

## A "CORRIERE" IN MILAN

Giangiacomo Schiavi

Anda  
usvardi **MODES**

ONIO VALLARDI

TEATRO **SCALA**  
MERAVIGLI DI MARCO  
RAPPRESENTAZIONE POPOLARE A PREZZI RIDOTTI  
ULTIMA RAPPRESENTAZIONE  
**AIDA**

VIA GIUSEPPE VERDI

CORNAL CAMPANA

*la* **Rinascente**  
[prima della Rinascente]

1865 - 1915

The *Bottiglieria del Leone* for pre-dinner drinks. The *Tre Marie* patisserie for afternoon coffee. Then the Galleria where the dishevelled, stumbling bohemian prowled around the Savini and the *risotto al salto* just to admire oneself in the shop windows, tripping over the girls that celebrated their eighteenth birthdays with dreams of love: might these be the so-called "*gagarelle del Biffi Scala*" from the folk song? At that time, you went into the *Magazzini Bocconi* from what the Milanese called in short 'il Corso' or from the corner of Santa Radegonda and sometimes you would stop to examine the outfits, bowler hats, canes with ivory handles, sandalwood and violet perfumes, quirky exceptions to general hustle and bustle of both the middle and working classes.

There was a lot to write about and everything was noted down in the jotter by the reporter the 'Corriere' had sent to breathe in the air of Milan, that same Milan that smelt of hay and dung, with the carriages that weaved their way through the streets of the centre just like in the paintings by Novello, the aroma of mocha and the large slabs of ice destined for the Campari or Camparino, where the splash of soda water announced the clattering of bottles and glasses. He was looking for that vitality springing from passion, that special frisson which you could inhale in the "*città più città d'Italia*" [the 'citiest' of cities in Italy], to quote Giovanni Verga, a

country that had been unified on paper, filled with vibrancy and tensions, that saw in Piazza Duomo the crossroads that would lead to an imaginable ever better future.

He had to be precise, scrupulous and meticulous because this was the task and because the chief editor of the 'Corriere', the newspaper that would lead the way of journalism, that Mr Torelli Viollier – Neapolitan, supporter of Garibaldi and idealist – was very demanding with the others and him-

self: "The public buy the paper to be informed and so it's the journalist duty not to keep quite about anything". He objectively and independently measured how much they were set apart from the competition, 'Il Secolo' and 'La Perseveranza', their names bellowed in the piazza among the crowds out shopping and the chatter at the bars, while Italy did not

want to be that petty Italy anymore and becoming more aware of the teeter-totter of Roman politics: Minghetti and De Pretis, right and left. But nothing ever changed.

Everything seemed to flourish in Milan between the nineteenth and twentieth century; with no more ground rents and rentiers, progress required investments and wealth needed to be manufactured: that is why Edison and Pirelli, Falck and Breda, the big banks and the commercial warehouses sprang up. There was the Polytechnic, and literary clubs



"Corriere della Sera" headquarter,  
via Solferino

that promoted the scathing writings of Tarchetti, Boito and Arrighi, rebellious against traditionalism and divergent from the distraught Catholicism of the Count Manzoni. A period still burdened by Crispi and Giolitti, the disastrous campaigns in Ethiopia and the criminal cannons of Bava Beccaris.

There was a lot to write about and the young reporter wrote in a frenzy, marching around that cramped city enclosed in the Spanish walls, snooping around shops and workshops, like the one be-

longing to the painter Hayez, and in particular the alleys where ladies, the real ones, would cast their eyes down so as not to see those other ones in the streets, which the great Orio Vergani, without meaning to offend, would one-day call: "The amorous dining hall for the connoisseurs of Venus". He would then go, as a urban sociologist, into those alleyways where the sunlight

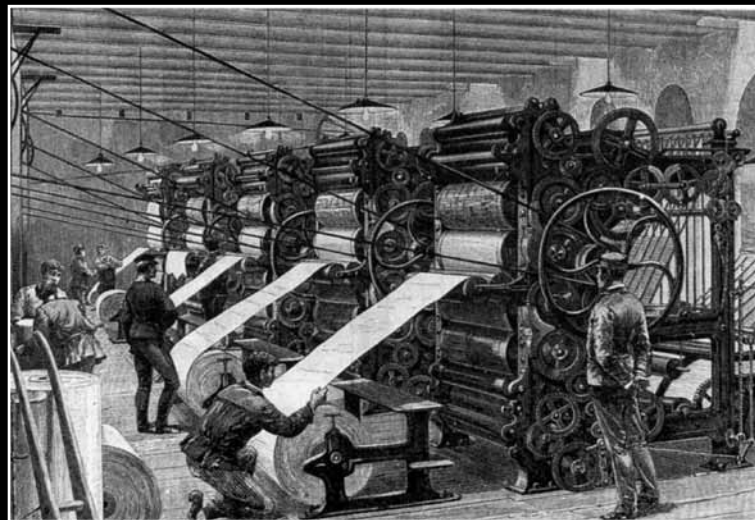
never penetrated, the back streets his fellow journalist ignored as they were habitués of other places, clubs and societies that were less troublesome and cumbersome: should you not bear witness, tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth? And so, among miasmas and back streets, he noted the indignities of that secret side of Milan, the same

one described by the social "palombari" [divers] in Paolo Valera's books, rightly outraged, as was appropriate to a city that took pride in the role of moral capital.

He happily but worriedly went back to the newsroom. Milan was all there, from its chicness to its vile-ness, from the department stores that would turn into the brand *la Rinascente* to the oppressed poverty of the industrial revolution. While writing he started thinking: foreseeing the future economic greatness,

the first signs of political transformation, the middle-classes, socialism, terrifying loneliness, social Darwinism, euphoria and adventurous outbursts, fashion, art and cafes. The chief editor of the 'Corriere della Sera' took the first handwritten sheet, with the ink still fresh from the inkwell. Slightly surprised he imaged the reactions on the faces of the readers. Then the spirit of a

picaroon prevailed, a bit like Don Quixote, the fundamental quality of being a reported. He said: "Reporters aren't the masters of the public but its servants. They must print the story, not serve their own ambitions, friendships, passions but inform and entertain the public". Here we have Milan, both the beautiful and the covert. Approved! Let's print it.



Typography factory machine's,  
Milan XX Century