end, perhaps due to the uncompromising attitude of Mr. Camozzi or perhaps because the Milanese bankers of the Gavazzi and Quinterio company were beginning to realise that steamboat services could be a good business, the company rescinded the contract, regaining possession of the two larger boats and purchasing the *Falco* from Camozzi».

<sup>54</sup> From Bruno Caizzi, *L'economia lombarda durante la Restaurazione (1814-1859)*, Banca Commerciale Italiana, Milan, 1972. The same author affirms that the money lost in the navigation company by the Quinterio and Gavazzi families had probably been made in the silk industry.

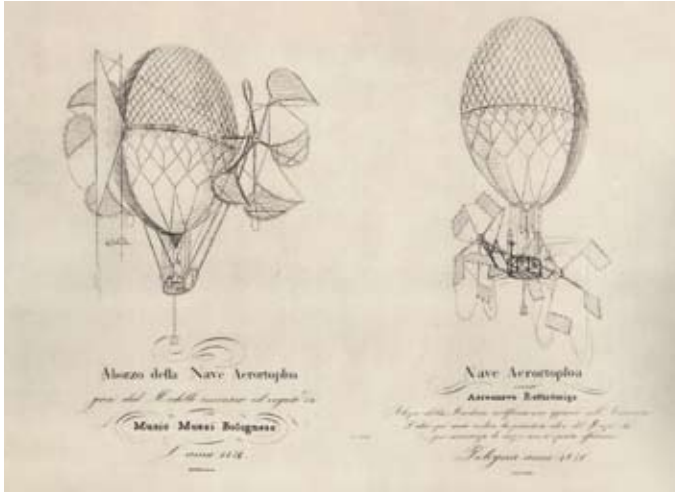
<sup>55</sup> Ippolito Gaetano Ciani, who had been a partner first in the Gavazzi and Quinterio company, since 1826, and later of the Pietro Gavazzi and Brothers firm, was Milanese. He was born in 1780 to Carlo Ciani and Maria Zanoni and married noblewoman Irene Appiani d'Aragona. Like his brothers Filippo (1778-1867), Giacomo (1776-1868) and Angelo, Baron Ciani came from a family of wealthy bankers, and was the owner in Milan of the famous Cà Rossa home in Corso Venezia, which was completely covered with bas-reliefs in terracotta, depicting various figures, episodes and symbols of the Italian Risorgimento; this unique building was demolished in 1928.

There is a story about an event that took place at a party given by the Ciani family in their home, when an uninvited guest turned up – a son of the Austrian general Radetzky, a lieutenant of the Imperial Guard. It is said that, after a short quarrel with Ciani, the young officer received a solemn slap in the face from the herculean Filippo Ciani who, as a result of the episode, was forced to flee to Lugano, in Switzerland, where he remained in exile and kept home until the founding of the Kingdom of Italy. The villa bought by the Ciani family today houses the Civic Museum of Lugano and the gardens are open to the public.

There were also many sisters in the Ciani family, one of whom, Giulia, the wife of Besana, owner of the Besana Villa of Cernobbio, became the grandmother of Carlo and Enrico Besana. Their son, Augusto Besana, by decree of the Head of State, added to his own surname also that of his great-grandmother, Giulia Ciani.

Filippo Ciani was a great friend of the Gavazzis and was also godfather to Marietta Gavazzi Badoni, daughter of Giuseppe Antonio and Luigia Verza.

Baron Ippolito Gaetano, a partner of the Gavazzis, was the last owner of the Villa d'Este of Cernobbio before this was transformed into a hotel, and was a patriot and great supporter of Italian independence.



Bologna-born Muzio Muzzi (b. 1809), having already designed an aerostatic glider, invented a «proto-dirigible» known as the Nave Aerostoploa, which later evolved into the Nave Rettiremiga. Pietro financed Muzzi's inventions. In fact, with a public announcement on 12/3/1835, the inventor gave notice that «though the search for funds, begun the previous year with an appeal, continues, the «ship» shall soon be built, thanks to the generous contribution of part of the needed funds by Mr. Pietro Gavazzi.» Pietro was also named treasurer of the funds collected. The two probably met because originally, the outer fabric of the airship was to be in silk. The only attempted flight, on November 6, 1838, failed when the outer skin was torn. Subsequently, Muzzi moved to Cuba, where he died in 1846.

The company took over all the assets and liabilities of the old Gavazzi and Quinterio company.

In this company the three Gavazzi brothers operated on the production end, running various steam-operated silk extraction mills in Cernusco, Saronno and Legnano and a spinning factory in Desio.

At around the middle of the century the company, thanks to the substantial resources deriving from the silk industry, also launched other initiatives, such as brokerage operations in the banking sector and the marketing of various types of goods.

In November of 1848 the company conferred a proxy on Giuseppe Paleari, a cousin of the Gavazzis. In April of 1852 the company was wound up<sup>56</sup>.

In 1852 the company ceased to operate and was removed from the Chamber of Commerce.

Contemporarily, the company «Pietro Gavazzi» (also known as the «Gavazzi Brothers») was established. The offices were still in the district of Bossi, at no. 1744, the former premises of «Gavazzi and Quinterio» and «Pietro Gavazzi and Brothers».

This new company took over (or was taken over by) the original Pietro Gavazzi company. On April 24, 1875, ten days after the death of Pietro, the Pietro Gavazzi company re-organised itself with the following owners: Giuseppe Gavazzi, Riccardo Gavazzi and Carlo Gavazzi, heirs of the Pietro Gavazzi company. The factories declared were those of Bellano, Valmadrera and Desio, for the processing and marketing of silk. The main offices were in Via Cusani no. 14, Milan.

On June 25, 1877 the company was transformed into a limited partnership. As of June 10 1894, the company capital amounted to 1,700,000 lira.

### *Other businesses*

«It was the Gavazzis who introduced the mechanical weaving of silk tops to Brianza, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

They did not, moreover, limit themselves to manufacturing – they were also involved in silkworm-raising and bee-keeping, and their employees who ran the various sectors were

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The Ciani Bank financed many patriots and numerous exploits against Austria. Several times the property of the Ciani family – considered subversives – was confiscated by the Austrian Government.

Carlo Dossi, in one of his *Note Azzurre* recalls the very strong constitution of Baron Ciani; he writes: «the Ciani family is extremely robust. The Baron rode on horseback for three days and three nights without eating. He fenced naked. He swam across Lake Como at its broadest point... On his deathbed, when the priest came to him, the baron asked: «Why are you here, priest? Have you come to confess me? ... so proceed! (and to the onlookers who turned to leave:) Stay, it makes no difference to me! Priest! I never removed anyone from the world, but I tried rather to bring as many into it as I could. This is my confession. Out!».

In order to express his political ideals he founded in the Villa d'Este, which he had purchased in 1834, a centre for patriotic activities and conspiracies. Here, right before the suspicious eyes of the Austrian police, who patrolled the area, and of the Viceroy, who lived in the adjacent Pizzo Villa, the Baron threw parties and entertained guests, but always with the purpose of preparing the way for Independence.

He put back in the drawing room the yellow wallpaper decorated with the letter N (which, in its time, had stood for Napoleon) crowned with laurel leaves; he transformed a pavilion into a shooting range.

In 1860, when the last cannonade of Independence had died away and unity had at last been brought to Italy, Ciani gave a great costume party there, with patriots from all parts of the country and exiles who had returned home.

<sup>56</sup> On display in the Museum of the Risorgimento, in Via Borgonuovo no. 23, Milan, is a ledger from the Pietro Gavazzi Company bearing the date of 1852.

enrolled in the local farmers' union and gave free courses for any who were interested in the subjects relating to their trade. The lessons were held in a very unusual place – the Society Theatre of Lecco.

The role of the family in the area was well reflected by the two homes in Valmadrera – the large house, previously the residence of Teresa Casati Confalonieri, where the *Regiora* traditionally resided, and the second house, named «Tower House», which was occupied by the daughter-in-law with her husband and children. The whole complex could be defined as one of the largest and most refined in the entire region»<sup>57</sup>.

In 1848, after the Austrians were driven out of the country, Pietro Gavazzi was called to manage the Mint of Milano.

A highly-respected member of the community, Pietro was appointed to numerous committees, who were eager to profit from his policies and council (his advice was also highly valued at the Chamber of Commerce), and was frequently called to act as arbitrator in the resolving of commercial disputes.

Pietro was a member of the Board of Governors (from 1852 to 1854) of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts and Trades (SIAM). Earlier, in 1851, on the occasion of the Universal Exhibition of London, he was in a fund-raising delegation (with Carlo Prinetti and Agostino Conconi).

In 1892, and therefore after his death, the «Pietro Gavazzi» company contributed the sum of 1,000 lira to the institution of a new course in weaving at the SIAM.

On May 21, 1869, Pietro is recorded as having been a member of the Town Council of Desio, where he owned a silk factory and where, together with his two youngest sons, he founded the famous Egidio & Pio Gavazzi company.

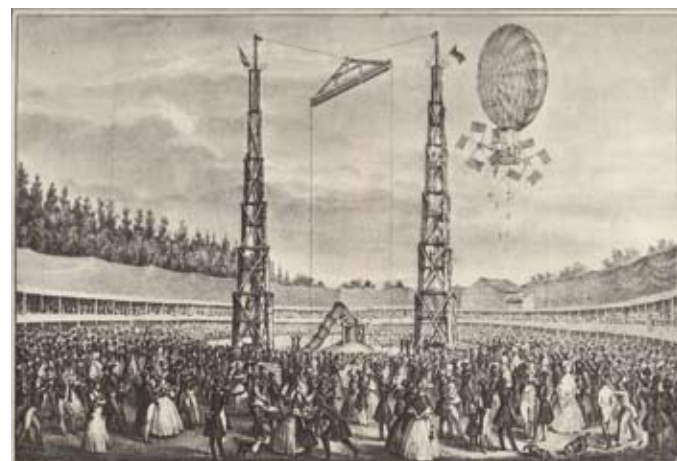
Pietro was conferred the title of Knight of the Order of St. Maurizio and St. Lazzaro.

He was a member of the Agricultural Society of Bologna, and as an expert on silkworms he wrote various pamphlets on the flaccid condition of silkworms, which were passed round and read in the assemblies of the Agricultural Society<sup>58</sup>.

### *Public works and the rearrangement of the «Piazza del Duomo» in Milan*

In 1848 Pietro was one of the members of the Provisional Government of Lombardy and, as such, one of the signatories of the annexation to the Kingdom of Sardinia.

This Government assigned him many delicate tasks (he was also part of the Financial Advice Commission), which he carried out wholeheartedly, so much so that upon the return of the Austrians he felt the brunt of heavy persecution, which he was determined to bear calmly.



Lithograph stamped in Bologna on the occasion of the flight of the «Aeronave Rettiremigà».

<sup>57</sup> From Aroldo Benini, *Lecco Economia*, edited by Banca Popolare di Lecco, n. 1, March 1996.

<sup>58</sup> These pamphlets are kept in the Natural History Museum of Milan and deal with the study of certain silkworm diseases. They are signed by Pietro Gavazzi and it appears likely that it is indeed the same Pietro. Of the various pamphlets, however, two publications are dated 1877 and 1881, while Pietro died in 1875, and he is referred to, rightly enough, as «Cavaliere» [an honorific used for highly-respected men of society, t.n.] but also as «Dottore» [title given to university graduates, t.n.], a title which does not appear in any other document.

As soon as the national Government was set up, however, he was repaid with well-deserved honours. He became a member of the board of directors and management of the Infant Schools of Milan, as well as President of the Valmadrera Charity Congregation.

He dedicated a great deal of his time to charity and helping the poor.

Pietro was also town councillor of Milan in around 1861. In this period there was much heated discussion concerning the creation of the Vittorio Emanuele Gallery and the reorganisation of the «Piazza del Duomo» (Cathedral Square).

A commission was charged with presenting projects to the Council. When the plan of this commission was made public it aroused great criticism. One particularly noteworthy example was a pamphlet written by Pietro himself, who found every one of the proposals formulated by the offending commission totally unacceptable.

He claimed that the proposed width of the square – 122 metres – ought to be reduced to 82 metres for reasons of perspective, and condemned the idea of substituting Via Vittorio Emanuele, which had already been decided upon, with a Gallery which, in his opinion, would be no more than a «caisson», with no monumental value.

These pamphlets commenting on the designs for the Gallery and the re-arrangement of the Duomo square were printed on January 31, 1861, and referred to the Town Council Assembly of January 5. Along with his criticisms of the Commission project, headed by leading architect Luigi Tatti, Pietro proposed a series of interesting suggestions that emphasised the «aesthetic» as well as functional importance of the project.

The present-day layout of the «Piazza del Duomo» is the result of this initiative on the part of Pietro and his brother-in-law, Antonio Tallachini.

The initial project for redesigning the square, outlined by an engineer named Caimi in 1857, was submitted by Pietro to the Government with the request for the authorisation of a lottery for the sake of collecting the necessary funds.

Pietro backed the initiative of architect Giuseppe Bovara regarding the formation of a joint-stock company for the construction of the Monza-Lecco Railway for Brianza, in 1863. In 1853, a circular had already been sent out by a committee of friends of Bovara for a railway which would serve Lecco. To this end, a report was written to the Provincial Council of Milan by the Commission in charge, regarding the request for a railway from Monza to Lecco, along with the proposal and the relative documents for the formation of the above-mentioned joint-stock company for the construction of the Monza-Lecco Railway for Brianza.

Throughout these legal dealings, Pietro was referred to as Bovara's cousin, as well as banker and silk dealer, and Town Councillor of Milan. The circular was written by him, together with engineer Salvatore Caccianino.

On this occasion, Pietro headed a group of Brianza mayors in the realisation of the project. Item 12 of the circular proposing the constitution of the company states that signatures were to be presented in Milan during the month of December at the office of the Pietro Gavazzi company, in Via Cusani no. 5.

Pietro's eldest son, Giuseppe, apparently inherited his father's interest in the railways: around 1880, Giuseppe sponsored an initiative for the construction of the Como-Erba-Lecco line.

### *The Milan Chamber of Commerce*<sup>59</sup>

With the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy, the law of July 6, 1862 placed arbitral jurisdiction in the hands of the Lombardy Chambers of Commerce. The Milan chamber constituted a direct link with the government and assumed a role of greater importance than all the others. The governing body was composed of twenty-one councillors, who served without remuneration.

The interests represented were many, but the textile industry was predominant. Among those representing silk were the Gavazzis, who were also among the bankers, and other leading names from the world of finance.

Pietro was a promoter of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts and Trades (SIAM)<sup>60</sup>, along with certain other managers of the Chamber of Commerce, including the silk industrialist of German origin Enrico Mylius, an old friend of Manzoni and Goethe.

Unlike most industrialists of the Lecco area, whether the product was metal or silk, he was never part of the local Chamber of Commerce (as, instead, were Badoni, Falck and others).

### *Cholera*

When, in the summer of 1835, a terrible epidemic of cholera struck Brianza, the Gavazzi brothers made great efforts to help the local people.

From *Le vicende della Brianza*, by Ignazio Cantù (1837): «It would be unfair not to spend a word of gratitude for the generous people who in this area also (in the district of Oggiono) stood out for their charity and concern, among whom Messrs. Gavazzi, merchants of Valmadrera, earned special merit.»

Again, in the newspaper *Il Resegone* of 24-25 September, 1886, regarding another epidemic, we find: «We can now say for certain that the disease has almost totally disappeared from Valmadrera. May God let this be the last time that we are obliged to run a regular feature of such sorrowful content. Of the 4 cases announced this week; that is, from midnight of the 16<sup>th</sup> to that of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, none resulted fatal; only one of those who previously contracted the disease died. The epidemic, therefore, can safely be considered over.

It is impossible for the poor of Valmadrera, and especially those unfortunate families hit by cholera, to remain silent about how much the worthy Gavazzi family did for them during the epidemic. During this time, moreover, when there are so many false «do-gooders», it is more a duty than a justice to call for public appreciation of those who still perform charity as the Bible teaches us.

<sup>59</sup> From Giorgio Fiocca, *Borghesi e imprenditori a Milano dall'Unità alla Prima guerra mondiale*, Laterza, Bari, 1984.

<sup>60</sup> Details on the SIAM are found in the section on Antonio Gavazzi (1815-1885).

For the whole period in which the unfortunate village of Valmadrera was struck by the disease, the Gavazzi family handed out money, medicine and food; defying the sickness and despising the comforts of a wealthy life, day and night they visited the homes of the poor, bringing, as well as material help, that moral comfort which gives such sustenance to those near death. In their factories, moreover, as well as making sure the rules of hygiene were observed, so necessary in times of epidemic, they themselves took care to see that the workers did not eat unhealthy food, providing where necessary other food, laudanum, wine, spirits and anything else they might need.

... In the name, therefore, of the entire population of Valmadrera, we express from the bottom of our hearts our sincere thanks to such generous gentlefolk, with the prayer that God might preserve them for many years to come in the love of their fellow townsmen and that He might shower heavenly blessings down upon those who are so deserving».

Obviously, the merit for all this went mostly to Giuseppe, the eldest son of Pietro, who at the time was the main representative of the family in Valmadrera. Pietro, in fact, had already passed away.

### *The death of Pietro*

Pietro Gavazzi died in his home in Street Cusani n. 2283, in Milan, on April 14, 1875. He was commemorated in the Church of Santa Maria del Carmine in Milan, in the church of Valmadrera, and in those of Bellano, Cernusco sul Naviglio, Desio and d'Inesio, where the obituaries were posted. He was also commemorated in a long speech given on May 13, 1875, by Don Luigi Vitali in the Church of San Fedele in Milan, as benefactor of the infant schools. He was always remembered as an «excellent husband, a wonderful father, an exemplary head of the family, an honest and upright citizen, and a true and honourable gentleman».

In these commemoration speeches special mention was always made of his contribution to the emancipation of Valmadrera, which he transformed into one of the most important towns of Northern Brianza by furthering its social and economic growth.

Pietro was also repeatedly praised for his great generosity and benevolence, evidence of which were the founding of the infant school (which were to become a model and example for the other towns and villages, and which saved hundreds of orphans from poverty and the street) and the erecting of monuments.

On April 18, 1875, the Milan-based newspaper *Il Sole* wrote: «The pall-bearers at the funeral were *Commendator* Giulio Bellinzaghi, Mayor of Milan; *Cavalier* Carlo Cantoni, Vice Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce; Leopoldo Monguzzi, representing the Town Council of Valmadrera; Pietro Tizzoni, Mayor of Cernusco sul Naviglio; *Cavalier* Antonio Simonetta; *Cavalier* Egidio Gavazzi; Vincenzo Villa; *Cavalier* Nicola Osio; Ulisse Pila, who arrived expressly from Lyons, and Mr. Joannés Poméon, who made the journey from St. Etienne.

At the cemetery, once the coffin had been interred, homilies were pronounced in honour of Pietro Gavazzi in refined speeches by *Cavalier* Domenico Gola, coadjutor of Carmine; *Noble Cavalier* Giovanni Battista Biella, Judge of the Court of Appeals; *Cavalier* Vincenzo Gariazzo

and Prof. Gazzinelli Agostino, Senior Town Councillor of Valmadrera».

The biography of Pietro Gavazzi gives us a very thorough and accurate description of the ceremony. Below, however, are a few comments by his then eighty-year-old grandson, Lodovico, Senator of the Realm, in a letter written on December 19, 1938 to the father of the author, Franco Gavazzi.

◀◀ Milan, December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1938

Dear Franco,

I am very grateful to you for taking the time to get me the book by Carta, with the delightful dedication to Pietro Gavazzi, my grandfather, who was also your great-grandfather, and the references to the silk factories of Bellano and Valmadrera that he owned.

Pietro Gavazzi, whom I had the good fortune to know and appreciate in all his infinite goodness (he died in 1875, when I was 18 years old), well deserved Carta's few words of praise. But those were days in which our ancestors, who were shaping Italy, ensuring its independence and the freedom of its citizens, dedicated themselves to studying how to prepare young people for a new age. And it is true that «guilty offspring» ruled Italy.

*whose valour was in number*

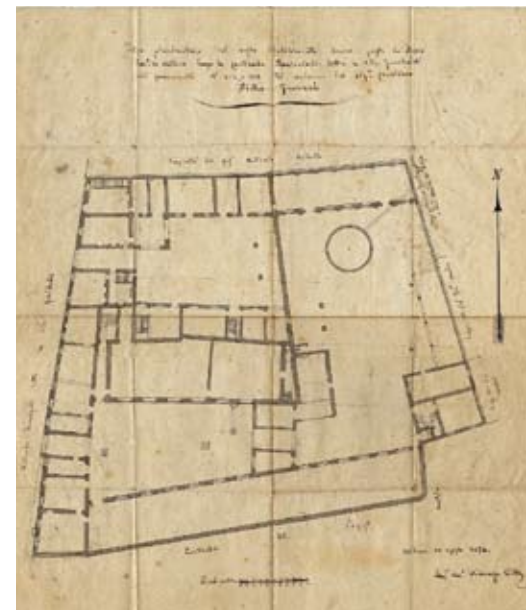
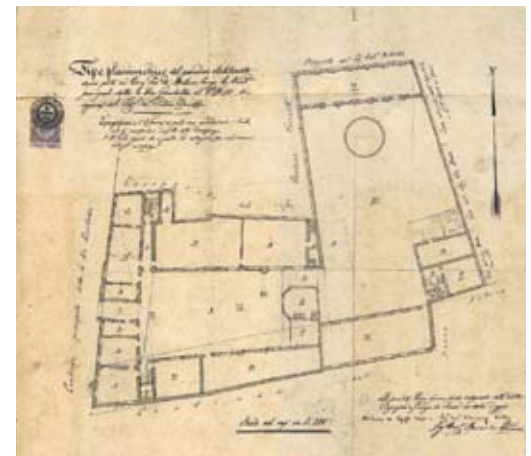
*whose reason was in offence*

*and blood their right*

*and lack of mercy their glory!...*

Pietro Gavazzi was truly a great figure of his time – he had been a student of Gian Domenico Romagnosi and, as we can see from the dedication of Carta, in 1844, even before the age of forty, he was already well respected among his fellow citizens. He loved art and especially music, but he had an open mind towards all studies and made good use of them primarily in his industry, where he recognised their importance much more than others. I remember that he was the first to introduce the chests in the silk mill, so that spinning could be carried out in the winter months as well. He was the first or one of the first to replace the open flame burners with steam-operated boilers for heating the water for spinning, and do away with manual cocoon-beating in favour of mechanical beaters. Indeed, in the silk manufacturing sector, he contributed to greatly boosting the silk-throwing industry, introducing the processing of Asian silks, especially Chinese and Japanese, to Italy on a large scale, for which purpose he set up other important silk factories.

Yet I feel it is my duty to remind you, so that you may pass it down to your own children, that, despite the numerous and growing family he had, he dedicated his great talent to the common good, and I mention as an example the studies he



The embryo of what was to become a great industry – the initial plans for the Desio factory, approx. 1856.

conducted on the steam engine, the hydraulic turbine, the railways of Brianza, etc.! He was even interested, way back then, in electricity and aviation.

I should not neglect to say also that in 1848, after the Austrians were driven out, confident of the future of Italy, he was called to manage the Mint of Milan, procuring (thanks to his acquaintances abroad) the precious metals necessary for minting the coins, which bore the inscription «a free Italy, as God wills». And when Italy became truly free he was elected town councillor of Milan, and drew up an extremely valuable plan for the layout of the Piazza del Duomo (a layout that is currently still awaiting its latest – and perhaps not final – alteration).

It is truly a pity that so much of his work has been lost and only lives on today in the memories of a very few, or rather, in the memory of the only grandson who has kept alive the memory of Pietro Gavazzi, a man who was as great as he was humble.

I hope that you do not find this short account disagreeable and that you will rightly recognise in the figure of your great-grandfather the quality of genuine nobility that from him has been passed down to all his descendants.

Remember me to your dear Margherita and please accept, together with my thanks for your kind gift, the sincere best wishes of your affectionate cousin,

*Lodovico Gavazzi* >>

### **CARLO GIUSEPPE GAVAZZI (1805-1823)**

Born in Valmadrera on November 7, 1805, Carlo, known affectionately as *Carlino* and *Carlinetto*, was named after his mother's father, silk mill owner Carlo Verza of Canzo, and his uncle Carlo Gavazzi (brother of Giuseppe Antonio).

In the parish registers of Valmadrera, next to his baptism registry is a note written by the parish priest, which says: «died on December 15, 1823 at 5 and 1/4 in the night with the resignation and edification of all». In the «printed» death register, alongside the date of his death there is a reference to another corresponding «handwritten» death register, which contains an account of his death: «on the fifteenth day of December at a quarter past five in the night Mr. Carlino Gavazzi, son of Mr. Giuseppe Antonio and Mrs. Verza Luigia, passed away.

His illness lasted two years, although he was not confined to his bed. Having neglected to adopt the necessary treatment for healing a bad cold, he found himself stuck down with consumption. In the last days of his illness he was completely at peace and three times received Holy Communion, and on the Sunday prior to his death he chose to receive the Last Rites. Before passing away, he thanked all those who had assisted him, kissed my hand, then called for his own brother Pietro, to whom he directed his speech and, among his various exhortations, he advised him to go often to church and receive the sacraments regularly. Carlinetto also asked forgiveness of his parents if in the course of his life he had ever caused them sorrow. After having received the Papal Blessing, he remained alive almost three hours more,

during which time he did nought but kiss images, ask for blessings and for good and holy thoughts to occupy his mind. Finally, with a cheerful countenance, he gave up his soul to God. His funeral service was led by eighteen priests».

### ENRICHETTA DOLZINO GAVAZZI (1808-?)

Enrichetta was the daughter of Giuseppe Antonio Gavazzi (1768-1835) and sister of Pietro «the Great», Carlo, Giuseppina and Maria. She was born in Valmadrera on May 18, 1808. She married Giovanni Dolzino, of Chiavenna, in Valmadrera, on October 4, 1828. Giovanni Dolzino (whose surname is occasionally given as Dolzini) was a Milanese silk dealer. After her husband's death, Enrichetta inherited the company, actually giving it her own surname, probably on behalf of her underage sons. She became the only woman among the various Gavazzis to personally run a family business, a role generally reserved for the men of the house. From the *General Notification Register of Merchants and Dealers in Art and Commerce* relating to the period from 1879 to 1891<sup>61</sup>, it appears that the company «Dolzino Enrichetta & Co.» was passed over to the children and heirs of the owner in 1882.

### GIUSEPPINA PONTI GAVAZZI (1811-1877)

Giuseppina was born in Valmadrera on October 21, 1811. On December 9, 1831 she married Marco Ponti, of Canzo (b. in Canzo on 1793, d. in Milan on 1853) in Valmadrera. Marco Ponti, a silk mill owner, was the son of Giuseppe Antonio Ponti. The couple had one son, Giuseppe. Giuseppina was a sister of Pietro «the Great».



Giovanni Dolzino  
and his wife  
Enrichetta Gavazzi  
(1808-?).



Giuseppina Gavazzi  
(1811-1877) and her  
husband Marco Ponti  
(1793-1853).

<sup>61</sup> Preserved in the archives of the Milan Chamber of Commerce, Volume 401.



Maria Gavazzi  
(1814-1866)

### **MARIA BADONI GAVAZZI (1814-1866)**

Maria Gavazzi (known as Marietta), another of Pietro's sisters, was born on November 11, 1814 and died on January 17, 1866. She married Giuseppe Badoni (23.6.1807-12.5.1877), a member of one of the most important metal and textile manufacturing families in the Lecco area, on May 17, 1835, in Valmadrera.

The Badonis played a leading role in the complex iron and steel economy of the Lecco district<sup>62</sup>.

#### *The entrepreneurial activities of Giuseppe Badoni*

After finishing his studies in accounting in 1829, Giuseppe followed in the footsteps of the many cotton manufacturers who went to test their knowledge in Europe; in his case Germany. Upon his return, after an apprenticeship in one of the family workshops, he was responsible for introducing new technologies in the drawing mill.

He transformed his ovens and utensils, applying all the new inventions of the metal industry learned abroad. The result was a factory which could compete with the Prussian plants. He was the first industrialist to manufacture sheet metal in Italy and oversee their use in public works. He was, in fact, hailed as a captain of industry.

He changed manufacturing processes by using peat (utilising the peat-bogs of Bosisio and Colico) and hydraulic power (in Mandello and Bellano, using the structures created by the Gavazzis on the river Pioverna) and through his association with Giorgio Enrico Falck.

#### *The financial support of the Gavazzis*

Through Giuseppe's marriage with Marietta Gavazzi, the Badoni dynasty aimed to establish its name firmly in society, as up until this time the Gavazzi family represented the most prestigious name in the silk industry of the Como area. We read, moreover, that «The Gavazzi brothers, silk dealers and mill owners», provided «important support, consolidated by this timely marriage, to the business of G. Badoni».

«In Bellano the motive power of the cylinders was generated by the river Pioverna, ingeniously channelled in co-operation with the Gavazzi silk industry. The course of the river, in fact, was intercepted at height of 13 m above the lake, by digging a channel 80 m in depth, into which the river was forced to enter and then plunge, generating power for the workshops and silk factories.

<sup>62</sup> In business from the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century onwards with one of the many «large» forges of the area, during the first decades of the Restoration the Badoni family, with Carlo, anticipated the structural changes in the metal industry of the Lecco district, which was betrayed by the local production of cast iron. They opted for the transformation of scrap iron, local and foreign, and verticalized fuel supply by purchasing chestnut woods and copses. Thus, in just one decade, between the 1820s and the 1830s, the Badoni family took control of one of the most important industrial centres of the area and emerged strengthened from the sector crisis in Lombardy. In the family, Giuseppe was the one who showed the greatest flair for business.

The co-operation between the Badoni and Gavazzi families was not limited to the mutual use of the river waters, but also involved very close financial relations.

Most of this powerful financial alliance, the supreme industrial engine, which Badoni confessed was the source of backing for numerous «expensive ventures» that had allowed his own companies to accomplish great things, came from the Gavazzi silk mill and throwing factory owners, who owned not only the factory in Bellano but also the large silk mill in Valmadrera, the first to adopt the new method of steam-extraction. The relations between the two families were founded on the kinship that resulted from the union of Giuseppe Badoni with a sister of the Gavazzi factory owners, Marietta.

Just a few years before the founding of Badoni & Co., the Lecco-born industrialist transferred several pieces of property situated in Mondello con Somana and in Arlenico to his wife's name, in settlement (so states the notary deed) of «her dowry and extra-dowry rights and interest ... amounting to the sum of 81,000 lira ... and, secondly, the sum of 5,000 lira for the loan made by the buyer to her husband with her own money»<sup>63</sup>.

In 1849, Marietta Gavazzi also received a three-year loan of 14,000 lira<sup>64</sup>, from a certain Pietro Banfi of Milan. These facts, modest as they may be, demonstrate the type of financial relations that linked some of the most important industrial families of the Lecco district.<sup>65</sup>»

### *Giuseppe Badoni the patriot*

Giuseppe Badoni was also a devoted patriot.

In 1848 he presented to the Lecco District Committee a very modern cannon, to be used in the war against Austria.

One month later he became president of the Public Health Committee (or the Insurrection Committee) and gave prompt and precise instructions that the Italian cause should be supported and defended, even in the countryside.

To those of Monza who had presented the flag of the Austrian regiment of Geppert, defeated thanks to the volunteers of Lecco, to the Lecco Committee, Badoni replied, adding his own signature to the names of the other Committee members: «Worthy people of Monza! Lecco and Monza shared, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of last March, the dangers of war; today they share the joys of the first victory. The citizens of Lecco are truly grateful for the heartfelt gesture of brotherhood made to them by the special Commission of the Monza Committee, in the presenta-



Giuseppe Badoni (1807-1877), husband of Maria Gavazzi.

<sup>63</sup> «Sale contract dated August 1, 1848 made by Mr. Giuseppe Badoni to his wife, Mrs. Marietta Gavazzi, of several pieces of property in Mandello with Somana and in Arlenico, hamlet of Castello", from the Badoni family archives, family archives cabinet, 5th floor, c. 14.

<sup>64</sup> «A loan made by Pietro Banfi of Milano to Marietta Gavazzi, married name Badoni, with deed dated September 10, 1849», *ibid.* The involvement of the Gavazzis in the Badoni business is also borne out by a passage which appeared in 1854 in the newspaper *Eco della Borsa*: «In 1851 the enterprising and fruitful mind of the same Mr. Badoni came up with the grand idea of the factory of Bellano, an idea which was welcomed and shared by Messrs. Antonio and Egidio Gavazzi who, demonstrating an abundance of the enterprising flair for which they are renowned, bore the costs of the realisation of the same project».

<sup>65</sup> From Pietro Cafaro, *Da un sistema agricolo a un sistema industriale. Il Comasco dal '700 al '900*, Volume II, edited by Camera di Commercio, Como, 1988.

tion of a part of the flag of the defeated regiment Geppert. This trophy of our mutual victory will serve to perpetuate the remembrance of the united efforts of the people of Lecco and Monza who, with help from above, brought about the first defeat of the enemies of Italy. From the hall of the Committee of Lecco, April 18, 1848.»

Placing himself against Austria meant financial disaster for Badoni, as well as moral ruin and mortal danger. In spite of this, he gathered together all those who were of like mind and directed them to the cause of liberating the country from the intruder.

When, in 1849, the Austrian army, reinforced in number, began to retake the Italian cities which had driven them out one year earlier, one by one, Giuseppe Badoni fled to Switzerland.

When the enemy entered the city of Lecco, there were many names listed in the decree of amnesty published by Austria, but the name of Giuseppe Badoni was not one of them. Not until two years later, in 1851, did Radetzky, commander-in-chief of the Lombardy-Veneto forces, sign his pardon. At the end of the French-Italian war against Austria, Badoni was elected City Councillor in Lecco and in Milan, Provincial Councillor in Como, President of the Chamber of Commerce of the Lecco area, active member of the Chamber of Commerce of Milan and Lombardy and, lastly, Deputy of the first Italian Parliament.

### *Other positions and activities*

From 1868 to 1870 he held the office of President *ad temporem* of the Workers' Society.

On December 22, 1844 he was nominated Director and President of the Lecco Theatre Society, replacing Lorenzo Agliati, a lawyer and the first president and promoter of the construction of the theatre, which had been inaugurated two months earlier, in October 1844. The building was the work of architect Giuseppe Bovara<sup>66</sup>.

In 1865, Giuseppe Badoni was part of the charitable commission nominated by the people of Lecco that founded the infant school in Largo Manzoni<sup>67</sup>.

In 1870, the Antonio Badoni Company of Lecco created, with materials produced in its own machine shop, situated in Castello, above Lecco, the successful «Gas Company of Lecco» with its gasometer at Corso Vittorio Emanuele no. 16. Subsequently, the Badoni company installed around thirty of these in various locations of Lombardy, Piedmont, the Marches, etc.

On December 3, 1892, again in Castello, the Gas Workshop of Emilio Colombo & Co. was inaugurated and opened to the public; this was founded specifically to supply gas and electricity throughout the territory of Lecco, i.e. from Castello as far as Laorca.

The entire installation of the furnaces and the apparatus making up the workshop and all the road piping was carried out by the Antonio Badoni company on behalf of a local limited partnership, composed mainly of local industrialists.

<sup>66</sup> See chapter 7, «The theatre of Lecco», and chapter 13, «The Gavazzis and art».

<sup>67</sup> The other members of the commission were: Attilio Carrara, Giuseppe Resinelli and Pietro Paccanelli, and Luigi Stoppani was G.M.

## ANTONIO GAVAZZI (1815-1885)

Antonio was a «Cavaliere» (title given to highly respected members of society), remained a bachelor, and worked in the silk business. In notary acts, he was referred to as a «dealer» and «a man of means».

The following is a profile of Antonio published in 1887<sup>68</sup>: «He was born in Valmadrera in November 1815 to husband and wife Giuseppe Antonio and Luigia Verza.

At school he was always either first in his class or among the first. He learned the silk trade in his father's factories and was left a substantial inheritance.

Together with his brother Egidio he founded the «Gavazzi Brothers» company, which was eventually to extend its business to the largest markets of Europe and America.

This was largely thanks to Antonio who, at the young age of 19, went to England, thus beginning a new commercial period that resulted in the substantial growth of his company. With great foresight and wisdom he handled the trading and packaging of the silkworm eggs. He himself held the reins of his immense company, which employed from 2,000 to 2,500 people. In the period when the silk industry first ceased to be profitable and then began to fall into decline, the Gavazzi factories were nevertheless kept open, so that the workers would not have to seek work elsewhere.

Friendly, polite and generous, he never sent the needy empty-handed, and in giving he always played down the importance of the gesture, so as to spare the receiver from a debt of gratitude.»

Antonio lived at Via Palestro no. 4, in Milan. In the year 1848, however, on the occasion of the baptism of his nephew and godchild Pio, he appears to have been living in Via Meravigli, at no. 2385. A few years later, in 1853, when he acted as witness at the wedding of his nephew Giuseppe (Pietro's son) his residence is recorded as being in Corso di Porta Nuova, again in Milan, together with his brother Egidio.

### *The «Gavazzi Brothers» Company*

Antonio often acted in concert with his brother Egidio in their business activities. Little is known about their entrepreneurial initiatives. They invariably worked together, in joint estate, and certainly enjoyed financial success, judging by the great wealth they accumulated.

They are most famous, however, for their selfless initiatives in favour of Milanese society. With a public and cultural spirit, they created institutions of great social impact, which today continue to be as active and valid as in those days, and with the same philosophy.

Also a bachelor, Antonio owned (together with Egidio) independent textile businesses and real estate in Bellano and in Brianza, different from those of their elder brother Pietro<sup>69</sup>.



Antonio Gavazzi  
(1815-1885)  
(Collection of the Society  
for the Encouragement  
of Arts and Trades).

<sup>68</sup> Pietro Canetta, *List of benefactors of the Ospedale Maggiore di Milano*, Milan, 1887.

<sup>69</sup> See chapter 7, «Other property of the Gavazzi family in Bellano».

On April 26, 1852, together with Egidio, Antonio notified the Milan Chamber of Commerce of the foundation of a new company, the «Gavazzi Brothers», with offices in Via Bossi at no. 1774, Milan.

After the death of Egidio in 1877, the company passed over completely to Antonio; subsequently, in his own will, Antonio appointed his nephew Enrico Dell'Orto (son of his sister Rosalinda) as delegated proxy, who was represented in turn by Messrs. Riccardo Piatti and Anacleto Dell'Oro.

### *The Society for the Encouragement of Arts and Trades (SIAM)*

The Society for the Encouragement of Arts and Trades (SIAM) was established in August of 1838 on the initiative of certain Milanese «dealers».

The Society was founded by 192 partners – a fact that reflects the intellectual vivacity of Milan in the period prior to the Five Days' War<sup>70</sup>.

The SIAM succeeded in concentrating within itself many of the positive characteristics of Milan: the inclination towards a concrete participation in the field of what today we would call social and cultural volunteer work; attention to scientific and technological culture and the ability to work together in unity, regardless of social standing, as is shown by the list of sponsors, which includes marquises, priests, craftsmen and, of course, merchants. It is no coincidence, in fact, that one of the great leading forces of the SIAM was for years, until his exile, Carlo Cattaneo, nor that this society contained the seeds of the future Polytechnic Institute.

The SIAM was founded with the purpose of encouraging the arts useful to manufacture and agriculture and found its main field of action immediately in the sphere of Milanese industrialism, providing manufacturers with information concerning new technologies, training the necessary technical staff and exposing the issues of scientific and technological culture to a vast public.

Thanks to SIAM, therefore, Milan remained open to change, technological progress and the evolution of cultural themes – all the qualities, in fact, that have for many years represented the true wealth of the city.

Through the SIAM, Milan managed to keep up the tradition of enlightenment whose leading figures were Beccaria and Verri, and gave life to an intelligent and useful formative tradition. In the geography of Milanese associations, the Society of the Encouragement of Arts and Trades held a special place. It was now widely acknowledged, in fact, among the most enlightened business leaders and industrial *elite*, that Italy needed a rational system of technical and professional training. Indeed, since the 1840s this had been a par-



The building of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts and Trades, in Milan.

<sup>70</sup> This important Milanese institution still exists and operates today from its celebrated offices in Via Santa Marta no. 18. SIAM, a non-profit organisation, is defined as a Professional Training Centre.

ticularly pressing issue for many industrialists who, in the managing – and the financing – of the SIAM recognised a context of work and co-operation that was fundamental for the economic growth of the area. The process of acquiring knowledge and skill from abroad, the transplanting of technological and organisational innovations, the providing of technical and professional training to workers, the development of technical-scientific research, and generally the whole movement of the socialisation of knowledge necessary for the growth of industry, represented a constant objective of the activation of relations and resources on the part of the most dynamic entrepreneurs, and was regarded as a general cultural choice.

The halls of the SIAM were a meeting-place for all the most important figures of traditional economic fields, new industrial enterprises, the political world, and the technical-scientific and the social-economic intellectual world. It had become a sort of *status* symbol in 19th century Milan to be a member of the Society, in fact, and access to the relational patrimony represented by the SIAM was appealing to the traditional *elite* and indispensable for the upcoming protagonists of national industrialisation.

The office of head director of the SIAM was, over the years, held by the following people: Turati, De Vecchi, Gavazzi, Keller, Ulrich, Brot, Litta, Giulini Della Porta, Maccia, Belinzaghi, Binda, Pirelli, Ponti, Villa Pernice, Pisa, Cozzi, D'Adda, Jacini, Cantoni, Crespi, Bocconi, Richard, Riva, Gondrand, Falck, and others. The list of members, however, is endless; from the 1850s onwards, in particular, the Society *network* resembles a group photo of the organisational centre of the Milanese business *elite* in its push towards modernisation<sup>71</sup>.

Among the SIAM sponsors, along with the aristocratic families and those of the bankers and financiers, were the textile manufacturers, especially those in silk and cotton; the latter included the Gavazzis (perhaps in reference to Bellano factory of Egidio and Antonio Gavazzi, which was leased to Cantoni).

In 1854 the SIAM founded a school of industrial mechanics and proceeded to set up a special fund for its support. The collection of 65 shares of 1,000 lira each confirmed the above-mentioned convergence of aristocratic groups with those of the commercial-industrial middle class. Apart from the Gavazzis, the list included the families of Taverna, Archinto, Mondolfo, Ponti, Turati, Visconti di Modrone, etc.

The SIAM contributed to the founding of the Milan Polytechnic Institute, which was founded in 1863 under the modest name of the Royal Higher Technical Institute. Since the very first years, however, both the students and the townsfolk referred to the school as the Polytechnic, a name that was to become official only in 1937.

The first man charged with the task of directing the institute was Professor Francesco Brioschi.

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<sup>71</sup> In over 160 years of existence, the SIAM concentrated not on accustoming its members to the culture of dependence but on teaching strict business discipline, training thousands of Renzo Tramaglinos – industrious, resourceful, sure of their own systems of values, with confidence in their skills and determined to evolve; thousands and thousands of self-made entrepreneurs, those who made Milan one of the capitals of virtuous capitalism, based on rules, competition and professional skills, taking satisfaction in a job well done and paying attention to the needs of the surrounding community. A truly unique school.



Two different portraits  
of Antonio Gavazzi.



The importance of the Polytechnic, which Brioschi modelled on the great technical schools of Switzerland and Germany, did not escape the enlightened industrialists of Lombardy, much less Antonio, who immediately perceived the great advantage of being able to use local engineers who were technically and scientifically well-trained, putting an end to an age in which the plans, machines, designers and workshop managers almost invariably came from abroad.

In the important network of information exchange represented by the industrial exhibitions, both national and international, the industrialists of Lombardy participated regularly as exhibitors, jury members, committee members and speakers. Giuseppe Colombo was an important figure in this context – a learned man, industrialist, leading politician, lively promoter of economic and cultural initiatives, former lecturer in industrial mechanics for the SIAM and founder in 1863, together with Francesco Brioschi, of the Milan Polytechnic. The institutional independence of the Polytechnic from the Italian university system and the important contribution to its maintenance made by local corporations and private citizens represent the key to understanding the importance of the active role played by the Milanese institution in the process of the modernisation of the Italian industrial structure, both in terms of human effort and of technical skill. With the opening of new sectors of study (especially electrical engineering) and with the development of others, we can see in the years of industrial development the joint effort of the industrial and scientific worlds to adapt training prospects to the demands of growth, with the shrewdest industrialists of Lombardy actively participating in the consolidation of the main nation-wide institutes of polytechnic education.

In the last few decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, following Colombo's model – industrialist, engineer and manager – the Polytechnic produced some of the leading figures in Italian industry in the years of industrial development. Alberto Riva, Pio and Fedele Borghi, Giovanni Battista Pirelli, Angelo Salmoiraghi, Aristide Rubini, Giulio Prinetti, Luigi Magrini, Egidio and Pio Gavazzi, Bartolomeo Cabella, Giacinto Motta, Ettore Conti and Giuseppe Gadda are just some of the names connected with the region's widespread economic growth.

Since then, many members of the Gavazzi family have taken degrees in engineering at the Milan Polytechnic<sup>72</sup>.

From 1863 to 1869 Antonio was a member of the board of directors of the SIAM.

With the bequest of 20,000 lira left by him in a will, the «Antonio Gavazzi Award» was instituted at the SIAM. This consisted in a prize of 4,000 lira, to be awarded every four years to the inventor of a new system or of an improvement of certain benefit to the silk extraction and spinning processes.

At the end of the century (1899), the representatives of Milanese industry, with the aim of using the resulting scientific discoveries for social and economic purposes, decided to start a course in electrical engineering for workers, contributing substantially to its funding.

The school was very successful. Among its sponsors were the Milan Town Council and, among the most renowned industrialists, Egidio and Pio Gavazzi.

<sup>72</sup> See chapter 13, par. «The Gavazzis as Engineers».

In 1950, with Senator Ettore Conti as president and the «Grand'Ufficiale Generale» Count Gerolamo Majnoni d'Intignano<sup>73</sup> as vice-president, the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi Company and the Pietro Gavazzi company were listed among the associated companies, the former since 1843 and the latter since 1890.

### *The Italian Industrial Association*

The Italian Industrial Association was founded in 1867. Just as the Chamber of Commerce and the SIAM were composed of members of the Milanese aristocracy, prominent financiers and politicians, the members of the Association were also industrialists, aristocrats and politicians. The list of founding members included the two most important names in the silk industry, Gavazzi and Sessa. In 1878 the Board of Directors of the Association included the name Gavazzi (probably Antonio, the most suited to this type of representation and the only one of the brothers still alive at the time).

### *Other activities*

Antonio was a member of the Union Society<sup>74</sup> since its founding (1841–1848). When the Club re-opened (1859) he again became a member, with his brother Egidio, in 1864. He was also a member of Society of the Garden, Society for Fine Arts, Italian Geographic Society, Patriotic Society for the Encouragement of Sciences, Literature and Arts.

He and his brother Egidio were responsible for the establishment of the Agricultural Society. He also founded a nursery school in Valmadrera and donated to it a sum of around 100,000 lire. He was, moreover, a great music lover.

In 1869, and again in 1879, Antonio is recorded to have served as councillor in the Town Council of Valmadrera. In 1871 he was president of the Valmadrera Infant School, to which he donated the equipment for the school theatre. In 1875 he was part of the management of the «Society of Silk Mill Owners», an association of silk manufacturers. In the same year, his name appears with those of two other important silk industrialists from Lecco, G.B. Ghislanzoni and Antonio Nava, in the Committee of Inspection of the so-called «Silk-Maturing Company», an institution with essentially a public function, placed under the supervision of the Chamber of Commerce (the director of the society was at the time Mr. G.B. Ronchi, himself also an important silk industrialist).

The «Silk-Maturing Company», which was based in Via Scalo Merci no. 12, Lecco, had been set up in 1865 by the Gavazzi Brothers Company, and its operations had expanded steadily. In 1878 Mr. Ronchi added the silk-scouring process to the company's activities, and by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century it had become one of the best silk-maturing companies in Italy and was highly respected abroad. The wooden entrance door of the ancient and beautiful Parish Church of Santa Maria Rossa in Crescenzago (situated in Via Brera, Milan; Crescenzago was

<sup>73</sup> My mother's father.

<sup>74</sup> See chapter 13, par. «The Gavazzis and the Union Club».

an independent township until after WW II, when it became part of the city of Milan) is divided into 42 panels, each one carved with the name of a «benefactor». Among these names can be read those of Nino Gavazzi, Antonio Gavazzi and Italo Gavazzi.

### *Cypress Island*

On January 3, 1877, with a deed drawn up by notary Giovanni Donegana of Bosisio, Antonio and his younger brother Egidio bought Cypress Island, on Lake Pusiano. At the time he appears to have been living in Milan.

### *The death of Antonio*

Antonio died a bachelor in Valmadrera on August 22, 1885. He left an enormous inheritance, which was divided among a great number of beneficiaries, mostly nephews and nieces, since he had not specified in his will that only his nephews on the Gavazzi side were to be heirs, as it seems had actually been his intention, expressed repeatedly while he was alive. In his will he wrote, imprecisely, «to my dearest nipoti» (noun meaning collectively nephews and nieces). In his will he remembered and generously provided for all those in charge in his factories and in his service. He also left a small sum to all his workers and all the farmers in his employment, as well as granting a whole pension to those who had run his factories for over 20 years. He also left a sum of 100,000 lira to be distributed among his poor relatives. In addition, in testimony of his goodwill and generosity, he left the considerable sum of 400,000 lira to charities and the poor, allotted as follows:

2,000 per year to the poor of Valmadrera, 400 lira per year to the poor of Bellano; 300 lira per year to the poor of San Giovanni in Croce; 50,000 lira to the Congregation of Charity of Milan, 40,000 lira to the Infant Charity Schools; 60,000 lira to Maggiore Hospital; 40,000 lira to the Seaside Homes for the Sick; 30,000 lira to the Reform Schools of the Province of Milan; 10,000 lira to the «Good Shepherd» Institute; 10,000 lira to the San Giuseppe Home; 20,000 lira to the Patronage of the Mentally-Infirm Poor; 20,000 lira to Fatebenefratelli Hospital; 40,000 lira to the Institute for the Blind; and 30,000 lira to the Deaf of the countryside.

Antonio had been so generous that the beneficiaries of his donations asked to have his portrait in their respective establishments. He therefore sat for portraits by Giuseppe Molteni for the Institute for the Blind, by Ferdinando Brambilla for Maggiore Hospital and by Bartolomeo Giuliano for the Congregation of Charity<sup>75</sup>.

At his funeral, an epitaph was placed over the door of the church, which read: «Let intercession and prayer be made to God – for the pious soul

Portrait of Antonio Gavazzi (Giuseppe Molteni, 1840)  
Oils on canvas,  
114 x 94 cm  
Private collection.



<sup>75</sup> Today the administration offices of the IPAB (Public Institutes of Assistance and Charity).

of Antonio Gavazzi – taken suddenly from his loved ones in his 70<sup>th</sup> year – mourned by all as he was loved by all – a shining example of uprightness – he dedicated his talents to commercial enterprises – and gained honour and wealth – from which great benefits were reaped by the country's industries in difficult times – and the poor always.»

### LUIGIA SIMONETTA GAVAZZI (1817-1853)

Luigia was born on September 3, 1817 in Valmadrera, where she died on January 22, 1853. On May 7, 1837 she married Antonio Domenico Simonetta (b. on 1814 in Milan, d. on 29.1.1888 in Milan).

The Simonetta family is remembered for a certain member named Clelia, who is said to have strangled several of her guests and lovers.

The Simonettas were the owners of the beautiful Villa Simonetta, in Via Stilicone no. 36 (the continuation of Via Messina) in Milan<sup>76</sup>.



Luigia Gavazzi  
(1817-1853) and  
her husband Antonio  
Domenico Simonetta  
(1814-1888).



The 16<sup>th</sup> Century  
Simonetta Villa in Milan.

<sup>76</sup> This 16<sup>th</sup> Century building was renowned as the entertainment venue of the Spanish ruler Don Ferrante Gonzaga (famous for having built the Spanish walls). The Simonettas were the next owners after him, followed by the Castelbarco family and then the Clerici family. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century the building began to fall into decline; in around 1820 it became the haunt of the Teppa Company, a group of fun-loving entertainers, famous for their pungent and somewhat cruel capers at the expense of Austrians and high-ranking figures. Today the Italian term teppista (hooligan) has taken on a completely different connotation from its original meaning, which derives from the Milanese botanical term teppa – moss, or stonecrop – perhaps in reference to the unkempt hair that marked these particular youths.

The condition of the villa progressively worsened, as it was used more and more for increasingly humble purposes (e.g. as a hospital for cholera victims and a candle-making factory), until finally, in 1943, it was severely damaged in the bombings. Some time later, however, the building was «miraculously» saved from the wrecking ball and reconstructed by the Town Council to become the prestigious seat of the Milan Civic School of Music, which had been founded in 1862 with the aim of training the musicians of the Civic Band and the choir members of La Scala. Today, this school has one thousand Italian and foreign students, 120 professors and an orchestra; it is practically a second Conservatory, offering courses of all types, theoretical and applied, with a section on ancient music and one on modern music (this latter held in Corso di Porta Vigentina).

Today, therefore, even though the famous «multiple echo» mentioned in physics books will never again be heard in the building, even though the Italian Renaissance garden outside and the furniture and frescoes inside are no more, we can still admire the architectural structure, with the beautiful colonnaded façade designed by Domenico Giuntallodi, as well as the new garden surrounding the villa, with its tulip-trees.



A portrait of Egidio Gavazzi (1818-1877) painted by C. de Bianchi in 1854, in Valmadrera.

### **EGIDIO GAVAZZI (1818-1877)**

Born in Valmadrera on September 15, 1818 he was a bachelor, with the distinguished title of «cavaliere». Egidio was in the silk business, and is defined in notary deeds as a «dealer».

He was town councillor of Bosisio.

He lived in Valmadrera and in Milan, in Via Palestro no. 2.

He was a member of the Union Club (which was then known as the Union Society) from 1864 until his death on February 9, 1877. Probably, as his brother Antonio, he was also member of: Society of the Garden, Society for Fine Arts, Society for the Encouragement of Sciences, Literature and Arts and SIAM.

#### *Business activities*

On May 9, 1867, a new Central Committee of the Italian Industrial Association was formed in Milan (it was previously based in Faenza). With Luigi Luzzati, the event made an impact thanks to its novelty and the participation of the leading industrialists of Lombardy. Egidio was part of the Central Committee, along with 16 other industrialists.

As well as the «Pietro Gavazzi» company, Egidio also ran the «Gavazzi Brothers Company», which he owned in partnership with Antonio<sup>77</sup>.

Egidio was responsible for a number of great improvements in Valmadrera, earning himself the well-deserved description of «engineer, botanist and architect» by his cousin, the Abbot and poet Giuseppe Prina. In fact, he renovated the rooms, halls, porticoes and garden and, above all, he built a new storehouse. In 1861 the two sons of King Victor Emanuel II came to Valmadrera to admire the garden, the famous English-style greenhouses and the factory. Egidio was away at the time, but a fast courier was sent to fetch him while in Valmadrera his younger sister Paola and his aunt Nina entertained the guests. Egidio received the princes and lunched with them in Lecco.

#### *The Lombard Horticultural Society*

Egidio and his brother Antonio were responsible for the founding of the Lombard Horticultural Society. Egidio was an honorary member and first chairman of the Board of Directors<sup>78</sup>.

The «Lombard Horticultural Society and Association of Mutual Aid between Gardeners and Market Gardeners of Italy» was established on July 1, 1869, as the re-organisation of the old Italian Gardeners' Association. The Lombard Horticultural Society had actually been founded three and a half years earlier, on December 16, 1865, with a deed written up by notary Paolo Finati, and Egidio Gavazzi as President, a position he held until his death, after which Count Gian Pietro Cicogna took over the post.

<sup>77</sup> For the Gavazzi Brothers Company and for other business activities, see the sections on Antonio Gavazzi (1815-1885), with whom he shared both interests and initiatives.

<sup>78</sup> 50 per cent of the Society's capital was made up of cash deposits in the Gavazzi Brothers Company, approximately 3,500 lira, which in 1871 rose to around 6,320 lira, or over 80 per cent.

The Society immediately boasted a number of important and famous names among its representatives: Prince Humbert of Savoy became Honorary President in 1866.

There were 150 founding members with 174 shares. These included, apart from the previously-mentioned Prince Humbert of Savoy, who owned 20 shares, Egidio and Antonio Gavazzi, with 10 shares each, and their mother, Luigia Gavazzi Verza, with 1 share. Almost all the other members had just one share each.

On June 17, 1866 the Horticultural Society, by a decree of Victor Emanuel II, King of Italy, was elevated to the status of non-profit organisation. The purpose of the association was:

- a) to promote and favour the advancement of horticulture, and of every branch of science or industry associated with it;
- b) to spread the knowledge of horticultural methods and promote the acclimatisation of the most useful and ornamental vegetables, with the intention of also founding its own journal;
- c) to hold public exhibitions of horticultural products, tools and mechanisms, as well as ornamental garden objects, in set periods of the year and with awards of medals or money or both;
- d) to award or commend those who introduce and utilise new vegetables or useful systems of cultivation, as well as to the authors of educational works relating to horticulture;
- e) to set up for such purposes a special department for practical experiments.

The purpose of the association was to «... disseminate knowledge concerning vegetables in order that their cultivation might become more popular, to diffuse the education of such by all possible means, to encourage, to reward, and to make of horticulture a powerful tool of civilisation.

To improve and increase horticultural products, so that they may compete with the markets of France, which, although less favoured by nature, have succeeded, thanks to perseverance, in reaching an enviable degree of perfection.»

The Horticultural Society was originally based in Piazza Cavour no. 4, in Milan; later, in 1875, it was moved to Via Palestro no. 2, in the Gavazzi family home.

The accomplishments of the Society include the creation of the Botanic Gardens of Milan in 1876 and the Pomological Museum at the Advanced School of Agriculture of Milan in 1869, a unique and extremely interesting initiative. A collection of artificial fruits representing those cultivated in Lombardy was purchased (the artist was Francesco Garnier Valletti, one of the last wax modellers who in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century developed flower and fruit-modelling skills for scientific purposes). The collection is made up of around 1,700 fruits. Also of particular interest is the awards event for the best gardeners.

Today, almost a century and a half later, the Lombard Horticultural Society operates from its offices in Via Monte Napoleone no. 8, and continues in its aim of intensifying the nation's enthusiasm for floriculture, unfortunately still backward and underdeveloped. This is one of the main tasks of the association, which regularly emphasises the fact that there is still insufficient enthusiasm for the cultivation and use of flowers in Italy, making competition with Northern countries impossible and generating relatively little revenue.



Egidio Gavazzi  
(1818-1877).

Another of the Society's missions is environmental protection - in particular, the priceless heritage represented by important parks and plantations, the elimination of the serious flaws in the professional training of architects due to a lack of theoretical and practical teaching of botany and other natural disciplines, and the guidance and tutelage of producers of Italian innovations through experimentation. The discernment of the original founders is evidently still valid and relevant today. Although times have changed, the Horticultural Society continues to follow the same aims, constantly striving to encourage an appreciation of plant life and therefore of the country's incomparable natural heritage.

Today, the Horticultural Society organises annual exhibitions, usually in the Public Gardens of Via Palestro, Milan.

### *Cypress Island*

On December 22, 1868, the Town Council of Bosisio purchased Lake Pusiano and its surroundings, including Cypress Island, from the Conti and Dell'Oro families.

For the first time, the lake was sold separately from the Beauharnais Manor, which remained the property of the sellers.

In 1874 the same Town Council of Bosisio put the lake with its appurtenances (the Cavo Diotti lock, wet docks, rights of use, etc.) up for sale and sponsored an auction. On April 27, Egidio Gavazzi and his brother Antonio knocked down the property at 188,700 lira, a sum higher than the price expected by the Council, which was 186,000 lira.

Monza-born Giulio Fumagalli, leader of a large consortium of industrialists from Monza and Brianza, joined together under the name of «Utenti Lambristi»<sup>79</sup>, opposed the sale and

Aerial view of Cypress Island, on Lake Pusiano.





offered 190,000 lira. He sustained, in fact, that, according to law, Administrators of Council property did not have the right to purchase, even at public auction, except by special permission. Since Egidio Gavazzi was Town Councillor of Bosisio, he should have first obtained the necessary authorisation. The prefect of Como accepted the protest advanced by the Utenti Lambristi and cancelled the auction sale that had favoured Egidio. This latter, however, then (January 1875) produced an injunction that ordered the Town Council of Bosisio to honour the contract, while at the same time raising his offer to 210,000 lira and promising for the sake of public hygiene to not lower the level of the lake water more than 50 centimetres below the Bosisio water-gauge.

Thus began a bidding war between Gavazzi and Fumagalli, placing the Town Council in a difficult situation, since in order to avoid the effects of the lawsuit brought against them by the Gavazzis, and also for the sake of public hygiene, they were inclined to accept his offer. Finally, on January 3, 1877, notary Giovanni Donegana officially put an end to the dispute with a transaction: the Utenti Lambristi bought the lake and all belonging to it, for a price which in the meantime had risen to 224,000 lira, and the two Gavazzi brothers dropped the

More views of Cypress Island, which became the property of Egidio and Antonio Gavazzi in 1877.

<sup>79</sup> The «Utenti Lambristi» were: the Fumagalli brothers of G.B.; Biffi & Maggi; Filippo & Pennati Brothers; Eraldo Krumm & Co.; Giuseppe Staurengi; Luigi Fossati of G.A.; Giuseppe Bonsaglio; Count Carlo Durini; Angiola Maspes Isella; Gaetano Dossi; Francesco Brioschi; Giovanni Battista Cernuschi; Dr. Giuseppe Puricelli Guerra; Francesco Curioni; nob. Giovanni Crivelli Mesmer; Count Alessandro Sormani Andreani; the Tagliabue brothers; Zaffiro Isacco; Paolo Pagnoni and Enrico Meyer & Co.



The Gavazzi home in via Palestro, Milan, where the family lived since the time of Giuseppe Antonio (1768-1835).

suit against the Town Council of Bosisio in exchange for the ownership of Cypress Island, hunting rights on the entire lake, non-exclusive sailing rights, etc. – all «granted without any expense to themselves.»

In conclusion, we can say that all those involved in this curious affair came out well, emerging «victorious» from the three-year long dispute. The Town Council of Bosisio received 224,000 lira for the sale of the lake, instead of the original estimated sum of 186,000 lira, an increase of over 20 per cent.

In the end, the two Gavazzi brothers found themselves owners of Cypress Island and a great number of rights without having to pay a penny.

As for Giulio Fumagalli and the group of the Utenti Lambristi, they finally became the owners of the lake and its appurtenances (except for the Island and the above-mentioned rights), with the hope of having made a good investment, but especially of having obtained control of the waters of the river Lambro, through the use of the Cavo Diotti lock, for the sake of guaranteeing a steady supply of energy to the many industries along the river.

It often happens, however, that much sought-after things do not live up to expectations.

Egidio Gavazzi died on February 9, 1877, just one month after becoming the owner of the island. His brother Antonio, however, who inherited Egidio's share, lived until 1885.

The Utenti Lambrist, who paid perhaps a little too much for what they purchased, did not profit from the use of the water for their industries as much as they had hoped.

### *Egidio and Antonio*

As we have already seen in the section on Antonio Gavazzi, the two bachelor brothers, among the last of the 16 children born to Giuseppe Antonio and Luigia Verza, were very close.

They were born three years apart, both in November (Antonio on November 17, 1815 and Egidio on November 15, 1818), and they was a great gap in age between them and their elder brother Pietro, the only other boy among many sisters.

They had joint estate and administered their vast holdings together.

In Bellano, Antonio and Egidio appear to have been the sole owners of numerous lands and factories, different from the properties in Pietro's name.

These two bachelor brothers were later to lease some of their plants to Eugenio Cantoni, the founder of the famous cotton manufacturing company<sup>80</sup>.

During the build-up to the second war of independence (1858), the cities of the region, including Milan, were sorely tried by the unrest caused by growing unemployment. This dire situation was undoubtedly determined by the considerable decrease in all kinds of business and industry, due to the economic crisis, and was partly caused also by the paralysis imposed by the state of war, even though this was not officially declared in Lombardy-Veneto until

<sup>80</sup> See chapter 7, "Other property of the Gavazzi family in Bellano".

May 6, 1859. In fact, the situation was so serious that on March 13, 1858, Carlo Cagnola, Guglielmo Fortis, Luigi Greppi, Lodovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso and Angelo Villa Pernice donated sums of money for laid-off workers to the Town Hall. The next day, Cesare Giulini, Carlo Borromeo and Egidio and Antonio Gavazzi followed their example.

When Antonio and Egidio died, their wealth was passed on to their innumerable nephews and nieces. Cypress Island and a vast amount of property in the areas of Lecco and Como went to Enrico and Uberto Dell'Orto, the young, orphaned sons of their sister Rosalinda.

### **ROSALINDA DELL'ORTO GAVAZZI (1820-1855)**

Rosalinda was born on June 14, 1820. She married Giuseppe Dell'Orto (b. on 14.6.1803, d. on 31.12.1849), who was 17 years her senior.

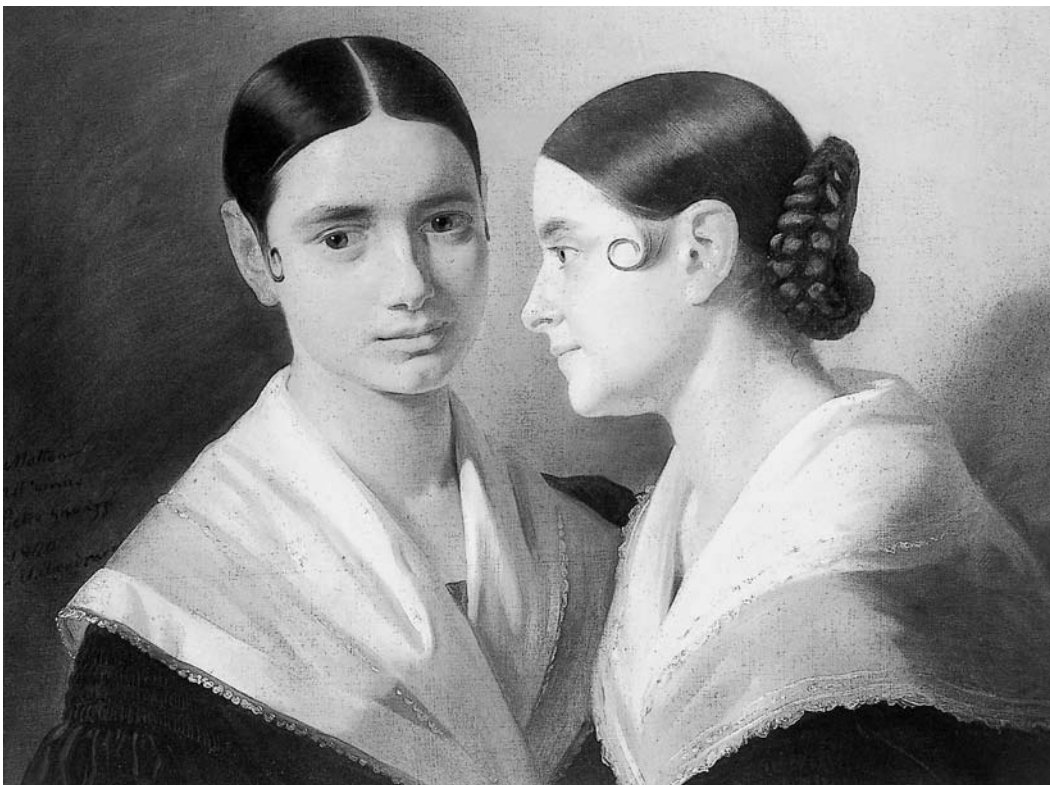
They both died young of tuberculosis – First Giuseppe, at 46, the Rosalinda at 34 (on January 15, 1855), leaving two young sons, Enrico and Uberto. These boys inherited Cypress Island on Lake Pusiano, as well as property in Bosisio, Erba, Cesana and on Lake Oggiono and Annone, from their bachelor uncles, Antonio and Egidio Gavazzi.

Enrico worked with his Gavazzi uncles until his marriage, perhaps in the role of assistant, helping them in their various businesses and numerous interests. Uberto, meanwhile, became a famous painter.

After the marriage of Rosalinda and Giuseppe, other unions were formed between the Gavazzi and Dell'Orto families, with the consequent mingling of kinship and interests.



Giuseppe Dell'Orto (1803-1849) and his wife Rosalinda Gavazzi (1820-1855).



Portrait of the sisters Rosalinda (1820-1855) and Paola (1823-1852) Gavazzi (Giuseppe Molteni, 1840)

*Family Tree of the Dell'Orto family*

